

Busy winter for Olympian Makowsky

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Byline: Rob Vanstone
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Lucas Makowsky marvels at the fact that nearly two years have elapsed since a golden moment.

"Time really does fly by," says the Regina-born Makowsky, who received a speed skating gold medal at the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, which were based in Vancouver.

"There was such excitement with those Games, and there was a carryover with the excitement of them being in Canada. And with the world championships and World Cups happening every year, the years all go by quite quickly."

The world championships and World Cups are often overlooked by fans and reporters whose focus on sports such as speed skating intensifies in Olympic years. Yet, world-class athletes such as Makowsky are every bit as busy and committed when the five concentric rings are not visible.

Consider Makowsky's upcoming schedule.

He is poised to compete in the Canadian single-distance championships, which are to be held from Thursday to Sunday at the Olympic Oval in Calgary. His agenda consists of the men's 1,500 metres on Thursday, and the 1,000m and 5,000m on Friday.

Makowsky's performance in the days to come will dictate the events in which he skates for the remainder of the 2011-12 season.

The possibilities include the Continental qualifiers (Jan. 14-15 in Calgary), World Cup events that could take him to Salt Lake City (Jan. 21-22), Hamar, Norway (Feb. 11-12), Heerenveen, Netherlands (March 2-4) and Berlin (March 9-11), and the world all-around championships (March 22-25 in Heerenveen).

"It's a pretty jam-packed schedule," he notes.

The Calgary-based Makowsky, 24, is balancing his speed skating obligations with his studies. He is working toward a double major in chemical engineering and economics

The collage features several newspaper articles. The largest article is titled "Busy winter for Olympian Makowsky" and includes a photo of Lucas Makowsky with two other athletes. Other visible headlines include "Broomball takes Odessa by Storm", "Local ScoreBoard", "Vanstone Rolling the Dyce", and "Rebels to be honoured".

at the University of Calgary. The objective is to graduate in time to concentrate primarily on training in the stretch run leading up to the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

"I just have to make sure that the balance is right," Makowsky says. "That's why it's so important to keep communicating with my coaches to make sure I'm doing my best while also being realistic with my time constraints."

It helps that Makowsky's elder brother, Mykola, has worked toward the same degree. Mykola, who graduated from the U of C in June, is a member of Speed Skating Canada's national development team.

"There's a pretty good dynamic between him and I," Lucas says. "It's pretty cool to be able to go through everything and go down the same path with somebody I'm so close to. We're able to feed off each other and work with each other to try to reach the same goals."

The Makowsky brothers - who were introduced to the sport at the Regina Speed Skating Club - aspire to represent Canada in Sochi. They are both scheduled to compete this weekend in Calgary. Mykola is to skate in the 1,000m, 1,500m and perhaps the 5,000m.

As the season progresses, Lucas hopes to match or exceed his accomplishments of last winter. He won his first ever individual medal at the world single-distance championships, earning bronze in the 1,500m on March 10 in Inzell, Germany.

Also at that event, Makowsky collaborated with Denny Morrison and Mathieu Giroux to finish second to the United States in team pursuit. That was the Canadian trio's first race together since the 2010 Winter Olympics, at which Makowsky, Morrison and Giroux edged the Americans to strike gold in Richmond, B.C.

Life as a gold medallist does not include around-the-clock adulation, but it is gratifying nonetheless.

"It's not like I can walk down the street and people will recognize who I am, but when people do find out that I was in the team pursuit and that we won the gold medal at a home Olympics, their eyes do widen a bit and they say, 'Oh yeah ...,' " Makowsky says. "It certainly is well-received."

So was the gold medal when it was presented to Makowsky.

"It comes out once in a while," he says. "People will want to see it, or I take it out once in a while to rekindle what kind of accomplishment it really was."

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