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Ottawa Sportspage

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TO A GREATER GOAL?



P. 7

The likes of Kadeisha Buchanan may not be back on an Ottawa pitch for a long time without an elite women's team in town.

SECRET SWORD SOCIETY



P. 2

From their hidden room inside the RA Centre, a number of fencers will emerge into the bright lights of the Pan Am Games.

CANOE-KAYAK COMPADRES



P. 11

A number of them are reaching the elite levels, but the sport's camaraderie remains a treasured feature for local paddlers.

PAN AM PRIMETIME



Decathlete Patrick Arbour is one of 30+ Ottawa athletes set to compete in the July 10-26 Pan American Games in Toronto.

PHOTO: STEVE KINGSMAN

Hurdler Kaba & decathlete Arbour join Lions group of 6 national team athletes for Toronto Games

By Anil Jhalli

They didn't make the grade for last year's Commonwealth Games, but Sekou Kaba and Patrick Arbour picked a fine time to join four fellow Ottawa Lions Track-and-Club members on the national team for the Toronto 2015 Pan American Games.

"This is such a big deal," smiles Kaba, 24. "To represent your country at such a level, it means so much."

The Guinea-born 110-metre hurdler first competed for Canada at the 2013 Francophone Games shortly after receiving his Canadian citizenship, winning gold over a former world champion.

Kaba was on the rise when he set a new Canadian university record in the 60 m hurdlers as a uOttawa Gee-Gee, but couldn't keep the momentum going in his 2014 outdoor season, missing the chance to compete at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games.

While Kaba says that competing at the Commonwealth Games would have been a tremendous opportunity, he translated the disappointment into motivation to be at his best in advance of the Pan Am Games.

LIVE FROM T.O.!

The *Ottawa Sportspage* will be in Toronto to provide exclusive coverage of Ottawa athletes competing at the Pan Am Games. Check SportsOttawa.com for up-to-date local medal alerts, and look out for a special August *Sportspage* recapping all the action.

The Sir Robert Borden High School grad kicked off his 2015 season by posting his fastest time ever – twice running 13.61 at April events in Florida. He later improved that mark at the July 2-5 Canadian Track-and-Field Championships in Edmonton with a 13.43 effort that also qualified him for the Aug. 22-30 IAAF World Athletics Championships in Beijing.

The performances served "as a confirmation that I can be the best and that I am very well prepared for this," highlights Kaba, the 3rd-place finisher nationally behind Arbour's chief Canadian competition, 2013 decathlon world bronze medallist Damian Warner, who set a new national championships record of 13.27 in the race.

"I won't be satisfied to go to the Pan Am Games and just try to score a personal best," Kaba adds. "You are there to win. You are there to be at the top."

DECATHLETE HITS #1 CAREER GOAL

Arbour says he also would have liked to compete at last summer's Commonwealth Games, but his objective for the last few years has always been set in stone.

"Competing at the Pan Am Games, that's what I have been working towards and now I am getting that chance," underlines the 27 year-old former 'AAA' hockey player. "I am looking forward to this chance. It's exciting and it's an honour to represent your country, especially in your home country."

Arbour qualified for the Pan Am Games based on his best overall score from 2014 (7,385 points). The University of Ottawa grad from Stittsville was recently crowned Canadian champion at the June 19-21 Capital Cup, part of the IAAF combined events series.

Despite posting less than stellar numbers by his standard at his home Terry Fox Athletic Facility (he managed an overall score of 7,147 points), Arbour did establish a new personal-best time in the 400 m.

The throws specialist says of course he would love to come away with a medal at the Pan Am Games, but if he is able to achieve a personal best, he will be happy with the result.

"I've worked hard to get to this point, and if I go out here, and do my best, I will be happy," indicates Arbour, whose personal-best total of 7,593 came in 2013. "If I don't feel like I did well, then I'll know I just have to keep working harder."

PAN AM TRACK continues on p.4



OTTAWA AT THE PAN AM GAMES

Local fencing hub propels big crew to Pan Ams

By Brendan Shaughnessy



Ottawa is of course recognized as the country's political capital, but the city is quietly assuming the title of sword-swinging capital of Canada, with a strong contingent of locally-trained fencers set to attack Toronto and the 2015 Pan American Games.

Ottawa native Kelleigh Ryan leads the medal-favourite Canadian women's foil contingent into the Games, while Calgary's Alanna Goldie and Hamilton's Eleanor Harvey have spent time in town training under national team coach Paul ApSimon at the RA Centre.

Modern pentathletes Garnett Stevens and Melanie McCann were drawn into town by the presence of Pentathlon Canada head coach John Hawes, while ApSimon's fencing expertise has proven to be a major bonus for the first of the five events they contest in a single day.

Five years ago, McCann left her southwestern Ontario hometown of Mount Carmel to set up shop in Ottawa. Looking back, the London 2012 Olympian calls it "the best decision ever."

The fencing event has become McCann's bread-and-butter. The 25-year-old parlayed a 2nd-place showing in the discipline into a top-10 overall performance at the June 8-14 World Cup Final in Belarus.

ApSimon says there is no mystery to McCann's upswing.

"Modern pentathlon is about experience," explains the Henry Munro Middle School phys ed teacher. "I feel that in the next year, we'll see her on the podium at a World Cup. She'll be ready."

McCann is already familiar with the Pan Am Games. At the 2011 Pan Ams in Mexico, she finished 4th and clinched a spot in the following year's Olympics. The stakes will be the same in Toronto (the top-5 win Rio 2016 Olympic berths), but the event itself will mean more.

"It's a big deal for me because it's probably the only time I'll get to compete on home soil at a major Games," McCann underlines. "I had a big group of people come and watch me in London when I competed at my first Olympics, and I really fed off their energy."

It's all a new experience for Stevens – a junior-age eligible athlete who picked a fine time to qualify for his first national team. The 21-year-old doesn't think he'll even hit his peak for another five years – just in time for the Tokyo Olympics.

"I'm just going to Toronto with the approach of having fun," indicates Stevens. "But I'm confident, I'm feeling good."

FENCERS TARGET U.S. FOES

Meanwhile, Canada's female foil fencers are hoping to translate home-piste advantage into an upset win over USA in the team competition. They've finished 2nd to the U.S. in every Pan Am tournament for the last seven years running.

"It makes a big difference to have that support there," signals Goldie, who was in Ottawa for a week of training in June.

The Ohio State Buckeyes fencer enjoyed the presence of a home crowd at the past two NCAA Championships, where she's won a bronze medal in back-to-back years (Lee Kiefer, the star of U.S. women's foil and ranked #3 in the world, has won the event three years running).

This year, Goldie took a huge step forward by beating 2012 Olympic champion Elisa Di Francisca at a World Cup event. Perhaps more importantly, she has gotten achingly close to beating Kiefer, losing a bout 15-13 last year.

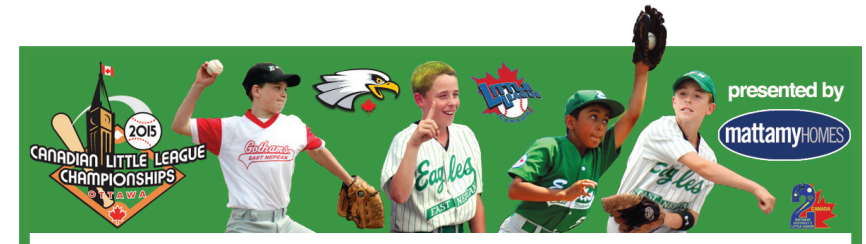
With three of the top-20 foil fencers in the world, Team USA are the heavy gold medal favourites.

Glebe Collegiate Institute grad Ryan, now based in New York, is the top-ranked Canadian at #28. The last time the teams met, the Americans collectively trounced Canada 41-30.

"On paper, there's no way we should even be coming close to the Americans," ApSimon echoes. "However, on any given day, each Canadian fencer can beat each American fencer. We have to have a perfect match in order to beat them."

The Scarborough venue is sold out for the preliminary and medal rounds of the women's team foil competition on the second-to-last day of the Games on July 25, which could provide the boost the Canadians need, ApSimon maintains.

"The refereeing in foil is very subtle, so assuming the crowd makes a lot of noise, those subtleties will pay off in a one or two-hit bout," he explains. "The crowd could very well be the difference."



Canadian Little League Championships

Excitement builds with events surrounding Little League nationals

mattamyHOMES presents

CANADIAN LITTLE LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIPS 2015 OTTAWA

Just a few short weeks away from the opening pitch, the 2015 Canadian Little League Championships are already starting to take form. The Aug. 5-16 tournament is set to bring hundreds to the games, along with some of the events that come with it. All of the games are free to watch.

One of the biggest attractions is the opening ceremony, taking place Friday, August 7th, at 4:40pm. The festivities will take place at the East Nepean Little League's main diamond the Eagles' Nest, Ken Ross Park, formerly known as South Nepean Park.

On August 6th, there will be a Cultural Day at Parliament Hill, involving the Changing of the Guard, a tour and a barbeque. August 9th will be a pancake breakfast and a Skills Competition. The Challenger Game will be held on August 15th.

