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Skaters qualify for Torino event

By Heidi Bruce

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KEARNS — As the American Cup long-track speed skating competition came to a close at the Utah Olympic Oval Sunday, the fierce competitors began to relax. The skaters, many of whom live and train together, finally got a chance to drop their masks and just enjoy each other.

At the side of the rink, Elli Ochowicz, a two-time Olympian, promised to tell Ashlee Barnett and April Medley the best places to shop in Italy. By taking first in the 3,000 and 5,000, respectively, Barnett and Medley both qualified for the World University Games to be held in Torino in January. Neither has been to Italy.

A little farther down the rink, the relative veteran Andrew Love was telling 21-year-old Lee Eckert his cure for overtraining, while other skaters leaned on the rink and cheered the contenders in the races still finishing.

But the friendships noticeably get pushed aside once the races begin.

In the women's 500, Ochowicz (39.87) and Becky Lang (41.51) finished first and second, repeating Saturday's results. Lang also qualified in the 500 and 1,000 to compete in the World University Games.

The men's 500 also had the same two skaters from Saturday at the top, but this time the results were flipped. Love took first this time with a 37.20, while Matt Plummer (38.18) placed second.

In the women's 1,000, 17-year-old wonder Mia Manganello upset Ochowicz by more than a second, 1:21:17 to 1:22:46.

"Mark my words, she'll be an Olympian some day," Love said of Manganello. "She's got all the components."

In the men's 1,000, Michael Stein-Stewart (1:13:24) of Sandy got his second of three overall firsts, while Love (1:15:40) finished second.



Utahn Michael Stein-Stewart, Park City, competes in the 1,000 at the American Cup long-track speed skating competition at the Utah Olympic Oval in Kearns on Sunday.

Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret Morning News

Ronald Macky (1:51:71) took first and Eric Cepuran (1:53:59) second in the men's 1,500, while Netanya Mintz (2:08:48) qualified for the World University Games by winning the women's 1,500. Barnett finished a close second with a 2:09:26.

Manganello won the women's 3,000 with a time of 4:26:90 to take her third overall first. Stacey Michel finished a distant second with a 5:02:20.

In the men's 3,000, Stein-Stewart skated a 4:05:19 to finish first, while Taylorsville's Paul Nahrwold (4:32:79) finished second.

Medley (8:20:23) defeated Erica Lanser (8:37:83) to win the women's 5,000, while Keith Carney skated a 7:11:75 to finish ahead of Colton Bailey (7:36:17) in the men's 5,000.

In the 1,0000, Liam Ortega skated a 14:47:66 to win, while Justin Stelly finished second with a 15:16:73.

As much as the events drained the competitors physically and emotionally, all the skaters seemed to think it was worth it.

"This is a precision sport. You've got to have it here, here and here," Love said, pointing to his head, heart and legs. "You get to the starting line and you know you're in for it, but that's part of the psychological and emotional pieces that make you a better person."

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