

# SPORTS

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## Foley's Commonwealth Games debut met with team pursuit bronze

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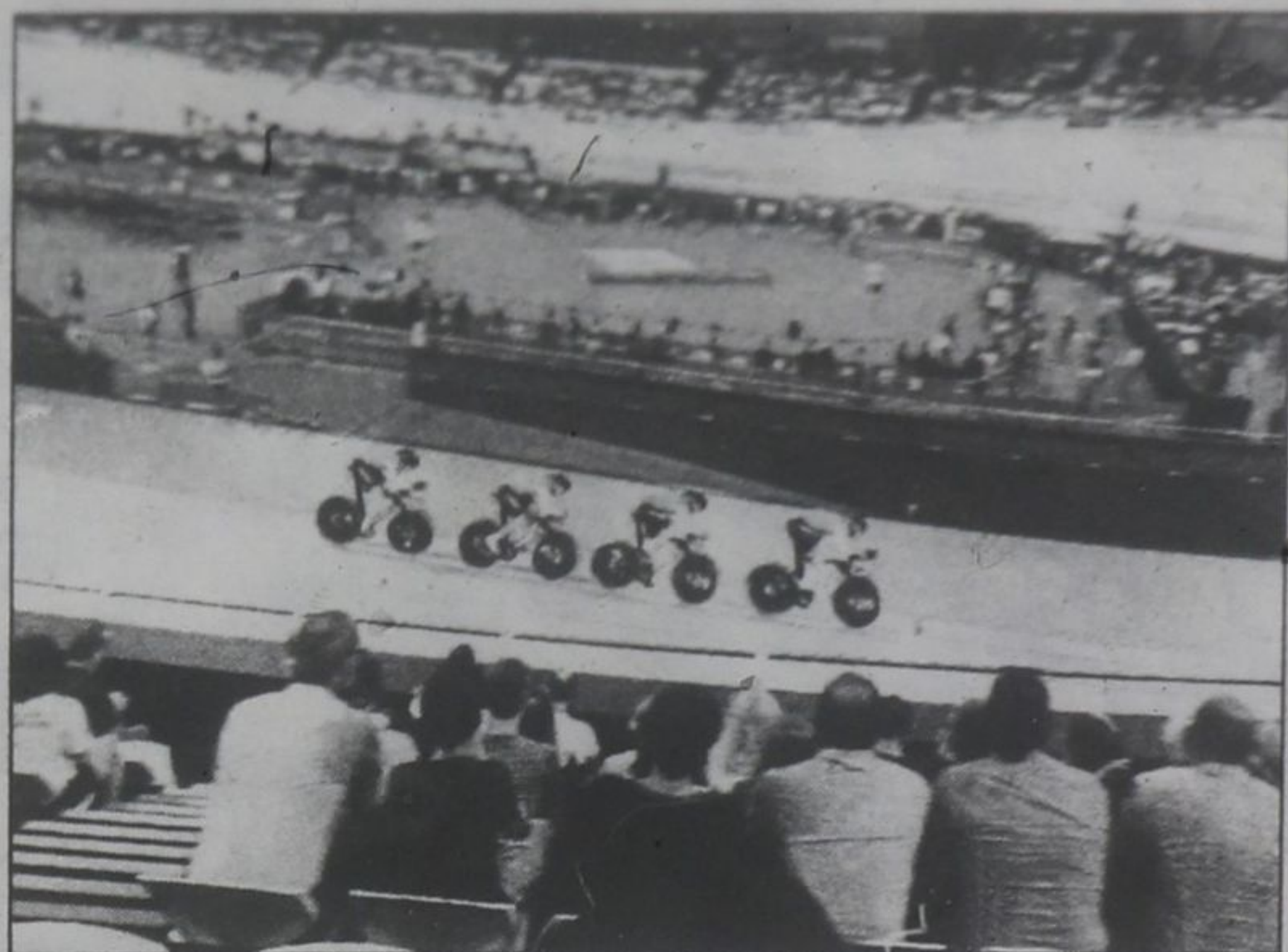
Michael Foley's potential in track cycling has skyrocketed since first entering the velodrome. But he sure hasn't lost his grounded mindset when it comes to the sport.

"Oh, don't say that," the 19-year-old Miltonian with a smile that reveals both pride and pressure, when told that Canadian men's endurance head coach Jono Hailstone sees him as a likely participant at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. "It feels good to be recognized that you're capable of big things, but just want to keep training every day and enjoy this as much as possible."

Assuming that enjoyment and success go hand-in-hand, Foley had himself quite the fun day in Australia earlier this spring.

The baby of a young national men's team pursuit squad, he marked his Commonwealth Games debut with a trip to the podium in Brisbane - riding to bronze; the first medal in that event ever for Canada.

Sitting fourth after the qualifying round but moving up a spot when New Zealand was disqualified for nonregulation equip-



ment, Foley, Derek Gee, Adam Jamieson and Aidan Caves - the lone returnee from a fourth-place performance at the 2014 Games in Glasgow, Scotland - grabbed an early lead on Wales in the battle for third and hung on to win the four kilometre race in 4:00.440.

That was 13 seconds faster than at the last Games, thanks largely to Foley's late oomph.

"Michael really saved us in the back end of the race," said Hailstone. "Usually you think it's the more seasoned guys who excel down the stretch, but he had a great second pull. For someone who's still relatively inexperienced, he was pretty amazing."

Said Foley, "I'm the starter (front of tandem) so you don't really expect me to do much at the end, or even to finish (only three riders needed to complete race). I just wanted it so bad."

The newly-minted Commonwealth Games medalist's late-race drive was a surprising - and much welcomed - turnaround after the local cycling standout took ill just before the trip overseas and was still out of sorts during the 15-hour plane ride.

"We had one last test ride before leaving and I was garbage," he recalled. "It was definitely hard (mentally) to be sick getting on the plane. You try



Gerard Foley photos

(Above) Michael Foley proudly shows his bronze medal from the Commonwealth Games. (Above left) Foley and Canada's team pursuit squad race to Commonwealth Games bronze.

not to freak out, but being ill like that so close to a big event can be devastating to the team."

Averting that dreaded scenario, Foley regained his health and groove just

in time to help give Canada its best-ever finish at the Commonwealth Games, with both men's and women's team pursuit coming away with bronze.

Foley's trip down under

also saw him part of a wild men's road race in which - as the only Canadian to survive a slew of attacks and subsequent crashes - he finished 48th.

With a lack of road race training, his leg strength faded near the end of the 168.3-km course after staying within range of the pack most of the way.

Less than half the field finished.

"I was hanging on for dear life (at the end)," said Foley, whose post-secondary studies will most likely be of the online variety in order to stay close to his hometown velodrome (Mattamy National Cycling Centre). "In a way it was great to finish. But then just finishing a race ... that's not really what I'm there to do."

With medals now secured at the Commonwealth Games and Tissot UCI World Cup in Milton over the last six months - a silver and new national record earned at the latter - Foley seems to have a comfortable hold on his Canadian men's team pursuit spot.

Just don't tell him that. "You always have to hustle. There's young guys coming for you from all sides. You need to keep getting better."

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