

Barton doc in Russia scouting out site of next Winter Games

By Rebecca Wass

Sochi, Russia, is next on the list for orthopedic surgeon Terry Orr's medical volunteerism. As a physician with Tahoe Orthopedic & Sports Medicine, he will be previewing the site of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games as part of his role as head team physician for the U.S. Men's Alpine Ski Team – a position he has had since 1999.

Orr has dedicated much of his orthopedic career to treating the world's top winter athletes, including Olympians. With his experience in the Olympics, he was chosen to serve as chief medical officer at the first Winter Youth Olympics in Innsbruck, Austria, in January. There, he oversaw medical care for the U.S. team.



Terry Orr

The youth event included athletes from more than 60 nations competing in skiing, snowboarding, bobsleigh, biathlon, cross country skiing, figure skating, freestyle skiing, luge, ice hockey, speed skating, Nordic combined, ski jumping, skeleton and short track speed skating events.

When it comes to the winter games, Orr is a seasoned veteran of Olympic athlete medical care.

Lake Tahoe News caught up with Orr before the 2010 Vancouver Games.

Orr is currently spending a few weeks in Russia providing medical coverage for the U.S. team at the first Alpine World Cup races in Sochi. Traveling to Sochi will give Orr an opportunity to assess the event venue and help develop an emergency action plan in case of any emergency incidents at the site of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games.

“As the host nation for the Olympics, Russia will set up a mini-medical-center and provide the necessary equipment and facilities to care for all athletes,” Orr said. “Such a center typically features exam rooms, X-ray, laboratory, pharmacy, MRI, along with a mobile operating room and includes all of the basic necessities of a hospital. In addition to injuries, we also treat illnesses that come along with just being on the road.”

Orr has volunteered much of his time on the medical team for the U.S. Ski Team. This has included covering training camps, World Cup races, World Cup finals and World Championships throughout the world. He says he will be on the side of the race course in Sochi whenever the U.S. team is training or competing. If someone is injured, he travels down with the athlete to evaluate, treat and/or assist in treatment.

“We build great relationships with the athletes while they are competing to qualify for the Olympics,” Orr said. “When the physicians that have been there by the athlete’s side during their competitions are able to follow them through to the Olympics, it gives the athlete a sense of ease, because we know them, their medical background, as well as the sport.”

In the 2002, 2006 and 2010 Winter Olympic Games, Orr served as a physician on the medical staff for Team U.S.A., with a primary focus on the Men’s Alpine Ski Team.

“When he [Dr. Orr] talks, you listen,” said Daron Rahlves,

men's downhill and alpine champion and U.S. skicross Olympian. "He has seen me throughout my career about 10 times; he's also taken care of my family and friends. I have 4-year-old twins now. If they were ski racing, I would definitely want Terry there."

In 2010, Rahlves suffered a dislocated hip during a competition and Orr took care of him with platelet rich plasma injections – a procedure based on a once seemingly revolutionary idea: inject people with their own blood, concentrated so it is mostly platelets, the tiny colorless bodies that release substances that help repair tissues.

"He's really cutting-edge and I was back on my skis in two weeks and competing in three," Rahlves said. "He really reduced my recovery time. When you travel someplace new, it's not only imperative to have someone experienced who really knows the team, but someone you trust and has been around for a while."

Selections for the 2014 Winter Olympic Games medical team for United States' athletes will take place in 2013.

"The Olympics has always been my favorite sporting event, and it has been great to be able to be a part of it," Orr stated.

Rebecca Wass works for Barton Health.