

Deaf-blind speed skater makes history at recent skating competition

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Orléans speed skater Kevin Frost has quickly become one of Canada's most decorated athletes in the sport.

After conquering the short track circuit, Frost, who has Usher Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that causes progressive hearing and vision loss, recently switched his focus to long track racing. All his success in the sport has come by competing against able bodied skaters.

So far in 2009, Frost has competed in three competitions, the most recent one, an international competition held in his home province of British Columbia.

And for Frost, it was a history making event, as he was the first and last disabled competitor to compete in the Vancouver Olympic Oval. The facility will be turned into a sports complex.

"It was simply amazing," said Frost. "Just to be in the Oval like that, it was unbelievable."

Competing in the 500, 1,000, 1,500 and 3,000 rac-

es, Frost came home with a few medals and even got the chance to watch some of Canada's top speed skaters, such as Jeremy Weatherspoon, practice and compete.

"It was certainly just a rush being in that environment," continued Frost. "Truly something I won't forget."

Frost is still pushing to have speed skating recognized as an official Paralympics sport in 2010. It's a dream he wants to accomplish sooner rather than later.

"I believe it can happen," said Frost.

Frost believes that language barriers, which lead to lack of participating countries, is the biggest reason speed skating isn't being recognized as part of the Paralympics in 2010.

15 countries are needed to have enough skaters to take part in national championships.

"I have been receiving a tremendous amount of support," said Frost. "If this can truly ever happen, it will be simply amazing."

While making his dream

a reality is his number one priority, Frost is aware that the sport won't be recognized in time for next year's games. He said he will switch his focus to 2011, for the Word Cup in Calgary, where he has an even bigger goal in my mind.

"That is going to be a huge event," said Frost. "I will train hard because I want to be the fastest in the world."

Frost has also been busy being involved in several fundraising initiatives. Most recently, the east end resident skated 100 kilometres on the Rideau Canal to raise money for the Rotary Club of Ottawa, which offers assistance for families with children or young adults with disabilities.

"It was skating for such a great cause, and I was happy to do what I could," he said.

Another fundraising campaign that Frost is a part of, he is actually leading. He is raising money to help buy a pair of hearing aids for a young boy named Alfredo that Frost encountered while vacationing in Cancun, Mexico. The cost for a pair of hearing aids is

\$3,000 and to date, Frost has raised just over \$2,500.

"We're getting really close and it's exciting," said Frost.

Frost is also busy gearing himself for the upcoming

rowing season. Due to his condition, Frost may eventually completely lose both his hearing and vision. On the recommendation from his sports' therapist, Frost

decided to take up rowing because there will always be someone else in the boat with you, supporting when needed whereas skating is a more individual sport.



Orléans' own Kevin Frost was the first and last disabled athlete to skate on the Vancouver Oval.