Another major attraction will be the Champions Banquet taking place on August 13th. The dinner will take place at Algonquin College, and have ex-Toronto Blue Jay Robbie Alomar as a guest speaker. Tickets are on sale on the tournament website.

Also, the schedule has been released for the tournament. The first match will take place Friday, August 7th between the teams from Quebec and British Columbia. The seven-day round robin will see every team play each other, for a total of six games each. Therefore, each team will get a one-day rest during the round robin.

The East Nepean Eagles will slot in in the final slot each day, except the Tuesday (Day 5). There are three games each day. Day 1 starts off with 11:00 AM, 2:00 PM and 6:00 PM. Days 2-6 are all the same, 12:00 PM, 3:00 PM and 6:00 PM. The final day of the round robin is an early start, 9:00 AM, 12:00 PM and 3:00 PM. Day 8 of the tournament will be a rest day, or a tie-break/rain-day if necessary.

The top four teams of the round robin will move on to the playoffs, Saturday the 15th (Day 9). 3rd place and 2nd place will start the day, facing off at 12:30 PM, followed by 1st and 4th fighting it out at 3:30 PM. The winner of these games will play Sunday at 1:00PM for the gold medal, National supremacy and a chance to go up against the World's best at the World Series.



HOST EAGLES SELECT ROSTER

One of the newest announcements coming from the tournament is the roster of host club East Nepean. Alex Hum, Riley Maude, Adam Saleh, Matteo Disipio, Jake Calder, Michael Stremlaw, Evan Stucker, Nicholas Pileggi, Tristan Godmaire, Ben Adams, Jayden Oliver, Ben Anderson, and Andre Bess will represent the club at the National level in a month.

The city is getting ready for this memorable event, as it hosts the tournament for the first time ever for East Nepean's 60th anniversary.

For more information, please check the tournament website at: ***2015.littleleaguechampionships.ca***





OTTAWA AT THE PAN AM GAMES



PHOTO PROVIDED

The Pan Am Games torch visited Ottawa on June 30 and Canada Day. Local torchbearers on the flame's relay to Toronto and July 10's Opening Ceremonies included Ottawa Lions hurdler Karelle Edwards (lighting the community cauldron above), national team volleyball player Nicholas Hoag, Olympic speed skater Vincent De Haitre, 2007 Pan Am Games rowing bronze medallist Paul Amesbury and retired Paralympic sledge hockey gold medallist Hervé Lord.

ANDREW D'SOUZA



SPORT: BADMINTON
EVENT: MEN'S SINGLES
AGE: 21
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: RA CENTRE

ALEXANDRA BRUCE



SPORT: BADMINTON
EVENT: WOMEN'S & MIXED DOUBLES
AGE: 25
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: RA CENTRE

JENNA FLANNIGAN



SPORT: WOMEN'S BASEBALL
AGE: 23
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: KANATA PIRATES & GEE-GEES SOFTBALL

JESSICA GAUDREAULT



SPORT: WOMEN'S WATER POLO
AGE: 20
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: CAPITAL WAVE WATER POLO CLUB

DUSAN ALEKSIC



SPORT: MEN'S WATER POLO
AGE: 24
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: OTTAWA TITANS WATER POLO CLUB

JOHN CONWAY



SPORT: MEN'S WATER POLO
AGE: 23
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: OTTAWA TITANS WATER POLO CLUB

MELISSA ARMSTRONG



SPORT: WOMEN'S BASEBALL
AGE: 24
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: CARLETON UNIVERSITY STUDENT

JASMINE LANDRY



SPORT: KARATE
EVENT: WOMEN'S -68 KG
AGE: 22

ROSIE DEBOEF



SPORT: ROWING
EVENT: WOMEN'S PAIR
AGE: 27
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: OTTAWA ROWING CLUB

EUGENE ZHEN WANG



SPORT: TABLE TENNIS
EVENT: MEN'S SINGLES & TEAM
AGE: 29
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: NATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE

ALEC TASCHEREAU



SPORT: MEN'S WATER POLO
AGE: 22
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: OTTAWA TITANS WATER POLO CLUB

CAM SMEDLEY



SPORT: CANOE SLALOM
EVENT: C-1 & C-2 MEN
AGE: 24
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: OTTAWA RIVER RUNNERS

MELANIE McCANN



SPORT: WOMEN'S MODERN PENTATHLON
AGE: 25
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: ROC SWIM CLUB, OTTAWA FENCING, WESTOCK FARMS

NATASHA WATCHAM-ROY



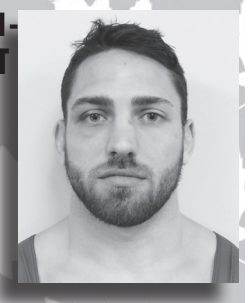
SPORT: WOMEN'S RUGBY SEVENS
AGE: 23
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: uOTTAWA GEE-GEES

GABRIELA DABROWSKI



SPORT: TENNIS
EVENT: SINGLES, WOMEN'S & MIXED DOUBLES
AGE: 23
LOCAL CLUB: OTTAWA ATHLETIC CLUB

ALEX BROWN-THERIAULT



SPORT: WRESTLING
EVENT: GRECO-ROMAN -85 KG
AGE: 28
CLUB: NATIONAL CAPITAL WRESTLING CLUB

KELLEIGH RYAN



SPORT: FENCING
EVENT: WOMEN'S FOIL & TEAM
AGE: 28
CLUBS: OTTAWA FENCING, CARLETON RAVENS

GARNETT STEVENS



SPORT: MEN'S MODERN PENTATHLON
AGE: 21
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA, OTTAWA FENCING, INTERNATIONAL EQUESTRIAN CENTRE (WENDOVER)

JEN YEE



SPORT: WOMEN'S SOFTBALL
AGE: 28
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: COMBAT SPORTS GROUP

JOANNA BROWN



SPORT: TRIATHLON
AGE: 22
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: BYTOWN STORM

SAMANTHA CORNETT



SPORT: SQUASH
EVENT: WOMEN'S SINGLES & TEAM
AGE: 24
LOCAL CLUB: GOODLIFE QUEENSVIEW

LUCINDA NOWELL



SPORT: RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS
EVENT: GROUP
AGE: 18
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: KANATA RG CLUB

KATE GOODFELLOW



SPORT: ROWING
EVENT: WOMEN'S QUAD
AGE: 25
CLUBS: OTTAWA ROWING CLUB, GEE-GEES

ERIKA SELTENREICH-HODGSON



SPORT: SWIMMING
EVENT: WOMEN'S 200M & 400M IM
AGE: 20
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: NKB & GO KINGFISH

ADAM SIMAC



SPORT: MEN'S VOLLEYBALL
AGE: 31
LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: SIR WILFRID LAURIER SS LANCERS

Carleton Ravens grads Aaron Doornekamp & Thomas Scrubb were named as 2 of the 16 candidates for the 12 Canadian men's basketball team Pan Am Games positions. Ravens coach Dave Smart is one of several local coaches serving national team coaching roles, along with Andre Lachance (baseball), Paul ApSimon (fencing), Glenroy Gilbert (athletics), Michal Staniszewski (canoe slalom) and John Hawes (modern pentathlon).

PAN AM TRACK: Commonwealth crew returns to Games seeking more medals

continued from Cover

The other four Lions Pan Am participants were all 2014 Commonwealth Games competitors. The Lions throwers offer the top prospects for medal wins in Toronto.

Sultana Frizell casually broke the 70 m barrier for the fifth time this season to win the fifth Canadian title of her career in Edmonton.

Frizell is currently ranked highest out of athletes in the Americas (6th in the world), but the Commonwealth Games record holder will face tougher competition from U.S. and Cuban athletes than she did in defending her Commonwealth gold last summer in Glasgow.

Tim Nedow, a Brockville native who trained with the Lions in his teenage years and has now re-associated with the club while training primarily out of Sweden, was also a Commonwealth Games medallist last summer, winning shotput bronze. The 24-year-old will compete in both shotput and discus in Toronto, with a number of U.S. athletes ranked ahead of his respective 17th and 82nd world standings.

Women's 800 m national silver medallist Melissa Bishop enters the Pan Ams with a season-best World Championships-qualifying time of 2:00.67 in her back pocket, while men's 4x400 m relay competition Michael Robertson (5th in men's 400 at nationals) is still chasing his worlds standard.

The track-and-field portion of the July 10-26 Pan Am Games runs from July 21-25 at York University.

LOCAL JR. & PARA ATHLETES COLLECT MEDALS

Competing in the junior nationals alongside the seniors in Edmonton, several Ottawa athletes claimed medals, including Lions Claire Smith (the women's 3,000 m champion in 9:49.87), Matthew Bedard (men's 400 m hurdles winner in 52.74), women's 800 m silver medallist Erinn Stenman-Fahey, and men's high jump champion Steve Nkusi, who bested Hans Lafleur of C.A.N.I. Athletics by one height with a personal-best leap of 2.06 m. Shermar Paul scored a second silver for C.A.N.I. with his men's 200 m performance of 21.63.

The selection picture for the Toronto 2015 Parapan Am Games became muddied when Athletics Canada learned shortly before the nationals that their team would be limited to 35 entries instead of the 60 they originally expected.

