

SPORTS

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Cyclist Sydney shines at RBC Training Ground event

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Given the opportunity to test his mettle against sports other than his first love, track cycling, Je'Land Sydney generated some eye-popping results and earned Future Olympic funding through the RBC Training Ground program.

But the 19-year-old Georgetown resident made it clear he's not interested in straying from the indoor tracks and dreams of riding his bicycle into the 2024 Summer Olympics - at least not yet anyway.

Sydney exceeded several elite and Olympic-level benchmarks for strength, power, standing long jump and vertical jump at combine-type events in Milton in August and again at the Training Ground regional event in the fall at the Pan Am Sports Centre in Toronto.

The Georgetown District High School grad piqued the interest of several national sport organizations, such as rowing, bobsleigh, cycling and rugby, and while Sydney was intrigued by the bobsleigh and appreciative for the chance to showcase his talents, he's sticking with track cycling.

"(The bobsleigh) looks like a lot of fun, but to go into that now and compete with the guys already in the program, you'd have to start all over and I'm not ready to do that," he said.

"The experience was a lot of fun and it took my mind off training for a while. This is the time when you put all the work in before you can shine in the big races."

Sydney, a native of Trinidad and Tobago who has been in com-



Photo by Kevin Light

Former Canadian Olympians Curt Harnett and Karina LeBlanc congratulate local resident Je'Land Sydney as he earned the Best Male Performance in the Speed category at the RBC Training Ground sport-specific testing combine in Toronto this past fall. The 19-year-old fared well in testing for other sports other than his speciality, track cycling, but he said he's sticking with the sport he took up at age six in his native Trinidad & Tobago.

petitive cycling since age six, emerged from the RBC Training Ground field of 250 elite male athletes age 14-25 from across the country with the best scores on the stationary Watt Bike for an under-19 contestant and second best overall.

"That was right in my ballpark," laughed the London-based Kallisto Cycling Club member.

He also received an award for

the Best Male Performance in the speed category - along with some funding that will help cover some of the burgeoning costs of being a member of Cycling Canada's development program.

"I would say that the testing and Je'Land's participation in the Training Ground program confirmed what he can do and then he sort of cemented his aspirations in (cycling)," said Kurt In-

nes, director of talent development for the Canadian Sport Institute Pacific.

"His power score and his ability to turn the pedals and create power on the bike are just fantastic. That's a great fit for him to be able to confirm his expertise and potential in cycling."

Sydney's confidence took a hit last summer at the World Junior Championships in Italy. The 2017

Canadian junior champion in the individual sprint, he was making his first appearance on the global stage and finished 17th in qualifying, just one spot out of making the round of 16 head-to-head races.

Now that he has graduated from the junior level to lining up against men, the competition is only going to become more challenging - although he did earn a bronze medal in the sprint in his first race at the national championships in Milton in September.

"What happened at the world juniors was mostly just not having enough experience at that level," he added.

"My coach said I need to have better fitness to ride against the bigger guys like I was up against over there. It was a good learning experience and now that I've raced with the elites I know how much faster I have to go."

As a member of Cycling Canada's development program, Sydney has been living and training full time in Milton near the Mattamy Athletic Centre in a house with other national team prospects.

This is a quiet year for him with respect to international races and he's trying to enrol in a post-secondary institution that will allow him to continue training in a field such as policing.

"I don't want to wait too long because some of the guys on the national team are like 25 or 26 and they haven't started their education yet," said the five-foot-seven, 209-pound Sydney.

"That's too big of a gap for me because by the time you graduate you're 30 and by then you should have your life under control anyway."

Justin Paul nets 3 in Raiders' win over Milton

Justin Paul struck for a hat trick against his former team as the Georgetown Raiders downed the visiting Milton IceHawks 6-2 Saturday night in an Ontario Junior Hockey League matchup.

The 17-year-old forward from Mississauga notched his third of the night 54 seconds into the second period to give the 34-11-0-3 Raiders a 3-0 lead.

Dominic Dumas, Brendan D'Agostino and Austin

Cho also scored for Georgetown, which outshot the 3-44-0-3 IceHawks 51-17.

Rookie goalie Nathan Torchia improved to 9-2-0 with a .950 save percentage, while Christ the King Secondary School grad Zac

McInall had both goals for the IceHawks.

With five regular-season games remaining, the West Division-champion Raiders take on the South Division front-runners, the 37-8-2-2 Toronto Patriots,

on Wednesday, Feb. 14 starting at 7:30 p.m. at the Alcott Arena.

Toronto is six points ahead of Georgetown for top spot in the South/West Conference.

Head coach and general

manager Greg Walters added some depth for the playoff run by signing free-agent goalkeeper Andrew Barwinski, a 17-year-old from Dundas who played with Blyth Academy of Burlington this season.