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A better shot

Management consultant helps skater improve chances of going to Games

By BRUCE ERSKINE Business Reporter
Thu. Nov 19 - 4:46 AM



Andrew Godbout, formerly of Dartmouth, trains in Calgary.

A LONG-DISTANCE skater from Dartmouth is using personal assessment tools designed to help businesses in his effort to make the Canadian Olympic team.

"There are a lot of parallels between the business world and elite sports," said Andrew Godbout in an interview from Calgary.

Mr. Godbout, 29, skated with the Dartmouth Speedskating Club as a youth and competed in the 1999 Canada Winter Games, where he was named top Nova Scotia male competitor.

But a 12th-place finish at the Games prompted him to give up skating at 18. He studied computer science and mathematics at Saint Mary's University and worked as a software developer with IBM in Markham, Ont.

While there, he became involved in skating again and decided four years ago to give the sport another serious shot.

"I wondered how good I'd be with the proper coaching and training," he said.

After winning the 2005 Canadian 300-metre inline skating championship, he was invited to try out for the Own the Podium recruitment program, aimed at introducing athletes to long-track speed skating for the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver.

He joined the Calgary-based program in February 2006, putting his software development career on hold.

In 2008, Mr. Godbout became the first Nova Scotian to represent Canada on the World Cup circuit when he skated a 10,000-metre race in Moscow.

"I'm in the best shape I've ever been in physically," he said.

But having to win a spot on the podium during trials in December in order to make the Olympic team prompted him to seek help with the non-physical side of the sport.

"I'm a legitimate contender but this is the first time I've been in a high-stress competition with so much at stake," he said.

That's where David Lahey, president of management consulting firm Predictive Success Corp. in Whitby, Ont., came in.

"Dave is helping me prepare for that situation," said Mr. Godbout, by using the firm's predictive index.

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The index, used in business for more than 50 years to match people to jobs, measures an individual's core behaviour in areas like patience, assertion and problem solving.

Those measurements serve as benchmarks for improving performance.

Mr. Godbout said the index has helped him develop strategies to achieve his Olympic goal.

"The index said I'm really aggressive and assertive and have a tendency to get really worked up for a race and forget my strategy," he said.

Strategy is important in long-distance skating, where pacing is critical.

"I've worked on methods to make sure I use my aggressive nature to my advantage — to get a lead but not burn myself out," he said.

Mr. Lahey said Mr. Godbout needed to learn he had to slow down to win races.

"Describing who he is was helpful."

That self-awareness has also helped the skater attract sponsors by pointing out the need to temper his assertiveness and become more collegial, said Mr. Lahey.

"It's helped on and off the ice."

Mr. Godbout's training times have dropped by eight to 10 per cent since he began working with Mr. Lahey in March.

"That's substantial. He's gone from no chance to a 70 per cent chance of making the team," said Mr. Lahey.

Mr. Godbout gave the management consultant the ultimate sporting compliment.

"I have lots of good teammates and coaches," he said. "Dave is part of the team."

Predictive Success Corp. donated its services to Mr. Godbout.

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