

Skaters Defend Their Hometown Shoebridge returns to take home rink advantage

By Bill Doucet, Times Staff

Sports

Mar 26, 2009

Kristy Shoebridge is laying down the law to her fellow skaters.

"This is my hometown, so stay away," the 18-year-old Cambridge native said with a chuckle.

OK, so the fighting words may be in jest, but the Cambridge Skating Club member certainly doesn't want to lose in Hespeler, where she grew up, when the Canadian Age Class Short Track Speed Skating Championships begin tomorrow at the Hespeler Arena.

Shoebridge, who has been living in Calgary and training at the Oval the last two years, wants a little revenge against some of her competitors after an admittedly poor showing at the junior team trials, where she finished 24th overall. She said it was just one of those "rough weekends" that can happen in the sport.

At the two senior team trials, she finished 27th and 23rd, respectively, for 32nd overall. Not bad since this is the first time she qualified for both team trials.

"(The seniors) is a totally different experience. It's a different ballgame," she said, noting that the senior trials is where all the big names in skating show up to comprise the World Cup, national and developmental teams.

"But it definitely gave me a lot more racing experience. I just raced all the girls in my age category two weeks ago and I know how all of them skate, so that will help a lot."

Shoebridge does admit that her whole season in Calgary was geared toward the trials, so she hasn't done much training the last couple weeks for the Canadians.

"I'm really here because this is my home club," adding that it would be nice to do well on her return.

If past results are any indication, Shoebridge has little to worry about. Last year at the nationals, she was fifth overall in female intermediate in Sherbrooke, Que., two weeks after winning two gold and two silver at the North American championships in Milwaukee. Both this year and last season, she was granted a bye —she is already a member of Team Ontario —from the provincial championships.

Her experience in Calgary far outweighs anything she can get of racing in the provincials.

"I've definitely improved a lot since I've been there," she said.

Shoebridge said she's been able to make the smooth transition to Calgary and concentrate on skating through the help of her 23-year-old brother Richard, a former national development team member who also trains at the Olympic Oval.

They are now roommates.

"We actually get along really well," Shoebridge said when asked about the usual sibling rivalry.



JUDEE RICHARDSON SCHOFIELD, SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Seven of the 10 Cambridge Speed Skating Club members competing at the 2009 Canadian Age Class Short Track Speed Skating Championships are ready to go. Team members are (left to right): Jacob Wright, 15, Bennett Wiancko, 15, Keri Morrison, 17, Taylor Schmidt, 16, Sarah-Lynn Reilly, 14, Madi Wright, 13, and Taylor White, 11. Other team members are: Kristy Shoebridge, Jairus Maus and Joelle Bulbrook.

"We have our disputes once and awhile, but we never fight. I would never have survived out there if I weren't living with him."

That's not to say she doesn't get homesick. Last year was particularly hard, as she was going through her senior high school year and had her skating, as well as schooling, stalled through a bout of mononucleosis. This year she is taking upgrading at the University of Calgary and has applied to go there in September.

"(Last year) was hard without my mom and dad. I have to say I came home a lot more last year than I did this year."

Shoebridge could have chosen to train in Montreal, where most short trackers seem to flock, but she said she had reasons why she didn't want to stay in Quebec, even though it is only about a seven-to eight-hour drive away.

"I'm not really fond of Montreal," she said, adding that having a family member in Calgary was also part of the decision.

"It's hard to get accepted there if you're not from Quebec or you don't speak French. I also attended camps in Calgary when I was little, so that was where I wanted to go."

If anything, Shoebridge should have a large cheering section following her to the Hespeler Arena.

Even though she hasn't seen most of her friends since her last trip home at Christmas, visiting and spending time with her friends won't take away from her focus when she hits the ice.

"When I walk into the arena, I leave everything at the door," she said.

"Only skating matters when I enter the door. My friends tell me they are coming and I told them OK, but don't expect me to talk to you or come sit with you. You have to know when to be focused and have fun."

Shoebridge is one of 10 Cambridge Speed Skating Club members competing this weekend. The others are: Jacob Wright, Bennett Wiancko, Keri Morrison, Taylor Schmidt, Sarah-Lynn Reilly, Madi Wright, Taylor White, Jairus Maus and Joelle Bulbrook.

The championships run tomorrow, Saturday and Sunday, from 9 am. to 5 p. m.

As published: <http://www.cambridgetimes.ca/sports/article/168195>