

Final Cut at the Summer Games

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## Blomeley Communications: Remote Control Coverage

By Noah Kadner

Canada-based Blomeley Communications is an award-winning interactive digital media production firm that produces video programming and applications for a global audience. Blomeley is working on behalf of Bell Canada to present special video content in the Bell Media Centre and Internet Lounge by Nortel at the Canadian Olympic House (COH) Pavilion in Beijing. COH’s primary functions are to preview what people can expect to see at the upcoming 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver as well as welcome Canadian athletes, their families, sponsors, dignitaries, and others. Using Final Cut Studio 2, Final Cut Server, and Apple Remote Desktop, Blomeley will edit and play back content remotely from their offices in Ottawa, Canada.



The Beijing setup consists primarily of a Mac Pro at the COH running Final Cut Server and Final Cut Pro. The Mac Pro will be used both for editing footage and playing clips on a 42-inch plasma display. Editor/journalist, Steve Omischl, who is also the reigning Freestyle Aerial Skiing World Champion and a Winter Olympics competitor, will use a Sony HVR-A1U HDV camcorder with a MacBook Pro to produce and edit content for the COH and viewers back in Canada.

“Our goal is to give a behind-the-scenes look at what an athlete as a spectator would do at the Games — anything from a swimmer playing ping-pong to a runner at the Great Wall,” explains Omischl. “I’ve been using Macs and Final Cut Pro for the past 3 years. I’ve competed in the World Cup for eight seasons since 1999, and I’ve already visited China several times, usually at events up in Northern China.

“My working with Final Cut Pro all started as a side hobby when I shot a bunch of travel diaries for my ski team on the road. I like having complete control over my editing. Now I’ve bought all of the Apple Pro Training books, which I read in my spare time, away from regular training. I feel pretty strong in Final Cut Pro, and I’m starting to work with Motion and Soundtrack Pro.”

Omischl shoots HDV onto tape at 1080i with the Sony HVR-A1U. He then transfers his footage to Final Cut Pro via Firewire onto his MacBook Pro and edits native HDV at 1080i. When Steve has a rough cut ready, he moves it over to the Mac Pro at the COH. Final Cut Server automatically takes over and encodes the footage to the Apple TV H.264 codec for transfer over a 10-megabit internet connection to Blomeley’s offices in Ottawa for finishing.

“Final Cut Server is definitely a key piece of software for us,” says Omischl. “Once I’ve done my editing, I just drag the file into my folder and it’s automatically converted and uploaded back to Ottawa. It allows Blomeley to do everything remotely and avoid having to send out a whole production crew. We also don’t have to send every clip I shoot over the Internet because Final Cut Server only uploads the footage that I actually use in the edit.”

“It’s a 12-hour time difference between Ottawa and Beijing, so each day Steve has to finish his work by 6 p.m. so we can start ours at 6 a.m.” adds Chris Paine, Blomeley’s Director of Production Operations. “He’s understandably nervous about delivering stories on a daily basis. We’re production people, and he’s a ski jumper. But Steve really knows the software, so there’s no learning curve to work around.”

In addition to Omischl’s human interest stories, Blomeley will also present pre-recorded greetings from other athletes along with news stories about Canadian competitors in Beijing at the COH. The content will be assembled in Final Cut Pro in Ottawa and then sent via VPN to the Mac Pro. Final Cut Server takes the content, moves it to the appropriate folder, and triggers playback on the plasma screen.

For viewers back in Canada, Blomeley works with Bell Canada to provide the finished content both online and as downloadable video for cell phone users. “A lot of the incoming greetings from Winter athletes were recorded all over Canada on a variety of cell phone cameras in formats like .AVI and 3GP,” says Paine.

“The different cell phone codecs are all importing fine into Final Cut Pro. Once we’re done with our edits, Final Cut Server does the encodes and adds the appropriate logos. We supply QuickPlay Media with an H.264 version at 750 Mb/s and they encode the 3GP versions for cell phones. We also use the Flip4Mac WMV Components for QuickTime to create WMV files. Then we upload everything to an FTP site for streaming to the web on the realchampions.ca site and directly to cell phone video subscribers.”

“While Steve’s out shooting during the day, we’re controlling Final Cut Server via Apple Remote Desktop and handling all the playouts at the COH,” says Paine. “At any time, Steve can take back control and modify the content to insert specific pieces, based on who’s in the audience watching. The Mac Pro connects directly to the plasma screen via DVI, and we’ve also got a second NVIDIA card in there as our backup video output.”

“Chris can even take over my MacBook Pro directly and finish my edits if we run out of time,” Omischl says. “As long as the network connection is fast enough, we shouldn’t have any problems. I feel prepared and nervous about this project but I’m also excited. It’s cool as an athlete to see the Games from the other side, as an observer. I know if I were being interviewed by a fellow athlete I’d probably react differently to someone who really understands the pressure and demands. Shooting and editing these stories is going to give me a whole new perspective.”

### Company Brief

#### Blomeley Communications Inc.

Canada-based, award-winning interactive digital media production firm that produces video programming and applications for a global audience. – [www.blomeley.com](http://www.blomeley.com)

#### Problem:

Set up a compact, integrated, on-location production and post-production facility in Beijing that can also be controlled and operated remotely from Ottawa.

#### Workflow Solution:

Blomeley uses Final Cut Studio, Final Cut Server, and Remote Desktop to control playback and edit footage across the Internet from Ottawa to Beijing. Blomeley’s integrated, remotely-operable workflow links editors and post-production finishing in Canada with on-site production personnel in Beijing. The system is controlled via Apple Remote Desktop and Final Cut Server. Final Cut Studio 2 is used to edit and complete post-production finishing.