

Makowsky demonstrates maturity

The Leader-Post (Regina)

Tue Feb 16 2010

Byline: Rob Vanstone

Lucas Makowsky is selectively sampling the perks of being an Olympian.

Friday's opening ceremonies were a highlight of the 2010 Winter Olympics, but the Regina-born speed skater was not part of the procession of athletes. He had a long-track race -- the men's 5,000-metre -- the following afternoon.

It would be easy to live in the athletes' village for the entire Olympiad, but such lodgings would not be conducive to optimal preparation. As a result, the 22-year-old Makowsky is spending half his time in a condo near the Richmond Olympic Oval.

He was able to savour the full Olympic experience when skating at the Oval on Saturday. Principally, he is at the Olympics to compete -- not to socialize or march into a stadium -- and, in that setting, he excelled. He finished 13th in Saturday's 5,000m with a time of six minutes 28.71 seconds, shaving five seconds off his previous best time at the Richmond Oval.

"It's an unreal experience, for my first race at the Olympics to be here in Canada," Makowsky said by telephone from Vancouver. "There were so many Canadian fans cheering for you. They were absolutely roaring throughout the race, and they helped me get through the race."

The fans' response more than compensated for the fact that Makowsky was unable to attend the opening ceremonies the night before.

"There was no way that I could be on my feet for that long," he said. "As nice as it would have been to take part in the opening ceremonies, it was too much for proper preparation for my race on Saturday."

When that race arrived, Makowsky was able to concentrate on the task at hand.

"The day before the race, I was very calm and confident, knowing that I was going into the race prepared," he said. "The nerves started to get up there a bit, but I'd catch myself and channel the nerves to my advantage. I knew there would be a bit of nerves, but I came to the line relaxed and ready to go."

Canadian long-track speed skating coach Marcel Lacroix took notice.

"He told me the first lap felt like cake, it was easy, and I was right in his face, reminding him 'Relax, relax,'" Lacroix told George Johnson of the Calgary Herald. "And he did. He slowed down and it paid off because he was on a very good pace for the rest of his race. I was very happy with the level of maturity shown."

Makowsky has now turned his attention to Saturday's 1,500m. He is also part of the Canadian entry in team pursuit, which is to be held Feb. 26 and 27.

