

## Houston, we haven't got any problems; Multi-million dollar IT section passing tests without a hitch

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Vancouver 2010 technology boss Ward Chapin has one Olympic nightmare he's praying he'll never experience.

"If Sidney Crosby had a breakaway, with five seconds to go, in a tied game -- and the TV went blank -- that would be my worst scenario," he chuckles. "You've got to get the event out to the world."

Chapin runs the \$350-million Olympic information-technology section.

And while the athletes have been busy testing the venues, Chapin's team and his IT partners have been working behind the scenes to make sure everything goes off without a hitch.

The Olympic IT operation includes TV coverage, computer networks, timing and scoring, results, scoreboards, jumbo video screens, public address systems, phone services and security cameras.

And if anything goes wrong, it could be seen by billions of TV viewers around the world.

Chapin said all the systems and networks were finished by the end of last year.

"Everything is duplicated, from the fibre that runs to the venues, the servers, the PCs, timing and scoring systems," he said. "Redundancy is built in."

This year has been devoted to making sure everything works.

Last winter, his team went through the sports test events and then went through a second phase, testing all the results systems, from April through June.

"At the end of each test period for each sport, the sports federations, and the broadcasters and the press agencies signed off that they're happy with the results systems," he said.

Then IT staff went through a disaster recovery test, making sure the 2010 back-up data centre worked.

And two weeks ago, there was an intensive set of four-day, technical rehearsals.

They took place at the Richmond speed skating oval, Whistler Creekside downhill course, the Hillcrest curling arena and Whistler Olympic Park, home of Nordic skiing and ski jumping.

"We went out to four venues and installed all the equipment and the servers, connected it to our data centre and had our full venue technology teams there," he said. "And we simulated a whole bunch of different races."

Then there were the rogue workers who were brought in to try to "break" the system.

"They'd go up, an unbeknownst to the venue technology team, they'd unplug a server and see if it cut over to the back-up server," said Chapin. "Or they'd go up and say, 'This PC's dead. I want to see if you can replace it in 15 minutes.'"

"Or we'd go to the venue technology manager and say, 'You've just been taken deathly ill. We want to see how your assistant handles these evil scenarios we're going to throw at you for the rest of the day.'"

Chapin said it's vital to test people, not just systems and infrastructure, to make sure they're Games-ready.

"We try to stress them out and give them things that, to be honest, would never happen during a Games," he said.

The International Olympic Committee was on hand and Chapin said everything went well.

The next major test is a technical rehearsal in December.

"We go out to the vast majority of the venues, set up all the servers, have all the venue teams in there again and simulate failures, so the team can practice," he said.

He said the biggest challenge is working with so many different partners -- including Bell, Samsung, Atos Origin, Acer, Panasonic, Nortel, Omega and Ricoh -- and making them a cohesive team.

By Games time, there'll be 1,000 people on the IT team, plus another 1,000 volunteers.

"If we've done our job, they'll be 2,000 of the most bored people you've ever seen," said Chapin.

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And you thought your entertainment system was cool

Some of the IT equipment Vancouver 2010 will use for the Winter Games includes:

- 25,000 network ports - 8,000 voice/fax lines - 6,700 mobile phones - 4,050 wired phones - 7,650 two-way radios
- 6,000 TV monitors - 5,200 PCs/laptops - 2,200 televisions - 2,200 printers- 600 Info 2010 kiosks
- 560 computer servers - 500 wi-fi access points - 500 kilometres of fibre-optic cable