The top local performers were Lions Jason Dunkerley (who ran 16:20.85 in the 5,000 m) and Stuart McGregor (4:20.30 in the 1,500 m and 53.75 in the 400 m) – both national champions in their respective T11 and T13 categories for athletes with visual impairments.

OTTAWA LIONS TRACK-AND-FIELD CLUB PAN AM GAMES ATHLETES



MELISSA BISHOP
EVENT: WOMEN'S 800M
AGE: 26



SULTANA FRIZELL
EVENT: WOMEN'S HAMMER THROW
AGE: 30



PATRICK ARBOUR
EVENT: MEN'S DECATHLON
AGE: 27



SEKOU KABA
EVENT: MEN'S 110M HURDLES
AGE: 24



MICHAEL ROBERTSON
EVENT: MEN'S 4X400M RELAY
AGE: 26



TIM NEDOW
EVENT: MEN'S DISCUS & SHOTPUT
AGE: 24



OTTAWA AT THE PAN AM GAMES

Medal contender tried rowing 'on a whim'

By Mat LaBranche



FILE PHOTO

It'll be the first time Canada's senior national team will race on home water in a major international competition since the 1999 World Rowing Championships, and Kate Goodfellow will be there with her seat in a Canadian boat come the Toronto 2015 Pan Am Games.

"It's absolutely huge," says the 25-year-old Ottawa Rowing Club product. "We're used to competing overseas, so it's a pretty special opportunity to have such a huge Canadian contingent in the crowd. Seeing how it's been so long (since Canada hosted), it's not something that most rowers will get to experience in their lifetime."

Along with the U.S., Canada will be a strong medal favourite in the women's quadruple sculls competition. The July 11-15 Pan Am rowing competition will be the international season debut for Goodfellow's team.

Preparations are largely the same as usual, with a little added emphasis on mental training, Goodfellow indicates.

"There's a lot more to prepare for in terms of it being a home setting," explains the Ottawa Sports Awards 2011 female athlete of the year. "We have to prepare ourselves for the distractions and just the pressure that comes along with it, as well as the atmosphere, because it's the first time any of us have competed internationally at home."

After stints on the under-23 and Canadian development teams, Goodfellow moved to London, Ont. to join the women's national team program at its home base full-time. Training in the shadow of the Games hub, the Perth native has felt the hype building.

"Our quad team went to one of the elementary schools for the last week of classes, and they were having a Pan Am sports day," Goodfellow details. "We hung out for a bit and played some sports with them, which is always a fun thing to do."

Having Team Canada athletes also might inspire students to pick up an oar themselves, she adds.

That type of spur-of-the-moment thinking is how Goodfellow became involved in the sport herself. One day, she picked up a flyer for introductory Gee-Gees rowing while studying at the University of Ottawa.

"It was just something on a whim that some friends and I decided to try out, which we thought would be a fun and beneficial extracurricular activity to do at university," recounts the 2013 World Rowing Championships silver medallist. "I was just drawn to the hard work it required and the very direct reward you can see. But I never once envisioned that I would be on a stage at this level."

WORLDS OLYMPIC QUALIFIER

The Pan Am Games will undoubtedly be a career highlight, however they aren't the biggest competition of the season. With 2016 Olympic qualification on the line, the Aug. 30-Sept. 6 World Championships in France will be of greatest importance.

Last year's 6th-place finishers in rough waters will look to jump at least one place higher to earn one of the Olympic berths available to the top-5 women's quad boats at worlds.

"Obviously that's the end focus for the summer, so Pan Am is kind of a step in that direction," Goodfellow highlights. "Making sure that we're doing all the little things right between now and then is very important. Any good racing we can get in is crucial."

Although a significant portion of the women on the national team are linked to the Ottawa Rowing Club, Goodfellow and women's pair competitor Rosie DeBoef of Victoria, B.C. will be the lone ORC representatives at the Pan Am Games.

The women's eight – generally regarded as the signature event in rowing – is oddly not part of the Pan Am Games programme, so Ottawa native Sarah Black, uOttawa grad Cristy Nurse and ORC-associated Jennifer Martins and Christine Roper will instead be in Switzerland for a World Cup race.

The Canadian women's eight made their first World Cup appearance of the season June 19-21 in Italy, earning a silver medal. Canada finished around 2 seconds back of the U.S. and 3 seconds ahead of Great Britain.

"I think we are pleased to be on the podium in this year's first international race, but not satisfied," Nurse said in a Rowing Canada media release. "We won't be content until we have that top spot, but the women's eight field continues to deepen and I'm proud of my teammates for demonstrating that we remain a force in this event."

2 local players earn trip to Morocco for Canada

By Dan Plouffe



They got to watch Canadian players compete on home soil for the FIFA Women's World Cup, and now a pair of young local soccer stars will get the chance to wear Canadian colours abroad this fall in Morocco.

Luka Vujicic and Keera Melenhorst helped Canada East to a 4-0 win in the east vs west national final on June 27 at Percival Molson Stadium in Montreal to qualify for the Danone Nations Cup, a World Cup-style competition for 10- to 12-year-olds featuring 32 countries.

"It was exciting," recounts Melenhorst, a midfielder for the West Ottawa Warriors. "I was so proud and happy. There was a lot riding on the game."

With a free Danone-sponsored trip to Morocco on the line, Vujicic was feeling the pressure of being his team's last line of defence.

"I knew I'd be nervous before the game because it was the biggest game of my whole life," underlines the Ottawa South United Force goalkeeper who made 3-4 big saves to produce a clean sheet in the high-stakes contest. "I was really happy, knowing that my country will be behind my team, and getting to represent Canada in Morocco."

Vujicic and Melenhorst are "underage" players in the Ontario Player Development League – both born in 2003 competing mainly against 2002-born athletes in the under-13 age group.

The local pair were selected from an estimated 5,000 players who participated in initial tryouts across Canada.

Melenhorst recalls feeling "stressed" at the selections "because there were a lot of people there, and they only picked one girl from all of Ontario."

Along with Naomy Flores-Cassista from Montreal area, Melenhorst is one of only two girls expected to compete in the international Danone finals.

"It's pretty cool," smiles the Christine Sinclair fan who attended FIFA games in Ottawa and Montreal. "Canada is the only team that takes girls. All the other countries don't."

Melenhorst enjoys the challenge of matching up against the boys.

"You have to play quicker with the boys because they're faster and more aggressive," explains the past Ottawa Fury and Nepean Hotspurs player.

The Canadian Danone players will reassemble for a camp in Montreal in advance of their Oct. 21 departure for Morocco. For Vujicic, that will be a short trip. In August, he'll join the youth academy of the Montreal Impact Major League Soccer team.

"I was really happy that I got selected for Impact," highlights Vujicic, who was an Ottawa Royals Futuro player before joining OSU's OPDL side.

Vujicic will stay with his uncle some of the time in Montreal, while his parents alternate weeks between Ottawa and the apartment they'll rent in Montreal. Vujicic is undaunted by all the sudden change.

"I can go to a new school and a new team and start over," he enthuses, noting that the big move is all about achieving future goals. "I would like to play in Europe some day."



Nepean Hotspurs Hotstove

Tournament gold boosts bonding for Hotspurs Friendship champs

For coach Phil Teske and his Nepean Hotspurs Fusion team, the focus for the 21st-annual Nepean Friendship Tournament was, appropriately, all about teamwork and team building.

His group wound up coming away from the June 13-14 event at Ben Franklin Park with not only that objective reached, but a gold medal from the U15/16 girls' competition as well – one of two golds and four medals overall won by the host club's five tournament entries.

"This is a new team for me, so it's a real bonding tournament," Teske signals. "You get to play short games, but four of them. You really start to gel together and play as a team."

The early-season event does wonders for the players, adds Tekse, whose squad downed the Glengarry Hearts in their division final.

"It's about becoming closer as a team and working together, but it's always nice to win a tournament too, that helps the bonding," he smiles. "They got to know each other. Instead of just practice, practice, practice, they got to depend on one another. They knew that they had each other's backs in the game. It was nice to see."



The Nepean Hotspurs placed 2 teams on the podium in the U15/16 girls' competition at their home tournament, with the Winston Bonnick-coached team (seen in action above) taking bronze and the Fusion squad coached by Phil Teske (below) winning gold.

HOTSPURS SHOW WELL AS HOSTS

Featuring six divisions in total, the tournament drew 16 boys' and 14 girls' district and regional-level competitive teams, including around a third from outside the Eastern Ontario District Soccer Association from as far as North Bay and Toronto.

The Hotspurs' medals came from the Hotspurs U16 boys (gold), the U13 Hotspurs Heat girls (silver) and a second medallist in the U15/16 category from the Winston Bonnick-coached U16 girls (bronze).

Other division champions included St. Anthony (U14 boys, Tier 1), Smiths Falls (U14 boys, Tier 2), Kingston (U13 girls) and St. Lawrence (U14 girls).

"It was a great tournament," underlines Teske, whose team will be sure to return next year "not just because it's our club putting it on, but because everyone enjoyed it.

"It was well organized and all the teams that entered were well disciplined. It was a really good weekend."



Page produces provincial rhythmic triple crown

By Anil Jhalli

The three-peat is complete for Cleo Page of the Ottawa Rhythmic Gymnastics Club. The 16-year-old captured her third consecutive all-around title at the June 13-14 provincial championships in Burlington, this time topping the Level 6B category, with gold medal wins for her ball and hoop routines and bronze for clubs.

