

Barrie Shepley headed to his fifth Olympic Games

Caledon's Barrie Shepley's fascination with the Olympic Games began in 1984, when he watched Canadian Olympian Alex Bauman swim to a gold medal at Los Angeles.

"Seeing a Canadian on top of the podium at the world's biggest sporting event was inspiring and hearing our anthem was very emotional," Shepley said.

Sixteen years later, Shepley was in Sydney, Australia, for the 2000 Olympic Games, where his young triathlete Simon Whitfield won gold and Shepley got to hear the anthem live.

"Simon's gold medal victory was pretty mind-blowing, and to be standing 20 metres away from a young athlete you've known since he was 12 years old and seeing him win the sport's first gold medal was hard to fully comprehend," Shepley commented.

As Canada's National Team Coach, Shepley was asked to do a lot of media work after the Sydney Olympics, and CBC hired him to work on the Athens Olympics four years later.

"While I had done a lot of smaller events, doing the live Athens Olympic Games coverage was a huge opportunity," he said, observing that when the Olympics are on, 70 per cent of the country turn their TVs on at some point. He also said it's a great honour to be working with the world-class broadcasters who bring the Olympic Games into Canadians' homes.

Shepley was in Beijing four years later, doing the live TV coverage when Whitfield won his Olympic Silver and again four years ago in London at the 2012 Olympics.

"I got to announce one of Simon's greatest races in Beijing in 2008 when he was in the sprint finish for gold and unfortunately was making the live call in London when he crashed out on his final race of his career," Shepley recalled.

Every third week, from March until October, Shepley does the live International Triathlon Live TV shows. The tour goes from Abu Dhabi to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Germany, Sweden, England, Japan, Canada, U.S.A. and more.

"I have become very familiar with airports for sure, and while airline travel is never that much fun, it is a great opportunity to fly to these incredible cities and have a chance to do the live TV coverage from each of these fantastic cities," he declared.

"No two Olympic Games are the same and I fully expect Rio Brazil 2016 to be an incredible experience," he added.

Shepley was in Rio in 2007 for the Pan American Games, but he knows that things will be much bigger and crazier in August with the Olympic Games on a much larger scale.

"Organizers are expecting over 500,000 spectators on the Copacabana Beach, where the triathletes will race on August 18th and 20th," he said.

Because many events have limited seating in swimming pools and cycling velodromes, spectator viewing is limited. The Olympic Triathlon will be outside, and free, so organizers are expecting massive crowds in their bathing suits cheering along the iconic Copacabana Beach.

"No question the Canadian kids will have their biggest, most boisterous-energetic crowds cheering for them when they race at the Rio Olympic Triathlon," Shepley remarked.

