

# Will PM enjoy post-Olympics golden glow?

Article

Published On Mon Mar 01 2010

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OTTAWA—There he was in the locker-room, a finger raised in the sign for number 1, with a few of the guys who had just made Canadian history winning the gold-medal game on home ice.

Then there were all the high-fives (and even one fist pump): with his wife, with silver medallist Jennifer Heil, with widely grinning hockey legend Wayne Gretzky in the stands.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, according to the 21 official photographs posted to his website and the television cameras that captured him in the stands – looking a little serious at times, mind you, but there nonetheless – was all over these Winter Olympic Games like, well, a politician looking for some positive exposure.

Pollsters suggest it might have worked, but caution that any post-Olympics bounce in the level of love for the prime minister is likely fleeting.

“It’s possible that the Olympics could have a short-term halo effect,” said Nik Nanos, president and CEO of polling company Nanos Research, adding the glow would more likely surround his personality than his politics.

“It’s unlikely for the Olympics to have a significant impact on the ballot box, but it could have an impact on how people personally view the prime minister – his personal brand,” Nanos said.

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Contrast that with what his political opponents were up to Sunday night, when nearly half the population was glued to the most-watched broadcast in Canadian history.

Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff wrote a thoughtful op-ed about what the Games meant to Canada and its future that appeared Monday, but watched the gold-medal game

at home after having left Vancouver the previous morning.

New Democrat Leader Jack Layton was front-and-centre in the crowd watching the game at Wayne Gretzky’s restaurant in downtown Toronto with his wife and fellow NDP MP Olivia Chow, at one moment captured on camera gently pushing a woman’s arm out of the way.

Bloggers blamed the move on eagerness to have his face broadcast to millions as he watched the game at a sports bar like a regular guy, but his press secretary insisted the NDP leader was just trying to get a better view of the game.

“The TV screen was up there, everybody was looking that way, and he moved her arm to be able to see. She was clearly not upset or anything like that,” Karl Bélanger wrote in an email on Monday. “End of the nonstory.”

Nanos said Harper likely came out on top.

“I don’t think you can stack either one of those up with being at the game and cheering Canada on in person,” Nanos said.

Pollster Frank Graves, president of EKOS, said he would expect a mild bounce for the Conservatives in the Olympics afterglow but it would likely fade quickly.

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