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Richards enjoys camp experience



Kenora's Mike Richards fires a shot on Marc-Andre Fleury during practice at the Canadian men's Olympic hockey orientation camp in Calgary.

Photos: Bruce Rakoczy

CALGARY – Mike Richards certainly enjoyed himself.

It's was good times for the Kenora product as the Canadian men's Olympic orientation finished up in Calgary.

"I had a lot of fun. It was nice to be here," suggested the Philadelphia Flyers captain. "It was nice to get together with a group like this, have some fun off the ice and get out on the ice. It went very smoothly."

The events of the four-day camp went according to plan said Richards.

"I had talked to some people beforehand and it went pretty much as they had described it would be like," claimed the gritty two-way centre. The skates were pretty quick, which is no surprise when you get some of the best players in Canada on the ice it's going to be a little bit faster. The tempo definitely increased every day."

While competing on the ice the Philadelphia forward seemed to put more emphasis on the start of the upcoming National Hockey League than the Hockey Canada get together.

"I didn't have any set goals or expectations at this camp I think," said Richards. "Obviously moving forward you want to have a good start to the season. That's where everyone will be judged in making this team before and heading into December."

He did wish to use the carry over of the on-ice sessions to his advantage however.



"You want to build off this camp, carry the tempo of this into the season, have a good start to the year and build it from there. You hope to do well."

Moving from a highly touted prospect with tremendous credentials in junior that included a Memorial Cup title with the Kitchener Rangers and a World Jr. Hockey Championship gold medal the skilled centre is pleased with his transition to an elite NHL player.



Philadelphia Flyers captain and Team Canada hopeful Mike Richards skates with the puck during drills at the Canadian men's Olympic hockey orientation camp in Calgary. He is coming off surgery on both shoulders during the off-season.

Photo: Bruce Rakoczy

"I think I've become a more complete player," he reflected. "Before, I was alright at a couple things, but I think I got better in a few different areas," he added. "I think I'm also maturing, getting stronger and that, which comes with the experience of playing in the NHL."

There was however this off-season that required surgery on both shoulders for Richards. He is pleased though with the progress of his rehabilitation.

"My shoulders are doing fine," he said while explaining his injury status. "Everything has gone well. I've been skating for a couple weeks now, but haven't really had a lot of contact yet and don't expect to, other than a few bumps here and there, until training camp."

The layoff before training camp should also benefit him.

"We're still three weeks away from training camp so there is still some healing time," stated Richards. "They feel good. I'm getting a lot stronger in the gym so hopefully they'll be a 100 percent by the start of the season."

For Richards, he was a part of a large contingent of players from the region who were invited to take part in the orientation camp. He wasn't too sure as to why so many area products have been so successful at such a high level of hockey.

"I really have no idea," suggested the former Kenora minor hockey star. "Obviously Northwestern Ontario has a good hockey program going where you get lots of ice time and good competition in a lot of different leagues right up into AA and AAA."

Richards own hockey upbringing is something he reflects positively on.

"I know in Kenora growing up I also had lots of ice time on outdoor rinks," he replied. I'm not really sure what it is, but I think the opportunity is there for everyone to have success with the programs they run. It was fun."

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