"It felt really great to be rewarded for all the effort put forth this year," Page smiles. "The one routine you do at competition is not always perfect. I had some little mistakes here and there, but overall, all three of my routines were as good as they were in training, and that's the most you could ask for."

Despite her streak of golden success, Page says she still gets nervous before competing. A less than stellar event by her standards at the provincials qualifier in May, where she placed 4th, provided motivation to take her championships performance to the next level.



"I really wanted to do my best since I had really good routines and put a lot of work into them," indicates the Nepean High School student who's headed into Grade 11.

An ORGC member since age 8, Page says her coach, Xinhong Jin, is a big reason why she's been able to win the three titles in a row.

"She has taught me how to combine grace, athleticism, strength speed and dance into something beautiful and challenging," Page notes.

"We are very proud of Cleo," signals Jin. "She is very strong mentally and had a very clean performance and got better and better as the day went on. She fought very hard."

A number of athletes contributed to a big medal haul for ORGC, highlighted by Page's win as well as a podium sweep by Vlada Coveny, Nina Samson and Raya Boicey in the Level 2A all-around competition.

ORGC's Selena Pang (bronze, L2B), Meara Donovan (L6A) and Veronika Cencen (L6C) also landed on the all-around podium, as did Haley Miller (silver, L4C) and Sarah Manyoki (bronze, L6B) from the Kanata Rhythmic Gymnastics Club.

FINLAND-BOUND FOR GYMNAESTRADA

While the provincials represented the end of the season for most local rhythmic gymnasts, Miller and Manyoki still had a big trip ahead.

A weekend after provincials at their club's open house event, the Kanata pair had their final warm-up performance alongside two-dozen teammates set to take part in the July 10-18 World Gymnaestrada in Helsinki – a non-competitive celebration of all forms of gymnastics featuring 20,000+ participants.

"Gymnaestrada highlights the fact that gymnastics and movement is for all ages," underlines Kanata team leader Paula Preston, whose cowgirl-themed gymnaestrada group's youngest member is 12 and also has a club coach in her early 30s. "Everyone is really excited."

Also bound for Finland, Barrhaven's Pirouette Rhythmic Gymnastics Club's entry also counts a 12-year-old as its youngest, ranging up to 23. Pirouette's 11-member contingent is joining forces with another small artistic gymnastics group from Kamloops, B.C. to make a 15-minute routine.

It's been a long journey for the Gymnaestrada gangs, with preparations dating back long before last summer's Canadian Gymnaestrada.

"The girls are nearing the end of their two year wait," Pirouette notes in a club news item. "They are very excited to be off to meet gymnasts from other countries, as well as visit Finland and perform their routines."

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Pro academies luring local soccer talent away young

By Dan Plouffe

They're regarded by many as the strongest collection of players from a single age group Ottawa has ever seen, and at age 14 and 15, this is likely the final season many of the talented bunch of boys will be performing on local soccer pitches.

"It's a strong age group across the city," highlights Paul Harris, the club head coach for Ottawa South United – one of three local teams that have earned their way into the Ontario Youth Soccer League under-15 boys' division along with FC Capital United and the Gloucester Hornets. "Having three Ottawa teams in OYSL certainly says that."

In a significant shift from historical norms, the June 24 matchup between 1st-place Gloucester and 2nd-place OSU represented the season's signature match in the province's high-performance loop.

"It's great to see Ottawa being successful," Harris adds. "If it's not us, I hope that they win it."

Playing in front of a large local soccer gathering, the 10-1 Hornets gained a major upper hand in the race by earning a hard-fought 3-2 triumph over the defending league champions, who are now 5-3-1.

"The parents, everyone's here, it's a big crowd, it's intense, there's the rivalry, everyone's going hard in it – it's quite the battle," describes Gloucester star Jonathan David, whose team had never before beaten OSU. "It's the first time, so that's why we're so happy."

After handily winning the OYSL scoring title last year, David is averaging nearly two goals per game this season with 21 in 11 contests.

The dazzling stats are part of the reason why David and a large number of his teammates and top players from each of the local OYSL sides may no longer be playing in town come this time next year. They've drawn attention from the Montreal Impact, Vancouver Whitecaps or Toronto FC – Canada's three Major League Soccer clubs who have all-expenses-paid positions to offer in their youth professional development academies.

David and the other hot prospects – all not yet old enough to drive even – are facing a big decision in the near future: do they want to move away to pursue their sport at the next level?

"For now, I don't think I'm going to go, but I'm thinking of maybe going to visit and see how it is, and maybe next year, I'll go," indicates David, who talked to all three Canadian MLS teams while at a Canadian U15 national team camp in May.

There are a lot of factors that go into the decision, David outlines, such as leaving home and staying with a billet family, seeing what the soccer environment is like and which school he'd attend, getting to now the coaching style and the staff involved with the club.

"Everything really," underlines the Louis-Riel high school student who recently finished his Grade 9 year. "You're basically starting a new life."

One of the most hotly pursued OSU players, David Chung realizes he'll likely have to choose his future path shortly too.

"If I do it, I'd probably do it soon – this year or next year. The sooner you go, the better chance you have to develop," notes Chung, who's auditioned for Vancouver, talked to Montreal and has a trial coming up with TFC. "It's a tough choice to leave all your friends and family. But if you love the sport enough, you can do it."


The 10-1 Gloucester U15 boys have built a commanding lead over 2nd-place OSU.

PHOTO: DAN PLOUFFE

While the prospect of a future pro contract or athletic scholarship is an attractive proposition, academy life is also an exceptionally demanding commitment that requires many sacrifices, cautions FC Capital United club head coach Raz El-Asmar.

"It's not for everybody obviously," he says. "It requires a lot of discipline. You've got to have that desire and drive. It takes special character to overcome some of those obstacles.

"You do school and soccer, then school and soccer, and then more school and soccer. There's not much time to hang out with friends, like most kids their age, for example.

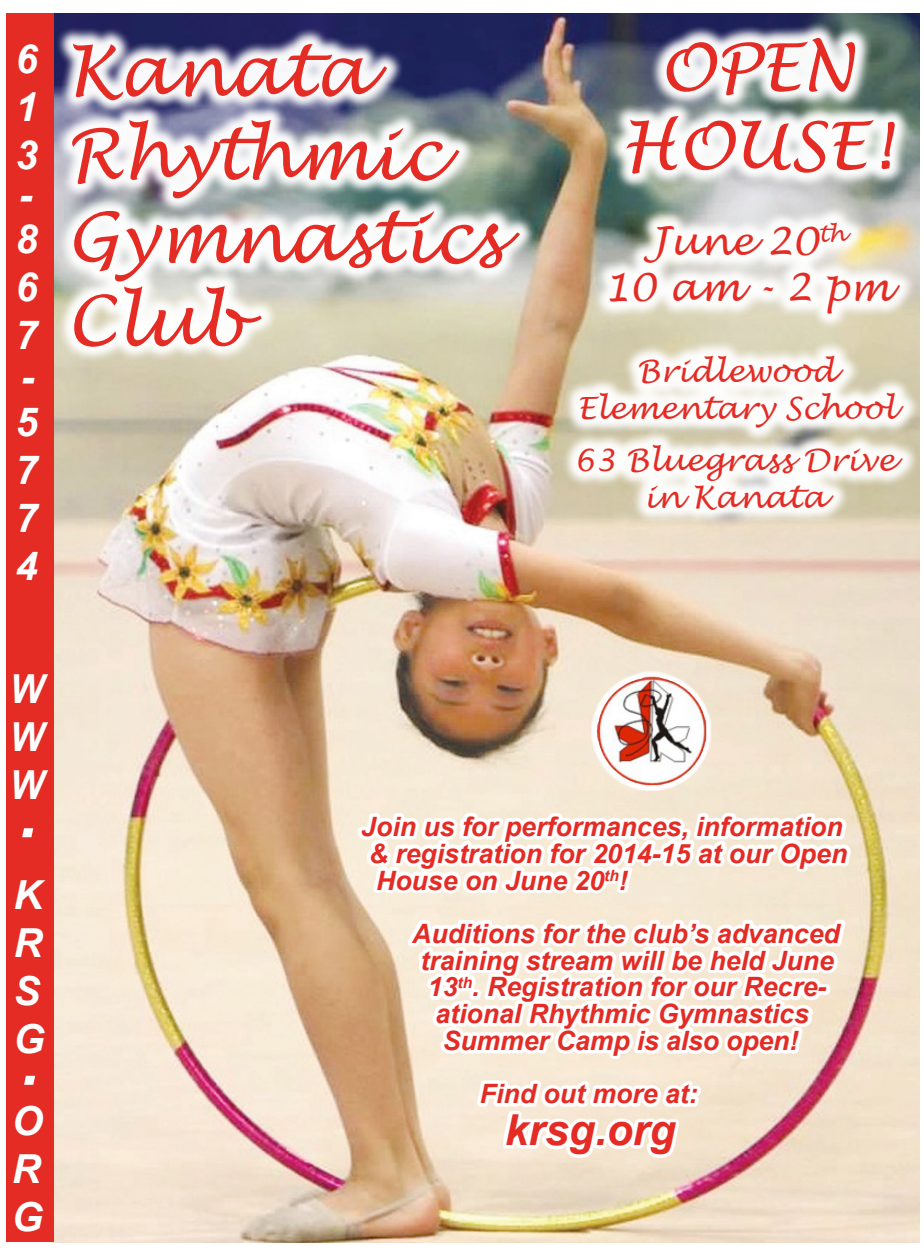
"Many go, and not many stay."

