

McSorley has been in athletes' shoes

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Column: Rob Vanstone

Bryan McSorley can relate to the athletes he will be coaching at the upcoming Canada Winter Games. Not too long ago, he was in their shoes -their skates, actually.

McSorley, 27, competed in speedskating for New Brunswick at the 1999 and 2003 Canada Winter Games, winning three medals in the latter year. Now he is hoping to watch Team Saskatchewan skaters ascend to the podium in Halifax, where the 2010 Games are to begin next weekend.

"Being this close to them in age, you're a little more in tune with what's happening in the sport," says McSorley, who is Saskatchewan's short-track coach and the province's team leader for all speedskating disciplines.

"But the sport is evolving so fast. Things have changed so much, even in the last couple of years. The way technique is taught now is a complete 180 from when I was going through the system as an athlete."

Nonetheless, he can appreciate the experience from an athlete's perspective, being that he is among the rare skaters who can say that they have competed in two Canada Winter Games.

"I had the benefit of going when I was 15, and again when I was 19," McSorley recalls. "I remember being at the Canada Games when I was 15 and having my butt handed to me, basically. At that point, I started looking forward to 2003 and being on the podium."

Mission accomplished. At the 2003 Canada Winter Games -based in what was then McSorley's home province -he won two individual bronze medals (in the 500 and 1,000-metre events) and also earned a silver medal as part of a relay team.

"Knowing how to prepare for the Canada Games as an athlete helps me to know what's important as far as preparation in general," McSorley notes.

Speedskaters at this year's Canada Games will range in age from 14 to 19. Competition will take place in the short-track and long-track distances during the first week of the Games.

"The Canada Games can be a stepping stone," McSorley says. "If you look at Lucas Makowsky, Justin Warsylewicz and Kerry Dankers, those are skaters (from Saskatchewan) who went on to compete at the Olympic Games.

"For some of the skaters at the Canada Games this time around, (the Olympics) could be a reality for them down the road. The Canada Games gives the athlete experience at a multi-sport event, and it's a lot like the Olympics in that regard."

TEAM SASKATCHEWAN SPEEDSKATING

LONG TRACK MALE ATHLETES: Ryan Bernhard, Muenster Axel Morin, Saskatoon Pieter Stoffel, Saskatoon Michael Wrubleski, Regina. **FEMALE ATHLETES:** Katie Babich, Saskatoon Anastasia Conly, Saskatoon Hillary Fast, Saskatoon Christina Thiel, Regina

SHORT TRACK MALE ATHLETES: Keegan Christ, Regina Alex Horst, Regina Michael Marsh, Saskatoon Lucas Morin, Saskatoon Jesse Slusar, Nipawin. **FEMALE ATHLETES:** Morgan Boutin, Saskatoon Stephanie Kendall, Moose Jaw Katie Kokotailo-Waterer, Saskatoon Taylor Leugner, Regina Madeleine Yager, Saskatoon Coaches/managers: Bryan McSorley, Fredericton, N.B.; Verna Kergan, Moose Jaw; Sandra Nase, Saskatoon; Larry Fast, Saskatoon.