

Pursuit of gold complete

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As Denny Morrison and his teammates on the Canadian men's long-track speedskating pursuit team reached the print area of the mixed zone, Morrison stopped to tug the post indicating where gold medallists are supposed to stand to conduct interviews.

"This is awesome, man," the Fort St. John, B.C., native said. "So cool. It's been a roller-coaster of emotions since we got here, but I like the conclusion the best. Sort of story with a good ending, turmoil in between.

"This is the spot to be. Better than those dark, shadowy corners over there."

Executing their game-plan to near perfection, Morrison, Lucas Makowsky of Regina and Mathieu Giroux of Montreal won the gold medal with a time of three minutes 41.37 seconds, besting the U.S. by 21 one-hundredths of a second.

"It was just enough," Giroux said after the trio claimed the fifth medal, and second gold, of the Games for Canada's long-trackers.

The Dutch, led by Sven Kramer, knocked off Norway for the bronze medal in 3:39.95, besting the Olympic record set by Morrison and Co. less than 24 hours earlier.

The Canadians couldn't have cared less. For the victory lap around the Richmond Oval, Morrison donned a Team Canada hockey jersey, which he hopes to sign and auction off on eBay or via silent auction to raise money for his charity of choice, KidSport B.C.

Saturday's celebration had to be sweetest for Morrison, the guy ticketed to win as many as two individual medals at the Games, but had come up empty before Saturday and became a cause celebre for flammable comments uttered a half-hour after his crushing disappointment in the 1,500 metres.



"What was written in many cases wasn't what I meant," he said. "I've got great team beside me. I couldn't have done it without them. I especially liked one newspaper, talking about how after (the comments) I shouldn't even be part of team pursuit. I thought it was kind of funny. Anyone who knows anything about speedskating wouldn't write something like that. But it was motivating. Sort of like the 'Shani Davis -- Untouchable' newspaper clip that I cut out and put on my fridge in Calgary for a while. To prove it wrong.

"Usually when I win a World Cup medal there are three or four stories in papers, but those the comments were picked up by 50 newspapers.

"That's OK. I made up for it, helping win a gold medal for Canada. So everything ends up happy."

Canadian coach Marcel Lacroix credited "the push" -- a slight tap on the backside of the lead skater by the two trailing skaters to create added forward momentum -- as being the difference.

"Today, it saved our ... butts," he said. "That gold medal today was 'the push.' "

"I put this forward three years ago," Lacroix said of the tactic. "We've been working on it but we've always been hiding it. We've never done it in a World Cup, never done it in a world championship. We've always kept it to ourselves. It's subtle, you can see it but it was so effective today it was stupid. I can guarantee when others look at the video they're going to go, 'Why didn't we do that?' "

Makowsky believes they've started a trend.

"It really helped us the last couple laps when we all getting tired," he said. "Especially starting as fast as we did. A secret? I don't know. You can see it on TV. I think you'll see everyone in team pursuit using it from now on. The cat's out of the bag."

Morrison, meanwhile, credited Giroux's short-track heritage with being instrumental.

"We were starting to fade there, losing a bit of time on the U.S. with three (laps) to go and he had this incredible corner build. He almost dropped me and Lucas. Seriously, it was one of the reasons we were able to hold on.

"When we crossed the line everyone was cooked and that's what you want."

On the podium for the medal presentation, revelling in the roar of the crowd, the golden trio attempted to time a one-for-all victory leap -- and mucked it up.

"Well, we haven't practised that as much we've practised skating," said Morrison. "We discussed it very briefly -- left, right, together ... jump."

"I guess it wasn't so hot."

It was the only time they were out of sync in two days.