Each individual must determine which scenario is best for them, Hornets U15 boys' coach Hanny El-Magraby signals.

"My advice to these players is always to look at what your end goal is, and what you want to do in the future," he details. "If soccer is serious to you, then you have to make decisions that reflect that. Sometimes that means you go to new places with new faces, but you've just got to continue working hard. There are a lot of players here that have that ambition."

Even though their 5-5-6 campaign was just their debut OYSL season, it's no secret to El-Magraby's players that this year may very well be their final chance to chase glory as a group. That reality is providing a little extra fire for the Hornets.

"This is probably the last year all our players are going to be together," David acknowledges. "That's why we want to make it the best this year."





Elite women's team missing in Ottawa

By Dan Plouffe



FIFA Young Player Award winner Kadeisha Buchanan was the most recent of seven 2015 Canadian Women's World Cup team players to suit up for the now-defunct Ottawa Fury W-League team.

The catchphrase of the FIFA Women's World Cup was "To A Greater Goal."

In Ottawa, many voices in the local soccer community say the greater goal our city must achieve is clear: return an elite women's team to the capital.

"We need that for our region," emphasizes Raz El-Asmar, who's coached many of Ottawa's top female players in recent years. "It's unfortunate for a city like ours to not have a W-League team, or League One team now."

Ottawa did have an elite women's franchise up until this year when the Ottawa Fury shut down for business reasons along with three other Ontario-based USL W-League clubs in Kitchener-Waterloo, London and Toronto.

"It was really devastating," recalls fourth-year Carleton University Ravens player Veronica Mazzella. "You build a bond with the club. I was there for two years. It was always a goal to play in the W-League, and to have that opportunity with the Fury – one of the best. To have one of your top teams fold before we were hosting the World Cup here, was really unfortunate."

It wasn't a pleasant decision to fold the team after investing significant energy and money into building one of the league's premiere programs, signals Fury owner John Pugh.

"It was hard," says the Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group partner now leading Ottawa's two-year-old North American Soccer League men's franchise. "It was a very, very tough thing for us to do because, in reality, we were better known – at least in the early years – for our women's team than our men's team, to be honest."



Champions in 2012, the Ottawa Fury W-League team folded just 2 seasons later.

FORMER FURY ALL OVER FIFA

Over the course of their time in Ottawa, the Fury lineup featured a number of players who competed for Canada at the 2015 World Cup – Ashley Lawrence, Diana Matheson, Rhian Wilkinson, Carmelina Moscato, Robyn Gayle, Marie-Eve Nault and tournament young player award winner Kadeisha Buchanan – plus several others for Australia, New Zealand and England.

"We had a long history over 12 seasons," notes Pugh, who took great pride in having provided a piece to the FIFA participants' emergence as world-class talents. "We're very happy about the players we were able to bring to Ottawa, the players we were able to move on to another level, and even local players, like Christina Julien, who has a lot of caps for Canada."

The W-League team's coach, Dom Oliveri, was "surprised" to be told the news that the team was folding.

"The Fury brand has done so much for women's soccer and Canadian women's soccer," states Oliveri, who now works for Seattle Sounders W-League team while keeping Ottawa as his home base. "It's hard to say why it didn't work here in Ottawa, but I think you have to market the game and sell the game for people to turn up.

"I'm not sure why Ottawa fans didn't do that considering we had one of the better teams in North America, and in some cases, the world."

BUSINESS TROUBLES SUNK TEAM

With housing provided and opportunities to work in the club's summer camps, the Fury set the bar high for what an amateur club offered its players, who hailed from all over the U.S. and elsewhere across the globe.

"Our goal always was to bring in talented players as best we could," indicates Pugh, whose club won 10 division titles in 12 years and a league championship in 2012 while usually playing in front of crowds no greater than a few hundred. "What we wanted to do was have our academy players have the opportunity to play on the first team, but also have the opportunity to watch these players train every night on the same field they train on."

WOMEN'S PRO SPORTS TOUGH GO

Oliveri suggests the operation could have potentially been more financially viable if they'd had more local players instead of bringing in players from all over the world.

The Fury coach of 10 years says he's unsure how deeply OSEG explored alternative manners to run the team, but adds "you have to respect the decision. It's their money. At the end of the day, it's coming out of their pocket."

Making women's pro sports viable as a business is not a problem unique to soccer. Aside from a small handful of sports such as golf, tennis and beach volleyball, very few opportunities exist for women to make a living in sport.

A somewhat similar story played out locally when the Ottawa Senators Canadian Women's Hockey League team folded in 2010.

"It is difficult," Pugh echoes. "And if I had the answer, you wouldn't be asking the question because we'd have a vibrant women's team here."

Pugh says it was "very, very unfortunate" that the Ontario W-League teams closed up shop just before the World Cup came to town. While FIFA being held in the Fury's stadium could have provided an opportunity to reach new fans for W-League soccer, Pugh says the overall costs to run the team were still too daunting.

"You just have to look at the business aspects of it," he underlines. "We knew that other (Ontario) clubs were not going to be able to continue next year, and this just increases the travel budget of the team. We would be traveling as far as New York, New Jersey, perhaps even as far a Maryland, to get our league games in.

"We're going to focus on supporting our professional NASL team for sure, but are we still strong supporters of the women's game? Yes, we are.

"We continue to have a girls' elite program and try to offer the best development environment we can for local players to take their game to the next level."

TEAM'S DEPARTURE LEAVES BIG GAP

Without an elite women's team in town, an important bridge for local collegiate players to the highest levels in the sport is lost, highlights El-Asmar.

"What's happening right now is a lot of these players may not be fully developed in their game or tactical awareness. They're being dropped or left behind just because there's nothing for them," he explains, noting that some talented players lose interest if they don't have a good standard of competition or coaching.

W-SOCCER continues on p.10



OSU Force Academy Zone

OSU international camps provide 'realistic' chance for aspiring pros

Ottawa South United Soccer Club Head Coach Paul Harris knows that sex sells, but he says it's substance that actually pays, and that's what players who are really serious about advancing in the game should remember when deciding which summer soccer camp to take part in.

"I know Blackburn may not be quite as 'sexy' a name as a Barcelona, but I do know the coaches and the quality they'll be able to provide," underlines Harris, whose club will welcome coaches from the Blackburn Rovers and Wigan Athletic amongst their selection of international camps this summer. "Also, I think it's a realistic opportunity. Both teams are Championship League clubs and they are actually looking for talent."

OSU alum Kris Twardek is a prime example of how a professional career can take root through a Championship (one tier below English Premier) club. The 18-year-old OSU-brewed player moved from Ottawa to Millwall FC's academy, then on to a pro contract with the London club's developmental side, to now travelling with the first team.

OSU's 2000-born boys also reaped the rewards of time training with top English clubs. Before winning Eastern Ontario's first-ever Ontario Youth Soccer League and Quebec-Ontario Cup titles in the same year, the team visited a number of academies during a pre-season tour of England.

"They get to see a different culture, a different way of coaching, a different philosophy," Harris outlines. "There's a new wave sweeping across Europe in terms of the way you coach and the way you make your points and the way you interact with your players. If players are going to go into those kind of systems, they'll have to adapt to what the coach wants them to do. It's a chance for them to see that The biggest thing for me though is the opportunity to put themselves in the shop window."

On the weeks of July 20-24 (boys and girls) and July 27-31 (boys), local players will have an opportunity to show off and receive instruction from Blackburn and Wigan coaches, including Nick Chadwick, an accomplished former player at all levels of the English pro game and now a leading Blackburn academy coach.

There will also be a unique opportunity for girls' players at a July 6-10 camp run under the direction of Victoria Jepson, an assistant coach for the world-famous Liverpool F.C. ladies' team. Jepson holds her UEFA 'B' and is a 2015 'A' licence candidate and has international development experience in Qatar, Indonesia and India – and soon Canada.

The fact that leaders like Jepson are now traveling the world is indicative of the rapidly-growing respect and opportunities available for women in soccer, Harris signals.

There is a full-time professional league in England, and several others elsewhere in Europe, including England's fellow FIFA Women's World Cup semi-finalist, Germany.

OSU recently received a first-hand illustration of the evolution when Tinja-Riikka Korpela, a Finnish player who's played professionally in Norway and now for the defending league-champion Bayern Munich women, visited with OSU while in town to watch the FIFA Women's World Cup.

"It was great to have her talk to our girls and make them realize there are these opportunities out there," Harris highlights. "Before, the best you could hope for was a college scholarship, whereas now and in the future, I think there will be those professional options for women."

*Visit **osu.ca** for more information and to register for summer camps.*





COMMUNITY CLUBS

Host club's swimmers keep busy at Ontarios


PHOTO: BRENDAN SHAUGHNESSY

The Nepean-Kanata Barracudas had their best provincials in 10 years, says NKB's coach.

