

# Amanda Overland

August 30, 1981 -

As the younger sister of Kevin (Crockett) and Cindy Overland, Amanda Overland literally grew up on long blades with the Cambridge Speed Skating Club. And while her older siblings eventually moved exclusively into long track, Amanda, though dabbling with long track like most of her clubmates when they had an opportunity, stuck with short track.

Both Kevin and Cindy preceded her into the Cambridge Sports Hall of Fame. And her father, Ernie, was inducted into the Canadian Speed Skating Hall of Fame in 2016.

All three siblings would eventually leave the Cambridge club, and their home in Kitchener, to pursue their sport, living and training at Calgary's National Training Centre based at the Olympic Oval. Each, in turn, would go on to compete at the highest levels of the sport, skating for Canada at the World Championships and at the Olympic Games. They remain one of the most successful families in Canadian speed skating history.

In their early years one of the common denominators for the entire family was the early coaching of Tom Overend and Lisa Gannett. The two London coaches commuted from London to coach the young skaters. "They established the roadmap for the Cambridge club," said Jasinskaskas.

Amanda, who began skating at age three or four, was among the youngest skaters at the club when the two coaches were shaping a bevy of local skaters into national-class athletes, but she benefitted from their influence, both directly and indirectly. Several of Amanda's longtime coaches — especially her father Ernie and Vytas Jasinskaskas — were trained by Overend and Gannett, and they moulded Amanda into the skater she became. This coaching tandem, which coached together for almost two decades, was named Cambridge Sports Contributor several years ago.

Jasinskaskas, who's known Amanda since she was about six years old, believes she could have excelled in long track had she chosen that option, because technically she was a very strong skater and had the desire to win.

"She liked short track," said Jasinskaskas. "She liked the head-to-head competition." The disappointments of short track — sometimes it's akin to a crapshoot with the disqualifications, being taken out by other skaters through not fault of your own, or just having a bad day — skaters aren't in control as much as they are in long track. "But that didn't faze her. She was tough mentally. And, at some level, I think it appealed to her."

Jasinskaskas saw her develop from a young skater into a force to be reckoned with as he watched her literally grow up on skates.

"To be an athlete at that level (Olympic) you've got to have the basic ingredients — you have to have some inherent talent, and she was always a good technical skater, very efficient; and you have to have the desire. You've got to really want to win, to succeed. And that desire makes it easier to do the training, because the training is really tough, both on ice and off ice. And finally, you've got to have the opportunity. You have to be somewhat at the right place at the right time."

Fortunately, she had all three.

The Cambridge club has long been regarded as one of the top clubs in the country, with a long succession of successful skaters. "We've been lucky that way," said Jasinskaskas. And though Amanda may have felt some pressure to excel like her older siblings, she eventually developed that burning internal desire to succeed.

Although, as her father notes, she likely wasn't the most naturally gifted skater of the Overland children as a youngster, it made her work harder to reach the level she finally attained. It never came easily for her. As Ernie said, she had to earn everything she achieved.

"She wasn't as talented as Kevin and Cindy, but she worked her butt off," said Ernie. "I never knew she had that in her until I started training her. She had a great work ethic."

But that was, of course, true for all the Overland children. They were talented and showed their talent from an early age, but each was tenacious in the pursuit of excellence. And, with her older siblings having reached Olympic heights, it gave Amanda a sense of what was possible if she pursued her dreams with everything she had.

On the threshold of making the national short track team, Ernie asked Jasinskaskas if he could make some skates for Amanda. "But he felt bad about asking me to make them, so he said he would help," said Jasinskaskas, who years earlier had begun making short track speed skates. Over the years he probably made about 70 pairs of skates.

But the way Ernie remembers it, Jasinskaskas said he wasn't going to make the skates. "I'm not going to make skates for her, but I'm going to show you how to make them." And with that, Ernie spent many hours with Jasinskaskas crafting Amanda's new skates. It turned out to be the only pair of skates Ernie would ever make, but they helped Amanda earn a spot on the national short track team in 2002. Her brother, famously, once won the Canadians in Ottawa on a broken blade.

By the time Amanda made the national team she had already competed at the Canada Winter Games (1999), finishing second in the relay. The next year she was 11th at the team trials and in 2001, finished fifth at the Junior World Championships in Poland.

Once on Canada's national team, she earned a silver medal in the 3000-metre relay at the World Championships in Sweden, and during the 2003-2004 ISU World Cup competitions she ranked fourth in the relay. Overall she held a rank of 11th, with a 14th-place ranking in the 500 metres, a ninth-place ranking in the 1000 metres, a 16th-place ranking in the 1500 metres, and fourth-place ranking in the relay. Her Canadian team ranked second in the world overall.

Overland finished second overall at the 2004 Canadian Open Championships and placed ninth overall at the Olympic Trials that year.



At the World Short Track Championships in 2004 she and her Canadian teammates finished just out of the medals in fourth-place overall, a position they repeated at season's end during the World Short Track Team Championships.

The next season — 2004-05 — was a breakout year; she finally stepped onto the podium at the World Cup, winning her first individual medals and was named Speed Skating Canada's Short Track Athlete of the Year for 2005.

In 2006 she qualified for the 1000

metres, the 1500 metres and the 3000-metre relay events at the Turin Winter Olympic Games in Italy, winning silver in the relay in a time of 4:17.336.

She also finished fifth in the 1000 metres, though she was disqualified in the 1500 metres.

Following the Olympics she competed in the World Short Track Team Championships, where she won relay gold and was second in the 3000 metres, as well as finishing first in her 1000-metre heat. The results helped her Canadian team win bronze in the overall team standings.

She also won silver in the relay at the World Championships in Minneapolis, where she placed 11th overall.

In 2007 Overland won a bronze medal at the World Championships in the 3000-metre relay in Milan, Italy, but sat out the 2007-08 season after undergoing hip surgery. Not long after recovering and returning to the sport, she learned her mother had been diagnosed with lung cancer.

She never returned to the Olympics — she was controversially cut from the national team the following season — but her achievements speak for themselves. In addition to her World Cup and World Championship performances and medals, which included gold, silver and bronze, she skated personal records in various arenas around the world.

Her 500-metre PB came on October 18, 2003, when she skated 44.794 seconds at Calgary, while her best time in the 1000 metres was 1:30.823 at Bormio in 2005. She also skated a PB in the 1500 metres of 2:21.886 at Budapest in February of 2005.

Overland, like her older siblings, was several times a Cambridge Tim Turow athlete-of-the-year finalist (2001, 2002, 2003 and 2005) before winning the award in 2006.

In 2016 she was inducted into the Waterloo Regional Hall of Fame.

Today the Olympic medalist is the mother of two and lives in Waterloo.

Inducted 2018