

TONYA'S IN TOWN SECURITY TIGHTENS FOR PRACTICE WITH NANCY

Author(s):

Jody Meacham, Mercury News Staff Writer

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HAMAR, Norway – Tonya Harding arrived Wednesday at the Winter Olympics, and the Games no longer are the same.

After two suspicious telephone calls in recent days from the United States to the Olympic Amphitheater, site of the figure skating, and then the ridiculously hilarious media stakeout that greeted Harding, officials announced a quadrupling of security forces for today's practices. These sessions will be the first in which Harding and Nancy Kerrigan skate together.

"You are always afraid when you are in charge of something like this," said Bjorn Ruud, venue manager of the Olympic Amphitheater and the Hamar Ishall practice ice next door.

About 150 soldiers and police officers -- unarmed, in accordance with Norwegian law -- have been assigned to the practice rink, to which a maximum of 500 reporters will be admitted today beginning at 6 a.m. The practice group for Harding and Kerrigan works out at 1:25 p.m. for 45 minutes at the practice rink and at 4:10 p.m. for 40 minutes at the Olympic Amphitheater. Tickets are not sold for the practices.

Ruud said he received the calls about a week ago, one from a woman who said "she could call a lot of people who could let (Harding) win," and another from a Santa Barbara man who opposed Harding's participation in the Olympics.

"He said I should stop Tonya Harding from participating in the competition, and if I did, that God would bless me forever," Ruud said.

As a result, all calls to the arena are now taped.

"When these Olympics are over, I will breathe again," Ruud said.

There has been no consideration given to rearranging practice schedules or groups.

"We do not divide countries for any reason," Ruud said. "It's not our problem if two girls on one team are not friendly with each other."

The two women probably are not friendly, but they did talk to each other Wednesday, two U.S. officials said.

Kerrigan and Harding, each walking in groups of friends, stopped and spoke briefly in the athletes' village, United States Olympic Committee information director Mike Moran told the Associated Press.

Gale Tanger, the figure skating team leader, said Kerrigan initiated the conversation and that two or three sentences were spoken.

That's about all that more than 100 reporters and photographers received from Harding when they intercepted her at Hamar's main accreditation center. The reporters, there to speak to her after her overnight flight from the United States, laughed at themselves for shivering in the sub-zero cold and then squeezed against a temporary steel fence for a glimpse and shouted questions. Stirring the frenzy were the latest in the ever-more-bizarre developments in the Harding-Kerrigan case: the broadcast of Harding's topless striptease on "A Current Affair," with her breasts censored out, and the publication of photos from the home video on the front page of London's Sun, with nothing censored.

Harding, 23, was accompanied on her SAS flight from the United States by several newspaper reporters and CBS co-anchor Connie Chung. Harding arrived in Hamar in a blue Volvo, accompanied by USOC assistant chef de mission Paul George and USOC security chief Larry Buendorf.

She waved at the crowd as she stepped into the building. It took 18 minutes and a cup of coffee for Harding to be photographed and receive her bar-coded plastic credential, and the media mob was the subject of much laughter and photography by normally stoic Norwegians.

"It's like 'Dynasty,' " said Gunn Karin Lovik of Molde, who was walking with her son and husband to the men's 1,500-meter speedskating competition when she stopped to photograph the commotion.

When Harding emerged, she said, "I'm feeling great. I am ready. Thanks for coming."

Then she was taken away, and a motorcade of cellular phone-wielding reporters in more rented Volvos attempted to follow her but lost the trail.

Harding arrived in town one week before the start of the women's figure- skating competition, which begins with the technical program Wednesday and concludes two days later with the freestyle competition.

Harding is the subject of a grand jury investigation into the Jan. 6 attack on Kerrigan, who was struck above the right knee with a metal police baton at the U.S. nationals -- which Harding later won.

Harding's ex-husband, Jeff Gillooly, has pleaded guilty to racketeering for helping to plan the attack and has said she was in on the scheme and gave the final go-ahead.

She denies his charges and says she only learned when she returned to Portland, Ore., that people around her were involved. She admits, however, that she did not come forward immediately with that information.

It took a \$25 million lawsuit against the USOC to ensure that Harding would be skating in Norway. Before she filed the suit, the USOC had scheduled a hearing in Oslo to consider her role in the attack on Kerrigan. That hearing could have resulted in her expulsion from the Olympic team.

But, in a deal cut Saturday, the USOC canceled the hearing and Harding dropped the lawsuit.

And now that leaves Kerrigan, 24, with a new face around practice.

Until now, her only practice partner had been South Korea's Lily Lyoonyung Lee, who never had seen as much media, even at her competitions.

"When my team leader found out they were in my practice group, he said, 'Lily, I want you to be the peacemaker between Nancy and Tonya,' " Lee said. "Then when I was thinking to myself about what to do later before taking my nap, I pondered and pondered and fell asleep. And I never could think of one."

AS TONYA TRAVELS

The latest in the Tonya Harding saga:

- Harding was the last of the 155 U.S. athletes to show up for the Winter Games, checking in at the accreditation center at 1:27 p.m. Wednesday.

- Harding, who eventually slipped away from reporters, was to take up residence in the Hamar athletes' village. She is assigned to the same two-story dormitory as rival Nancy Kerrigan, although their rooms are on different floors.
- Harding and Kerrigan will skate together on a practice rink at 1:25 p.m. today Norwegian time and at 4:10 p.m. on the main Olympic Amphitheater ice in Hamar.
- The two-night women's figure-skating competition begins Wednesday and ends Friday, Feb. 25.

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