By Brendan Shaughnessy

Beeps, whistles, neon and Lycra: these were the sights and sounds at the Nepean Sportsplex pool from July 2-5, when no less than 68 teams from around the province competed at the 2015 Ontario Long Course Swimming Championships.

The host Nepean-Kanata Barracudas exceeded their expectations, earning 3rd place overall in the club standings behind larger teams from Etobicoke and Markham.

Coach Scott Faithfull considers it "probably our best showing in the past 10 years" and credits his athletes for their ability to swim back-to-back races.

NKB swimmer Chuchu Yang gave a simple explanation of her coach's strategy for this meet.

"Basically, he just throws us in a bunch of events," smiles the 17-year-old.

"That's what our practices are focused on," adds Mackenzie Houston, one of many swimmers who wore the electric green shirts of the Barracudas. "Having the endurance to keep going."

The training clearly worked for 13-year-old Mia Zahab. On Sunday evening, she earned her 10th gold medal in four days by winning the 400-metre freestyle event in her age group.

Right after receiving the medal from her coach, Zahab got back to business: she stuffed the medal in her backpack, pulled out her goggles, and got ready for the 400-metre medley relay. NKB had to settle for a silver medal in that race behind Etobicoke.

For Faithfull, it's important for younger swimmers like Zahab to make a habit of racing full-out in every event. The way he sees it, there's no excuse. "Our practices are an hour and a half, maybe two hours," highlights the coach at NKB – the club that served as a launching point for Toronto 2015 Pan Am Games competitor Erika Seltenreich-Hodgson, one of Canada's top individual medley swimmers.

"At these meets, you might have two races in the morning, then maybe two more in the afternoon," Faithfull adds. "There's plenty of time to recover."

With the meet over, Zahab and other top swimmers will now rest up for the Canadian Age Group Championships July 29-Aug. 2 in Quebec City.

Nepean leads Ontario East charge to nationals

By Dan Plouffe


The Nepean Nighthawks hosted their annual junior festival June 13-14 at Nepean Sportsplex.

PHOTO: DAN PLOUFFE

They've done their fair share of winning on the turf in recent years, and now the Nepean Nighthawks Field Hockey Club is celebrating a big win off the field.

For the first time, Field Hockey Canada has granted an entry in its Canadian Championships to an Ontario East team, which will compete in the under-16 boys' division at the July 28-Aug. 1 nationals in Brampton.

"We feel very excited about this, not because we're just entering this one tournament, but we've been building up to this," signals Nighthawks club founder Sandeep Chopra. "It's been our plan all along, and in year 6, we're a bit ahead of where we thought we were going to be, but we're thrilled to see this happen."

The Nepean U16 boys' group has shown they're up for the challenge of taking on six other top regions at the nationals, Chopra details, and it also helps that they've got other older athletes who have proven their mettle internationally.

Liam Manning, Braedon Muldoon and Rohan Chopra recently helped the Canadian U21 men's team sweep USA in four consecutive matches during an exhibition series June 24-27 in Surrey, B.C. Manning and Muldoon also helped Canada to its all-time best showing on the international stage by winning silver medal at the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games.

"The national organization has seen how quickly we've been producing athletes for the very top level," Chopra underlines, "so they thought we deserved a shot."

While it's only the U16 boys who will enter nationals as Ontario East this year, Chopra would like to also have regional entries for the other nationals divisions in the future once those groups become as competitive as the U16 boys.

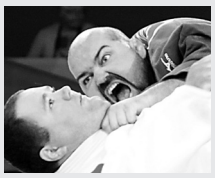
"It's the first time, but it's not going to be the last," Chopra pledges. "Come 2016 or 2017, we're going to do the same for the girls."

OTTAWA SPORTSPAGE SNAPSHOTS

BALLERS HELP CANADA TO AMERICAS SILVER & BEST-EVER WORLDS

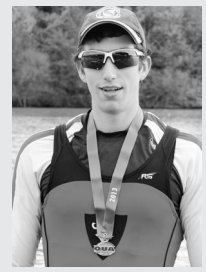


Ottawa's Noah Kirkwood was a silver medallist for the Canadian under-16 men's basketball team at the June 10-14 FIBA Americas Championships in Argentina. Coached by Ottawa's Dave DeAveiro and assisted by James Derouin, the Canadians won games over Venezuela, Mexico, Argentina and Dominican Republic to reach the tournament final and qualify for the 2016 FIBA U17 World Championships before falling to USA 77-60 in the final. Kirkwood led the team in minutes played and was 3rd in scoring at the event. At the FIBA U19 World Championships in Greece, Ottawa native Corey Johnson helped Canada to its all-time best result at the event, a 5th-place finish. Losing only one game in seven matches to Croatia in the quarter-final round, Canada beat Tunisia and Korea, and Italy and Australia twice each, with Johnson averaging over 12 points per game.



JUDOKAS WIN NATIONAL MEDALS & NOMINATION TO PARAPAN TEAM

London 2012 Paralympian Tony Walby, 41, was one of four athletes nominated to the Canadian judo team for the Toronto 2015 Parapan Am Games. The Guadalajara 2011 Parapan bronze medallist from the Takahashi Dojo will compete in the men's 90 kg class for athletes with a visual impairment. Ottawa judokas collected a number of medals at the recent Canadian Championships near Montreal. Zacharie Cheng-Boivin of the Ottawa Judo Club – also the under-18 men's 55 kg runner-up – was the men's 55 kg champion in the U21 category ahead of silver medallist Torin Macfadyen of Takahashi Dojo, who won silver in the senior men's 55 kg event as well. Lycée-Claudel's Florence Grenapin earned a U18 women's 52 kg gold medal to go alongside a U21 52 kg silver, while Takahashi's Adam Macfadyen won bronze in senior men's 60 kg.



FURIOUS TAKEOFF FOR FISU GAMES ATHLETES IN GWANGJU

Local athletes are off to a solid start at the July 3-14 FISU World University Games in Gwangju, South Korea. Ottawa South United Soccer Club alum Katherine Kohler-Grassau and University of Ottawa Gee-Gee Meghan Ramsden helped the Canadian women's soccer team post a pair of 2-0 victories over France and South Africa in the preliminary round. The Canadian men's basketball team featuring Gee-Gees Johnny Berhanemeskel and Caleb Agada began their tournament on the right foot with a 78-61 win over Sweden. Waleed Cassis and Robbie Murphy endured a rougher time in their men's soccer opener, a 5-2 loss to Italy. Rowers Matthew Christie and Matthew Fournier finished 2nd in their men's lightweight double sculls heat and then advanced to the 'A' final by placing 2nd again in the repechage round, while James Potts and the Canadian men's lightweight four missed the 'A' final by one position. Swimmer Eli Wall won the 5th of 8 heats in the men's 100-metre breaststroke competition but in an unusual format did not qualify for the semi-final round based solely on the top-16 times to finish 19th overall. Vicky Savard and Sophie Carpentier endured a heartbreaker in their women's volleyball tournament opener, falling 16-14 in the fifth set to Turkey.



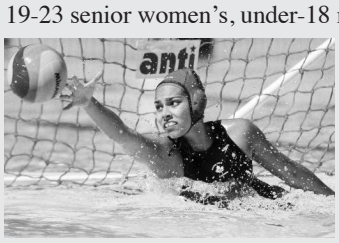
1-PT LOSS AT HOME A KILLER FOR OUTLAWS ULTIMATE

The D.C. Breeze dealt the host Ottawa Outlaws a 26-25 heartbreaker on July 4 at Carleton University to put a dagger in the first-year American Ultimate Disk League franchise's playoff hopes. Following June victories over Rochester and a pair of road wins in Montreal, the 7-5 Outlaws still find themselves behind 9-5 Montreal for the final east division playoff position with only a home-and-home against 1st-place Toronto left on their schedule.



RAVENOUS AMOUNTS OF RUGBY COMING TO TOWN THIS SUMMER

Highlighted by the recently-announced Canadian men's rugby team's appearance for an Aug. 22 exhibition against USA, Ottawa will see a busy summer of elite rugby action as Twin Elm Rugby Park also hosts the National Capital Rugby Festival July 18-19, a B.C. vs Ontario series from July 31-Aug. 3 and the Aug. 19-23 senior women's, under-18 men's and women's, and U16 men's national championships.



WATER POLO GOALIE HELPS CANADA TO 6TH PLACE

National team goalkeeper Jessica Gaudreault of the Capital Wave Water Polo Club backstopped the Canadian women to a shootout win over the Netherlands in the FINA World League Super Final tournament opener June 9-14 in Shanghai. The Canadians had a win and a loss against their future Pan American Games rivals to conclude the pool stage, falling to USA 9-3 and beating Brazil 11-8. They lost 6-5 to China in the quarter-finals, then downed Brazil 8-6 and lost 16-8 to Russia to finish 6th overall. The Pan Am women's water polo competition begins July 7.

Volleyball player injured before national team opportunity

By Brendan Shaughnessy

A concussion kept him from making his Team Canada debut across the river from his hometown, but Stephen Kary's presence on the sidelines at the June 21-28 Pan Am Cup under-21 men's volleyball tournament signals that the Ottawa native should expect brighter days in his burgeoning career.

