

Top Spot in Speedskating

By Bill Doucet, Times Staff
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Greg and Gloria White might want to invest in a trophy case. The way their daughter Taylor is copping speed skating medals, her current hiding spot is ready to burst at the seams.

"I just put them in a drawer. They're in a big bag that's full."

After this weekend, she may have to reinforce that bag. The 11-year-old Ayr resident medalled in all four distances she competed in and took top spot in the midget girls' division for the second year in a row at the Canadian Age Class Short Track Speed Skating Championship at the Hespeler Arena.

White came into her final race –the 777- metre final –with gold in the 666m and 500m events, and third in the 333m. With mom Gloria doing all the math for placement, White knew exactly where she had to place in her last race to take top spot.

"I was told a lot of times by people where I had to finish. I had to finish top three," White said.

Though she challenged for first place in 777m, she eased off in the final two laps and slipped into third behind Ontario teammates Paisley Perrie and Bethany McKinley-Young. It was a purely strategic move.

"If I got disqualified in that race I wouldn't have gotten first, so I didn't want to risk it."

As the defending national champion, White knew she would be a target, which showed at the provincials, where she came in second. But the Cedar Creek Public School student found another level in her hometown.

"It was really hard to defend, but it feels good. I knew that I could compete for it." White said she benefited from being able to stay in her own home all weekend.

"You don't have to stay in a hotel and you know where to go. It's harder to fall asleep in some hotel rooms," she said.

Next season, White may have some sleepless nights, as she moves up to juvenile and will have to face Quebec skaters for the first time. As seen in this weekend's championships, Quebec skaters are a fixture in the top five of each age class

"It will get pretty hard." That's why Keri Morrison's second place finish in the intermediate women's division is a major accomplishment, as she was the only skater to break up a trio of Quebec skaters at the top of the division.

The 17-year-old Burlington native, who skates out of the Cambridge Speed Skating Club, carried a third-place finish in the 1,500m and 500m races –where she broke the Ontario record of 48.13 seconds with a 47.32- second clocking –and second in the 1,000m into the 3,000m final.

Despite bouncing from first to as low as fifth throughout the race, Morrison took command in the final laps of the 27-lap race to take first place.



BILL DOUCET, TIMES STAFF
Keri Morrison is in front in intermediate girls' 1,000m A final. She finished second.

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Team Ontario's Jacob White, of Cambridge, has Quebec's Guillaume Chatigny looking over his shoulder in the B final of the 777-metre race on the weekend at the Canadian Age Class Short Track Speed Skating Championships at the Hespeler Arena. Wright ended up being disqualified from the race for impeding, but managed to finish seventh over in the junior division.

Finishing first at the provincials and ranked third coming into the competition, Morrison admitted that she was confident to make some noise at the Hespeler Arena after showing great improvement this season.

And she knows where it came from.

"I skated for the first time nationally this year with team trials and I've been competing against the Quebec skaters off and on all year, so I got used to it," said Morrison, adding she finished 23rd and 21st at the two events.

"It was real competition because there was no one skater that was easy to beat. You have to try every race and it really helps you improve."

The Lester B. Pearson High School senior took care of business in impressive fashion, even though she was out of her element a bit. Happy to coast along in the draft of other skaters, Morrison was forced in most finals to take the lead as she was outnumbered by, usually, the Quebec skaters.

"I know my competition and I feel I can go on the outside to win. But it's so close that if you get left in the back, that's where you'll going to stay. I took the chance with taking the lead and it worked out well," she said.

Morrison was pleased with her finish, especially after she was disappointed last year by ending up fourth at the nationals in her junior division swan song.

"I came in ranked third so I'm really happy with it. I didn't expect anything; I just wanted to finish my season off well. It was a really good season for me.

"I thought some of the national team skaters might be here. I was kind of nervous coming in because I really didn't want to skate against them, but they ended up not coming."

Eight more Cambridge Speed Skating Club members competed on the weekend, with Sarah-Lynn Reilly sixth and Madi Wright 15th in juvenile girls; Jacob Wright seventh and Bennett Wiancko 19th in junior male; Taylor Schmidt fifth, Kristy Shoebridge sixth and Joelle Bulbrook in 14th in intermediate female; and Jairus Maus fifth in senior male.

Jacob Wright also broke an Ontario record in the junior mens' 777m, beating the old mark of 1:11.04 in 1:10.29.



BILL DOUCET, TIMES STAFF

Taylor White leads the pack and went on to win the midget girls' 500-metre A final at the Canadian Age Class Short Track Speed Skating Championships on the weekend at the Hespeler Arena.

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