

Aurora's Livingston lands spot on Olympic snowboard team



By Jeff Doner

After breaking his collarbone on New Year's Eve, Aurora's Derek Livingston had some doubts about his chances of making Canada's Olympic snowboarding team.

But those doubts disappeared last week when he was named to the final roster.

"I don't really know how to explain it, but it has been a dream of mine for the last four years to go and it's still hard to believe that it's actually happening," he told *The Auroran* before leaving for Switzerland on Monday night to train with his team. "I guess it won't really set in until I'm there."

With a speedy recovery from the broken collarbone, Livingston was cleared to participate in the final Canadian qualifier in Quebec City two weeks ago, where he earned enough points to secure his ranking.

But, he admitted that leading up to that, things got a little tense.

"It has been a stressful month up until last week," he said. "Leading up to the last event I was expecting [to make the team], but then, after the collarbone break, that shattered my world and I didn't even think I was going to be able to compete in the event. I got in touch with a couple really good surgeons and they did an amazing job along with my team and my physiotherapists."

"For a couple days after my event, and before the announcement, I was on the bubble" so that was a really stressful few days."

He felt like things started to turn around when his coach and high performance director called him in to have a heart-to-heart.

"They told me to stop stressing out. That was just a huge weight off my chest. It felt amazing."

It turns out that was the best advice he could have gotten, as just a week later he and 19 other athletes were added to the team.

He has been snowboarding since he was eight years old, but really started to specialize in halfpipe in 2009. That year he was named to the national team and just fell short of a spot for the Vancouver Winter Games. This year, he feels as though Canada has a chance to dominate.

?I think in halfpipe, this is the event where we're going to peak and we're going to show the world what we've got and lay it all on the line,? he said.

Since his inclusion on the Olympic team, Livingston said he is amazed with the outpouring of support from friends, family and the community as a whole.

?It's crazy the kind of support I've been getting,? he said. ?People I don't know have been messaging me on Twitter and Facebook, people I haven't seen in more than five years are messaging me as well. I'm getting tons of notifications and support from the community and it is amazing. That's when it first starts to set in, how crazy this is, how awesome of an opportunity this is.?

His dad, Pete, has watched his son's career progress over the years and couldn't be any happier to be able to watch his son compete on the world stage.

?It's pretty awesome,? he said. ?It's rare that someone gets to go to the Olympics, so it's cool when it's your own son. There was always a chance, but you don't really realize how big it is until you hear the announcement.?

Pete said when Derek was younger, he never really talked about going to the Olympics; snowboarding was just about having fun and competing.

?Then he went to Canadian nationals and was named to the national team,? he said. ?It was like one more stumbling block removed.?

Unable to book a last minute trip to Sochi, the family is eager to watch their son on TV when he competes. They plan to be surrounded by friends and family when Derek hits the half pipe in Sochi.

?It'll be a nail biter, no doubt,? said Pete. ?This whole thing has been like a rollercoaster all along, but now the rollercoaster has gotten a lot bigger.?

With tons of support behind him, Livingston is headed off to Sochi to compete in something that now comes naturally to him.

?After the announcement it was awesome and I felt excited to be with my friends and represent Canada, but then I got all this response from everybody and it just made me feel so good and so excited to go and do well at the Olympics,? said Derek.

?All my training from the last five years has led me to this moment and this is where I'm going to show the world what I've got.?