The 18-year-old had been selected as one of the youngest players on the U21 national team, but has been out with a concussion since May 12.

A blocked spike caught Kary in the head and "just curved the brain a bit," he recounts casually, as if discussing a fender bender. "(The medical staff) are real careful with that – don't want to aggravate it or anything."

Kary's volleyball journey began at Glashan Middle School, a local volleyball breeding power.

"My coaches there – Rick Desclouds in Grade 7, then Murat Erlik in Grade 8 – those two guys really introduced me to the sport and taught me to love the game," details Kary, who now stands 6' 7" tall.

Such was Kary's passion for volleyball that he left Lisgar Collegiate Institute in Grade 12, moving to Brampton to play for the Storm, an elite club team.

"It was alright once I got used to it," indicates the McMaster University-bound middle who hopes to play for the senior national team and professionally afterwards. "It was a great experience as far as growing as a player and as a person."

Local cyclists set stage for home nationals

By Alex Quevillon

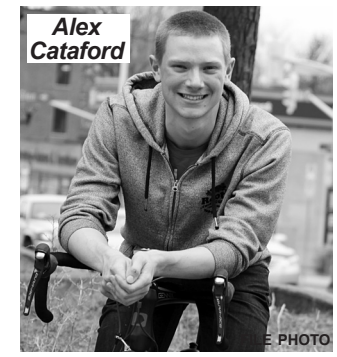
A year before the nation's capital hosts the Canadian Road Cycling Championships, a trio of Ottawa cyclists all finished amongst the leaders at the 2015 nationals in St-Georges, Que.

Alex Cataford was the best under-23 athlete in the men's time trial, Matteo Dal-Cin was a bronze medallist in the elite men's criterium and Mike Woods battled to the line in the sprint finish of the men's elite road race alongside Cataford.

"My goal was to win the U23, and it was a perfect result," signals Cataford, who is back in fine form after a serious 2014 accident dealt him a multitude of injuries, such as a concussion and extensive dental work.

For Dal-Cin, an otherwise tough trip came together in the final event of nationals when he finished in the middle position of the Silber Pro Cycling teammates who swept the top-5 (including Cataford in 4th).

"Our team goal was to win," underlines Dal-Cin, who'd finished well back in the earlier time trial and road race events. "For me, it was about making



good on the weekend. It hadn't gone the way I'd wanted it."

The men's road race came down to a sprint between 12 riders in the field of 123 entrants, with Cataford placing 7th and Woods 8th as the top-8 riders all finished the 186.2 km course within 1 second of each other.

Woods says he's "not shouting from the rooftops" about his results in St. Georges, but the climbing specialist notes that his job was to put the top sprinters on his Optum p/b Kelly Benefit Strategies team into position to win, which they did with Guillaume Boivin and Ryan Anderson finishing 1-2.

COMING HOME IN 2016-2017

They cross paths now and again on the North American continental circuit, but no event will bring the local trio together quite like the 2016 and 2017 Canadians, which will be staged in Ottawa and Gatineau on to-be-determined courses.

"The terrain could be hilly in Gatineau, or it could be flat near a farm," notes Dal-Cin, who recorded the first UCI race win at the Grand Prix de Saguenay in late-May. "I don't know if it will suit me personally, but it'll be pretty special."

Cataford expects to benefit from home-course advantage regardless of setting since the most visitors will "only get to test ride the track once or twice."

"We'll have a big advantage on them when we find out," signals the Ottawa Bicycle Club product who's looking forward to September's U23 worlds in Virginia and would like to make the jump to the European pro circuit next season.

They may not be his pro teammates at present, but Woods still roots for Cataford and Dal-Cin.

"We had a great local contingent (in St. Georges), which bodes well," indicates the 27-year-old. "It's always good when three of the top racers in an event are all from Ottawa."



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W-SOCCER continued from p.7

"If we have a place for them to continue to develop, then we'll find some late developers who will probably make the national program at the later stages."

El-Asmar coached an under-17 Ontario east and Quebec-Ontario Cup champion team with FC Capital United in 2013, with many of those players now competing in the NCAA. Many found a summertime home with the Fury in the past, but have now had to look elsewhere.

DAILY ROAD TRIPS TO LAVAL

For former Fury Arielle Kabangu, that means simply playing Ottawa Carleton Soccer League women's premiere with Cap U.

Vanessa Gilles elected to stay close to her Cincinnati university team and play for Dayton W-League franchise.

Christine Rebus picked the next closest W-League team to home that's still operating, the Laval Comètes, and travels from Ottawa almost daily for training alongside a number of other past Ottawa players such as Kayla Adamek, Rachelle Beanlands, Melissa Busque and Alexis Martel-Lamothe.

"It's a long trek, but she's doing it," says El-Asmar, saluting Rebus and the others for their commitment to the sport. "A lot of it is the drive – and not the car drive – it's their passion to get better and play at the highest level they can.

"I can't really speak for them, but I think having the Women's World Cup around us is driving these girls and keeping their momentum and their dream going."

OSA'S LEAGUE ONE AN OPTION

While a W-League return would be great, El-Asmar believes a local team in the Ontario Soccer Association's new League One loop – currently in its second season for men and first for women – would also serve the purpose.

"The Ontario League One is the next thing now," says the Carleton Ravens women's soccer head coach. "This is where the top kids – before they head to Europe or the States to compete at the pro level – they will play in League One and eventually it will be a stepping-stone probably for the national program."

CAPITALIZING ON WORLD CUP KEY

El-Asmar is hoping the local soccer community can step up now and harness the momentum from hosting the World Cup to bring in an elite women's team for the 2016 season.

"This World Cup has added additional excitement for the women's game in the country," he underlines. "It would be great if we could take advantage of that opportunity that's been given to us. I think it's time for us to push forward together."

YMCA-YMCA OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION STARS OF THE MONTH



Team of the Month: Nepean Nighthawks Under-14 Girls' Field Hockey Team

Team Members: **Mannat Bal, Emma Perreault, Kristen Butterfield, Erica Gordon, Sierra Labelle, Claire Mackay-Dietrich, Jane Sourges, Katherine Mechura, Kait Davidson, Bailey O'Brien, Kami Tam, Aleda Milne, Annabelle Murray, Ava Lanouette & Coach Maureen Chopra.**

About: **The Nepean Nighthawks under-14 girls' team won their first-ever tournament gold medal at their club's home junior festival on June 13-14 at Nepean Sportsplex. The Nighthawks were undefeated at the event, downing teams from Toronto, Kingston and Chelsea. It was the group's second medal win of the year, coming on the heels of a bronze medal performance at Field Hockey Ontario's May Meltdown in Mississauga. A highly athletic bunch, the bulk of the U14 team members have been playing field hockey for 5-6 years and have become promising rising talents for the future.**



Athlete of the Month: Luka Vujicic

Sport: **Soccer**

Club: **Ottawa South United Force**

School/Grade: **Finished Grade 6 at EEC Pierre-Elliott-Trudeau**

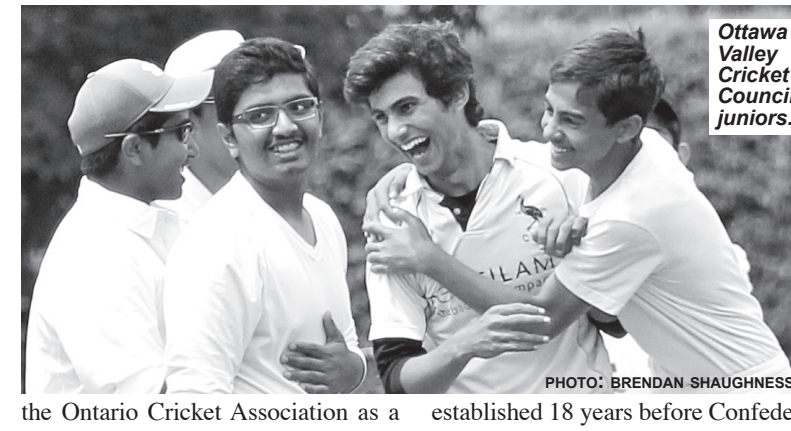
About: **Goalkeeper Luka Vujicic recorded a clean sheet in helping his Canada East team to a 4-0 shutout victory over their western Canadian counterparts in the July 27 national final in Montreal to qualify for the Danone Nations Cup in Morocco later this year. The Ottawa South United keeper is undefeated in Ontario Player Development League play as well, and will become a member of the Montreal Impact's youth academy this fall.**

To nominate Stars of the Month, go to SportsOttawa.com and follow the link on the right-hand bar under the Stars of the Month feature. Courtesy of the Ottawa Sportspage and the YMCA-YWCA of the National Capital Region, the selected Stars of the Month will receive free one-week Family Passes to the Y.

COMMUNITY CLUBS

Revived local jr. cricket team takes on Toronto

By Brendan Shaughnessy



Ottawa Valley Cricket Council juniors.

PHOTO: BRENDAN SHAUGHNESSY

Deejay Kumar first played cricket as a Grade 8 student in India. There, he notes, "it's like a religion." Like many people from his homeland, Kumar is a wealth of cricket knowledge.

