

Mark Wild is knocking on the door in speed skating

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away from making that happen, he'll likely need all 16 months remaining to realize his dream.

The Milton speed skater recently returned to Calgary for another season of national team training. He has yet to earn a spot on the Canadian team, but hopes to change that this winter. Calgary and the Olympic Oval training centre have been his home away from home for the past five years now.

His training runs from September to April.

"We're on the ice for two hours every morning and then do one or two hours of off-ice training, including weights and cycling, in the afternoon," said Wild.

Speed skating, he explained, comprises four separate races. Overall placing in competition is based on a point system totaling finishes in the 500 metre, 1,000m, 1,500m and 3,000m. The top eight skaters after each set of Olympic time trials, held around Christmas and in March, make up the national team. Only the top five will likely compete at the 1998 Olympics.

Last year Wild finished 13th, moving him up a notch from his 1994-95 performance. He said however, that his placing doesn't

do his efforts justice. "I'm not getting the calls my way. In speed skating, if you accidentally touch another skater even slightly during a race you can get disqualified and that's hurt my scores over the past couple of years.

"My best time is a tenth of a second behind the top skaters in the country," Wild noted. "With four different races, you need to have both speed and endurance. I use to be lacking a bit in the endurance department but that's getting better."

Wild's best finish in the 500m event is 43.74 seconds, less than a click of the stopwatch behind the world record of 42.96. The top Canadian skater is currently stopping the clock at about 43.04.

Wild is hoping to trim about a half a second off his times, which he feels should be enough to get him onto the national team. "I'm hoping to finish seventh this season and then move up to top five in 1997. I think I have a realistic shot at doing that, it's just a matter of putting together four flawless races," he said. "This is the setup year for the Olympics so it's very important that I improve."

Earning a spot on the national team would also mean ensuring some much needed sponsorship. While he has received government funding in the past, he has yet to receive a cheque for his

1995-96 expenses.

He said it's hard to get sponsorship from big companies "unless you're a national team member."

Unlike a lot of Canadian speed skaters, Wild didn't start out in hockey when he was a child. He began racing at the age of five when his family moved to St. John's, Newfoundland from England. "I've been skating for 16 years now and have always loved it."

STANDINGS

Halton Men's Fastball Final League Standings

	GP	W	L	T	RF	RA	Pts	GBL
Juke Box Charlies	23	20	2	0	171	55	40	-
Streetsville Sports	24	19	4	1	124	79	39	0.5
Oldtimers	23	15	8	0	126	91	30	5
Forbes Hewlett	24	13	11	0	128	119	26	7.5
Almak Machine	24	13	11	0	188	161	26	7.5
Moose Roofing	24	11	12	1	128	98	23	8.5
Georgetown Bell	24	11	13	0	71	99	22	9.5
G'town Minit-Tune	24	4	20	0	70	137	8	16.5
Performance Satellite	24	1	23	0	76	236	2	19.5

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