

Shoebridge Shining on Speedskating Circuit

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By: Josh Brown

jbrown@therecord.com

CAMBRIDGE — Since the Olympics, short-track speedskater Richard Shoebridge has been absolutely flying around the oval.

Perhaps it shouldn't be too surprising for the Cambridge athlete since he grew up idolizing Superman.

"Things are going really well," he said. "I'm definitely not getting any slower. Things are going in the right direction. I'm having a lot of fun right now."

Shoebridge is back in Cambridge for a few days during a break in the short-track schedule and took the opportunity to stop by his old Cambridge Speed Skating Club Tuesday night.

The 29-year-old slipped on his skates and glided along the Hespeler Memorial Arena as a group of kids followed and asked questions.

It was his first trip back to the rink since a banner honouring his achievements was raised to the rafters alongside other Cambridge Speed Skating club legends. It was also his first return since being named Cambridge athlete of the year earlier this month.

"It's a special feeling coming back," he said.

Shoebridge cut his teeth on the rink in South Africa. Parents Paul and Jacky were both competitive short-track speedskaters and moved the family to Cambridge for their son's formative years.

After coming close but failing to crack the Olympics for Canada, Shoebridge latched on with England since his dad is a dual citizen.

He finished 27th in the 1,000-metre race at the Winter Games and was contemplating retirement as he walked off the ice in Sochi. But a summer home in Hespeler and a mother's intuition helped shelve those thoughts.

"I was kind of on the fence in Sochi," said Shoebridge. "My mom told me that if I was contemplating it this long, then I clearly wasn't ready to retire."

And so, it was back to England's short track home base in Nottingham for another go-around in the sport.

This past weekend, Shoebridge helped Great Britain to a bronze medal in the 5,000-metre relay at a world cup event in Montreal. He also finished seventh in the men's 500-metre race, which was one of his best individual results in years.



Photo courtesy of Michael Poole
Richard Shoebridge, a member of the British speed skating team, made a stop in Cambridge on Tuesday.

The Brits will skip the next two short-track events in Asia for budgetary reasons and focus on the remaining European world cup dates with an eye toward the world championships set to run in Moscow in March.

Training will keep Shoebridge away from home for Christmas, so he's making the most of this week's visit.

One day, he'd like to return permanently to become a firefighter and coach at the Cambridge Speed Skating Club.

But, for now, he still has unfinished business on the oval.

"The Olympics are always on the horizon," said Shoebridge, with a sparkle in his eye. "I'm not ruling it out."

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