



CONOR MCDERMOTT-MOSTOWY FINDS A SUCCESSFUL HOME RACING LONG TRACK

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Speedskater Conor McDermott-Mostowy didn't have a lot of fun racing short track a few years ago. One of his friends referred to him at the time as "extremely scary," as in very angry and intense. He's not any of those things, but McDermott-Mostowy recognizes that was the vibe he gave off needing to be "in the zone" for short track races.

One of the changes he's made since his switch to long track speed skating three years ago is that he's having more fun. That's easier for him to do in long track, he said, because he's not racing other people.



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“You’re racing the clock,” McDermott-Mostowy said. “And at the end of the day, whoever’s the fastest that day will win.”

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The 21-year-old Washington D.C. native earned a spot on the 2020-21 U.S. Long Track National Team. He’s now training in Salt Lake City hoping to make the U.S. Olympic team for Beijing in 2022.

McDermott-Mostowy started out on hockey skates at age 2, but as good as he became at skating, he didn’t have any interest in playing hockey or figure skating. All it took was seeing someone wearing speed skates zip by on a frozen canal. McDermott-Mostowy wanted a pair of those “cool” skates. He started skating once a week at a club when he was about 9 years old.

He said he liked that speedskating is an individual sport.

“I’m not super big on team sports,” he said. “Because at the end of the day, in an individual sport, if I don’t do well, it’s my fault. There’s no one else that you can blame.”

Focusing on short track, he refers to 2016 as a “breakout year” for him, when he exceeded his expectations and almost made the junior world championships team before getting knocked off in the final race of the team trials. But with higher expectations the next year, however, he DQ’d in all but one race.

That disappointment flipped a switch in McDermott-Mostowy.



“I was like, ‘I’m done with this. I’m going to try long track,’” he said.

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US SPEEDSKATING The idea of switching to long track was hardly new. Plenty of people had suggested he try it. Still, McDermott-Mostowy was unsure at first. After all, he’d skated short track for so long.

But the switch from short track to long track is much more feasible than the reverse, according to McDermott-Mostowy, since short track takes a lot to master the required technical skills. There was another factor in the decision, too. At 6-1, he was the tallest person on the U.S. short track team at the time he switched. Because of the tighter radius of the turns, short track suits itself better to smaller people, and his height was “very, very tall” for short track, he said, leaving the cards stacked against him.

In the end he figured he had nothing to lose. McDermott-Mostowy trained for two weeks in Milwaukee, then promptly made the long track team at the 2017 junior world trials. That cemented his decision to stick with long track.

“I like long track for different reasons,” McDermott-Mostowy said. “I always say that I enjoy training short track more, but I enjoy the racing long track more.”

Beyond speedskating, McDermott-Mostowy is a neuroscience major at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, with a tentative goal of later attending medical school. He’s interested in using genetic engineering in health applications for therapies.

“Just because I feel like it’s the new frontier in medicine,” he said.



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When he's not skating or training, cooking is one of his favorite activities, with McDermott-Mostowy finding it very therapeutic.

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McDermott-Mostowy has his sights on the 2022 Winter Games in Beijing, a goal he said is within his grasp though not a guarantee.

"In order to make it, I have to work as hard as I can and be on top of my practices and on top of my game all the time," he said.

This year with the COVID-19 pandemic threw a wrench into things, however, both in terms of his personal growth and the competition circuit being up in the air. He hoped to make the world cup team this fall, which would have been his first full ISU World Cup circuit, but the fall portion of the tour was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. There's a chance races could resume in 2021.

Overall, McDermott-Mostowy is happy with his path starting in short track and then making the switch to long track. He also sees his experience in both disciplines as an asset.

In addition to the technical skills that carried over, he also said short track helped him from a mentality standpoint.

"I have learned over time now that I am not somebody who needs to psyche myself up," McDermott-Mostowy said. "I am already plenty psyched up. I need to calm myself down at competitions."



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Heather Rule is a freelance sports journalist and blogger from the Twin Cities. Her work has appeared in various publications.

US SPEEDSKATING is a contributor to USSpeedskating.org on behalf of Red Line Editorial, Inc.



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