In his five years of playing the sport in Ottawa, Kumar has developed a keen appreciation for cricket's long-time connection to Canada.

"Most people don't know – once, cricket was the national sport," Indeed, John A. Macdonald designated it as such in 1867. Five years later, the Rideau Hall Cricket Pavilion was built.

"The top players – like, gods of cricket – they played on this very pitch," Kumar says while standing on the porch of the Pavilion and looking out over the field. "So, it is a privilege for us to play on the same cricket ground."

There is now a new, younger generation playing on the grounds. Three years ago, the Ottawa Valley Cricket Council revived its junior program.

"When we started, we were struggling to get 11 players (for the age 10-19 team)," recounts Kumar, who works with the OVCC as well as the Ontario Cricket Association as a sport development director. "But now we're getting more response from the community."

Fees of $100 for a five-month season with equipment provided has proven popular, indicates OVCC junior program coordinator Darlene Batstone, but a major challenge remains that "people don't know we're here," adds the mother of two boys who got hooked on the sport while living in the Caribbean.

A new cricket field at Millennium Park is a sign of the sport's growth locally, but with its flat bats and funny pads, cricket is still a confusing novelty for many in the city – despite the fact that the Ottawa Cricket Club was established 18 years before Confederation.

In an effort to gain both exposure for the sport and experience for themselves, the OVCC juniors got to play their biggest game yet on June 25 at Rideau Hall – an exhibition against the Toronto Mayor's team, composed of the top youth cricket players from the GTA warming up for a two-week cricket and leadership tour to Sri Lanka.

The more experienced Toronto team did as expected and soundly beat the OVCC juniors, but that's not how we're evaluating today," Ottawa coach Heinrich Hattingh signals. "Today was about showing the boys what they can achieve if they work hard."

Canoe camaraderie a 'defining feature'



PHOTO: BRENDAN SHAUGHNESSY

The Rideau Canoe Club hosted its Canada Day International Regatta on June 30-July 1 at Mooney's Bay.

By Brendan Shaughnessy

"All boats out of the water!" The call came loudly over the speakers for the second time. Organizers heard thunder, and they weren't taking any chances. Spectators at the Rideau Canoe Club Canada Day International Regatta sprinted for cover while paddlers hauled their boats onto the grass. Within seconds, the drizzle turned to buckets of rain.

The races were postponed. It was pouring Canada Day. Yet still, spirits were light. Athletes got drenched with smiles on their faces. Others played cards or just razzed each other as they waited to get back out on the water. Canadian paddlers took photos and exchanged slang with competitors from Puerto Rico and Colombia.

"It's a big defining feature," says Ian Mortimer, a former coach at the club now working as a manager for Canoe-Kayak Canada in domestic development and partnership relations. "Fierce competition on the water, and a lot of great, lifelong friendships off."

That's what hooked Rideau paddler August Sibthorpe, who, at age 17, already has one Junior World Championships appearance under her belt.

"I love being here (at the Rideau Canoe Club) because all my friends come," Sibthorpe indicates. "Practice is always really fun."

For promising athletes like Sibthorpe and the host club itself, the Canada Day event served as a warm-up for the national championships, which will be held Aug. 25-29 at Mooney's Bay.

As the second of three stops on the new Canada Cup circuit, the Canada Day regatta was a strong competitive event, but the five-day nationals competition in late August is a different beast altogether.

"Right now we're racing together as Team Canada, but at the end of the summer (at nationals), it'll be a dog-fight," explains Dave Robertson, a Canadian development team coach based out of Montreal. "They'll be fighting against each other for club championships."

Robertson will have a number of athletes from Ottawa under his watch in the near future. Sibthorpe was recently selected to return to this year's junior worlds July 24-26 in Portugal, along with fellow Rideau paddler Scott Braddon and Genevieve L'Abbé of the Ottawa River Canoe Club. Rideau's Drew Hodges and Megan Sibthorpe will also head to Portugal for the under-23 worlds competition, while Braddon and clubmate Isaac Finkelstein were chosen to represent Canada at the Sept. 25-27 Olympic Hopes regatta in Poland.

The local paddlers are reaching the elite levels of the sport – the plethora of gold and silver medals they collected at the Canada Day event serving as strong evidence – but it's an initial love for the sport that got them there.

"It's the calmness," explains Braddon, who first set foot at the Rideau Canoe Club as an 8-year-old summer camper. "You get out there on the water and all your stresses are gone. You get out there and take a deep breath and don't have to worry about anything, just moving forward in the boat."

While Braddon cherishes the calm, L'Abbé is addicted to the idea of self-improvement on the water.

"Even at the highest levels, you're always trying to just tweak your technique," notes L'Abbé, who was two seats behind Sibthorpe in a victorious K-4 Canada Day boat that will likely compete together again in Portugal. "You can always work individually, but then there's also the team aspect."

FRIENDLY SPIRIT REIGNS

In all, there were 164 races at the two-day regatta. Over and over, medallists climbed the podium as other races finished. Those who had just raced would cheer for the winners – regardless of nationality or affiliation.

Rain or shine, it was one big family.



Ottawa Knights BASEBALL CLUB

Ottawa Knights News

KEVIN PARK

Ottawa Knights Baseball Club Player of the Month



The Ottawa Knights Baseball Club is happy to recognize **KEVIN PARK** as its second player of the month for the 2015 summer season.

Park is currently leading the 18U Knights team with a dazzling .425 batting average, and he's also been solid on the pitching mound, posting a 3.031 earned-run-average.

Park was at his best in a pair of matches against the Montreal Prospects on June 20 at Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton Park and June 21 at Trillium Park.

In the opener, the left-handed pitcher allowed just three hits in a complete-game 93-pitch performance, allowing his Knights to cruise on to a 6-2 win.

The next day, he was a force in batter's box, going 3-for-3 with an RBI and crossing the plate three times himself to lead the offensive charge in an 8-6 Knights victory.

Park has also been dynamite on the base paths this season, speeding to a team-high 15 stolen bases. He's also drawn 10 walks to post an on-base percentage of .540.

Philippe Lafleche has the best ERA out of regular pitchers for the 18U Knights at 2.942 to go alongside a .333 batting average, while **Justin Silverwood** continues to flirt with the .400 mark at the plate this season, currently owning a .397 average. The 18U team carries a solid overall record of 16-11-2 in all of 2015.

There are a number of other Knights putting up impressive stats this season.

A pair of 16U Knights own the first and second-best batting averages for the club as a whole. **Ryan Gunther** holds the #2 spot at .429, while **Nestor Tapia** is batting an eye-popping .474 from the dish, and continues to average better than a stolen base per game with 31 in 30 outings.

Corben Peters and the previous organizational player of the month, **Shane Brimacombe**, are both hitting north of .400 for the 15U Knights, at .426 and .406 respectively. The pair are amongst the club's top pitchers too with 2 of the 3 best ERAs out of those appearing regularly, with impressive marks of 1.667 for Brimacombe and 2.182 for Peters.

Jonah Poirier from the 14U Knights holds the distinction of best club ERA with his paltry 1.313 average from 16 innings pitched, while **Kyle Moore** is the team leader in the batter's box at .415.

The Ottawa Knights Baseball Club provides the region's premiere competitive development program for teenaged players.

www.ottawaknightsbaseballclub.com

OVFL Riders keep up 3-year win streak

By Brendan Shaughnessy


PHOTO: BRENDAN SHAUGHNESSY

The two-time defending Ontario Varsity Football League champions are back at it again.

On July 4 at Millennium Field, the Myers Riders immediately showed the host Cumberland Panthers that they were the real deal.

On the first play from scrimmage, a Mali Sauvé-Mohamed catch put the visitors a few yards from paydirt, with Keenan Tanti running it in for the major before the game was 37 seconds old.

A few minutes later, Riders defensive back Nick Urbani's interception return deep into Cumberland territory set up another Tanti TD.

"My speed wasn't there (to reach the end zone), but that's ok," smiled Urbani, whose defensive mates dashed the Panthers' hopes of getting back into the game on the next drive by stopping Cumberland on four-straight occasions after an interception had set up them up with 1st-and-goal.

"That definitely put a shake in them," Urbani added.

The Riders cruised on to a comfortable 27-7 win over the 3-3 Panthers, although that marked the smallest margin of victory so far this year for the juggernauts who'd previously put up 60+ points in 3 of 5 games under the guidance of quarterback Jacob Spinella.

"This was our toughest test," signalled Riders coach Max Palladino. "Our defence played a hell of a game."

With the win, the Riders kept alive a remarkable streak – Myers hasn't lost a game at the varsity level since the 2012 season.

"We don't think about it," Palladino underlined. "We all know we have a big target on our back. My hat goes off to our kids, because they don't let that bother them. They just come out and play football. They don't worry about records, scores – all they worry about is that particular night, that particular game, and being ready for it."

3 LOCAL TEAMS PERFECT

With a 37-22 win over 5-2 Cumberland, the Myers Riders junior varsity OVFL side remained undefeated at 6-0.

It's the Panthers who own one of two perfect 7-0 records in the Bantam division (along with Essex) thanks to their 10-7 win over the previously-unbeaten Riders.

A HOMERUN IN PLAYER DEVELOPMENT.

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