

DERRICK CAMPBELL

Athletics



Born in Galt in 1972, Derrick spent his entire high school career at GCI, graduating in 1992. Derrick was involved in a number of sports, but in one he was destined to become among the best in the world: short track speed skating.

Derrick joined the Cambridge Speed Skating Club at the age of 12 and quickly began to have an impact on the sport. By the age of 17, he was a member of the National Training Squad and two years later, while a student at GCI, he became a member of the National Team, winning three gold medals at the Canada Games. The next step for Derrick was his first Olympic Games in Albertville, France, in 1992.

Mr. Campbell moved to Calgary to train at the newly opened National Short Track Training Center. He started posting outstanding times while training at the centre and as the 1994 Lillehammer Olympics in Norway neared, Mr. Campbell was picked as the *Sports Illustrated* Gold Medal favourite in the 500 meters. In the final of the 1000m, with only two laps remaining, Derrick had his legs taken out from under him by another skater. The skater was disqualified, so Derrick merely had to finish the race to win the bronze medal. However, a lap counting mistake resulted in his leaving the track one lap short, causing him to be disqualified in one of the most bizarre moments in Olympic history.

Mr. Campbell still had his specialty, the 500m, to follow, but once again misfortune struck when he fell in the semi-final. To add to his personal pain, a member of the Canadian team also fell in the relay.

His hopes of winning three medals dashed, Derrick returned to Canada empty-handed but with a determination to continue his Olympic quest.

In 1995, Mr. Campbell set the 500m World Record of 43.04 and lowered it to 42.78 in 1996. The 1997 World Championships were held at Nagano, Japan, where he won the 500m. Derrick was primed for the 1998 Nagano Olympics but, just weeks before the Games, Derrick crashed in training and cut his quadricep muscle. The wound needed 40 sutures to close and with it went Derrick's opportunity to compete individually at Nagano. Again, Derrick overcame adversity and focused his training on preparation for the 5000m relay. There was no way that Derrick would be denied as he, Francois Drolet, Eric Bedard and Marc Gagnon won Olympic Gold.

"I knew winning in the relay would be special but I didn't think it would compare to winning as an individual. Something has to be said about winning with three other guys who are just as proud, just as excited. I couldn't possibly ever imagine a feeling like that in my life again."

Mr. Campbell was the keynote speaker at the inaugural induction ceremony of the Cambridge Sports Hall of Fame in 1997 and was inducted in 1998. In 2004 Mr. Campbell and his three Gold Medal teammates were inducted into the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame in Montreal.