

Haver has pull in international rowing

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The key to rowing, says John Haver, is a long stroke, lots of power and a high stroke rate.

Do all three efficiently and the results can be phenomenal.

"You get a feeling of flying on top of the water," Haver says. "You hear the water trickling underneath the boat and it's like a waterfall.

"That's why I row -- to get that feeling."

Haver has been flying a lot the past three months, in the boat and around the world.

The pinnacle was winning a bronze medal with Morgan Jarvis in lightweight double sculls at the world under-23 championships in Poznan, Poland earlier this month.

To say there were low expectations for Haver and Jarvis is an understatement.

"The expectations were non-existent," laughs Haver, 20, back in Saskatoon after a whirlwind summer.

Canada may be a power in rowing, but not in sculls. The last time Canada even sent a lightweight men's doubles duo to under-23 worlds was in 1999, when they finished 17th.

"We'd walk down to the dock with our sculling blades that had a maple leaf on them and everyone would look at us," Haver says of Poland. "Even we had no idea what to expect."

Haver and Jarvis won their heat and got everyone's attention by winning their semi-final.

In the final, Haver and Jarvis got out to a quick lead and held it until the 1,000-metre mark in the 2,000-metre race.

Hungary passed them, followed by Portugal.

"We did everything we could to hold on to the bronze," Haver says. "It was like sprinting for 2,000 metres. The last 15 strokes I was almost passing out.

"I'll never forget that race."

The unexpected bronze was just the latest in a number of surprises for Haver.

He contracted whooping cough last year and couldn't begin training until December.

When he went to the national team tryouts in June it was just to get experience.

"I didn't intend on making the national team this year," he says.

"It changed my plans for the summer."

Haver has been around rowing his entire life. Both his parents, Bob and Ann, are heavily involved in the sport and have won world masters titles, while younger sister, Katy, won a Canada Cup title this year.

Haver credits his dad, who is also his coach, for his success and that of his Saskatchewan teammates.

"He got us on the national team," Haver says.

After securing a spot on the national team, Haver was put in the lightweight doubles boat with Jarvis. The two had six weeks together in Winnipeg to prepare for worlds.

On the water by 7 a.m., Haver and Jarvis spent five to seven hours a day training. The hardest part, he said, was having to get down to 154 pounds to make the weight.

"To go to bed hungry is not a good feeling," he says.

Now that he has had a taste of success on the international stage, Haver is eager to return.

"The goal is to go back," he says. "Coming so close to doing something everyone considers impossible for Canada feels pretty good.

"Hopefully we can build off of those results."

Olympics 2004

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