

## Speed skater shows promise

Intermediate Morrison impressive at Canadians

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From the time Keri Morrison first laced up a pair of skates, the goal was always to go as fast as possible.

Morrison was just three years old when she took up speed skating and has grown so comfortable with the long blades that if you were to replace them with the skates most of us learn on, it would be difficult to recognize her as a promising star in her sport.

"I've skated a couple of times on figure skates," the 17 year old says. "The first time I tried hockey skates, it was the weirdest thing. I could hardly skate."

There were no such problems at the recent Canadian Age Class Short Track Speed Skating Championships in Cambridge. The Grade 12 Lester B. Pearson High School student turned in four top-three finishes, including a victory in the 3,000 metres, to place second overall in the intermediate women's division. Speed skating was a natural pursuit for Morrison. Her uncle, Dave Morrison, is a national level coach and the head coach of the Gloucester Concorde. When her brother started speed skating, Morrison followed along. It is starting to pay off.

She attended two national team trials in the past year, competing against national-team members, and finished 23rd and 21st in a field of 32.

"It was a big eye opener being able to judge myself where I am and where I could be if I train harder."

Working hard has never been a problem for Morrison, says her coach at the Cambridge Speed Skating Club.

"She's a fine young lady. She works hard and listens well," says Ernie Overland.

Though Morrison says the combination of above-average endurance and poor starts makes her a better candidate for long-distance races, she has proven she can excel in shorter races as well. At nationals, she finished third in the 500m, lowering her own Ontario record by .81 seconds to 47.32 seconds.

"The kid can pound out whatever she needs to do. She's a very good athlete in all distances, which is very rare," says Overland, who believes Morrison compensates for any weaknesses with the skill of working through traffic in tight quarters. "She has a wonderful ability to catch up and make decisions on the fly. She can pull out on the outside of the pack and pass or she can go on the inside of the pack."

Skating at her home club, Morrison also turned in a second-place finish in the 1,000m and a third in the 1,500m at nationals, finishing behind only Quebec's Isabelle Carrier in the overall standings.

Heading off to university next year, Morrison contemplated going to school in Calgary so that she could train at the national training facility. Instead, she has opted for Ottawa where she can train with her uncle. There, she will continue working toward her goal of making Canada's Olympic team at some point.

Overland, who has seen three of his own children compete at the Olympics, says 2010 may be too soon for Morrison but says she definitely has potential four years down the road in Russia.

"The next one around is a possibility if she keeps rolling the way she is."



**SPEEDY:** Keri Morrison in action at the recent Canadian speed skating championships in Cambridge.