

# ROOFING BC

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Dean DeHamel of Olympic Roofing

## Member profile: Olympic Roofing Ltd.

**Former Olympic wrestler Dean DeHamel is turning his young company into an industry contender**

By Frank O'Brien

Port Coquitlam roofer Dean DeHamel came within a match of representing Canada at the Beijing Olympics in 2010, and the young nationally ranked wrestler now has a solid grip on the local roofing industry.

As founder and president of aptly named Olympic Roofing Ltd., and one of the latest members of the Roofing Contractors Association of BC, DeHamel believes he knows what it takes to build a winning company: hard work, talented crews and the experience and guts to take on any contract.

DeHamel, 34, started Olympic Roofing in 2001, shortly after completing his RCABC apprenticeship training with

Western Roofing Ltd. of Kamloops.

"It all started as a summer job," he recalls, with his first roofing job the expansion of Thompson River University, where he worked on both flat roofs and metal sheets.

Recalls DeHamel: "I remember walking to school one morning in Kamloops with my nice clean clothes and I saw Western Roofing working on a warehouse with the tar kettle smoking and the workers on the roof with dust all over them.

I thought to myself, 'man I would never want to do that job – it's hot and dusty, glad I'm going to school today', but only a couple of years later that's right where I ended up, now I look back and just laugh."

DeHamel started Olympic with an old Ford pickup and Skidoo trailer he borrowed from his dad. His first contract was installing shingles for Sears residential and he then moved onto commercial

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#### Award-winning ASM

Nelson Roofing takes ASM work to new heights. See page 12



#### Fall protection 101

First in a series. See page 16

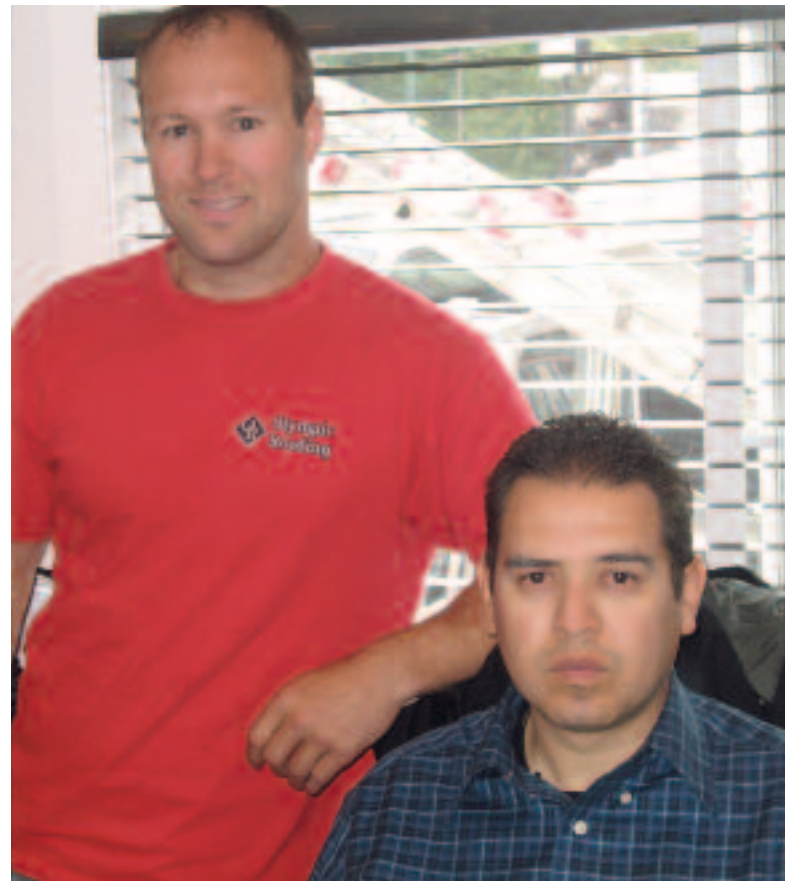


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Dean DeHamel (red shirt); above, with Ernesto Sandoval. Below, accountant Sheila Morton



and government contracts. Olympic's first big job was a rock ballasted EPDM roof for Federal Fisheries in Kamloops.

Working from a small shop/office and metal plant in Port Coquitlam, Olympic runs eight crews with three to six workers in each. While his staff are a mix of fellow apprentices and old friends, Olympic also recruits foreign workers, with which it has had some startling success. DeHamel's manager and estimator at Olympic Roofing is Mexico-born Ernesto Sandoval who started with the company as the low man on the totem pole. "He surpassed everyone," DeHamel said, "even me sometimes."

The downturn in the construction sector has had an effect on Olympic, but DeHamel said institutional and industrial work has kept his crews busy. Recent jobs have included a new arena in New Westminster, a mine building in

Tumbler Ridge, a local animal shelter and Firehall 15 heritage building downtown Vancouver.

Right now an Olympic crew is roofing the new \$16 million Samuel Brighthouse Elementary school in Richmond. The roof is particularly challenging: the curved wood platform calls for three layers of ISO; one layer of Sopra Board, tapered insulation and highly reflective SopraStar from Soprema. Part of the roof is also a green planted roof.

DeHamel said maintenance on green roofs can be challenging. "If you ever have any leaks they can be costly to fix" and he also expressed concern about the fire resistance of plants and grasses on rooftops. "It is a huge fire hazard, especially in a dry climate like Kamloops."

DeHamel estimates that 95 percent of Olympics roofs are



commercial and institutional with residential making up the rest. His company is now offering a financing option for homeowners in

a bid to take more work in the competitive residential sector.

But like the young wrestler who ranked among the top five in Canada – he held a national title in 2003 – DeHamel knows how to set and achieve goals.

"From my first week at Olympic Roofing I wanted the company to be a member of the RCABC," he said, "it has always been my goal."

It took Olympic Roofing eight years to meet that goal, and DeHamel said there are excellent advantages to membership.

"We get to work on a range of high-profile projects and we deal with clients who want to pay for quality products installed by qualified tradesmen. The main clients include senior government and municipalities," he said.

Olympic also signed on for

RCAIC member insurance, and he adds that networking with other RCABC members has also helped his business.

Looking forward, DeHamel believes the BC construction economy is going to remain competitive and does not expect any big improvements. His strategy for success: "Keep the overhead down, stick to what we know and stay efficient."

Today, DeHamel – married and with a child on the way – works eight to 12 hours a day, six days a week and the only vacation he can recall is the week he took off to get married last year.

The young CEO is not often found in the small office he shares with Sandoval and accountant Sheila Morton: often he is leading a crew onto a rooftop or working an estimate on a job site. "You do what you have to do," DeHamel said, "and you make sure the job is done right." ■