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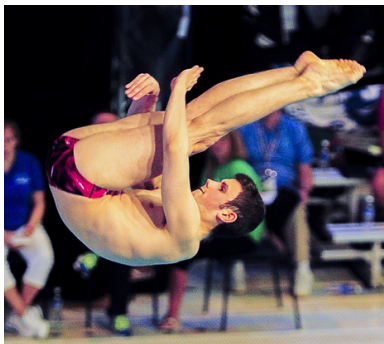
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May 2016

DIVER CALLS IT A CAREER



P.6

2015 Canadian champion Jamie Bissett of Ottawa has elected to retire from diving at age 22.

RIDING TO THE RIO RIVER



P.4

Several local whitewater paddlers are gearing up for a run at the Rio 2016 Olympics, led by Cam Smedley.

VBALL STAR BACK IN ACTION



P.4

Adam Simac is fired up to be back from shoulder surgery in time for Canada's last-chance Olympic qualifier.



It came down to her final race, but Ottawa native Erika Seltenreich-Hodgson was able to secure her ticket to her first Olympic Games with a 2nd-place finish in the women's 200 m individual medley at the Canadian team trials.

Ottawa's newest Olympian

PHOTO: STEVE KINGSMAN

Swimmer struggled with depression during rough year preceding Rio 2016 Games

By Dan Plouffe

Erika Seltenreich-Hodgson is one of the best swimmers in the world, but for days upon hard days, she could barely stay afloat.

The Ottawa native would be the midst of her lengths at the national

team training centre in Vancouver when she'd abruptly break down crying in the middle of the pool.

"I'd be swimming and my heart rate would be increasing and my breathing would be increasing and all of a sudden, my quicker breathing would turn into crying," recounts Seltenreich-Hodgson, explaining that the trigger was breathing at the same rate as sobbing. "I'd be in workouts, I'd be swimming really poorly, and then I'd get down on myself about swimming

poorly, and then I'd get down on myself about getting down on myself.

"It was just this continuous spiral downwards of negative thoughts."

Seltenreich-Hodgson was enduring the worst part of her struggle with depression.

"Deep down, I really like swimming," underlines the Nepean-Kanata Barracudas and Greater Ottawa Kingfish product who's made a lifelong commitment to early-morning practices and intense training. "Yes, it

hurts and you're tired, but for the first 19 years of my life – the part of it without depression – I could still find at least a sense of motivation to be there.

"Knowing that I'm there for a purpose, knowing that I want to be there because what I want to do is going to be reflective of what I'm doing in the pool at that time in practice. I totally lost sight of that last year.

RIO QUALIFIER continues on p.5

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Ice's miracle finish brings Ottawa girls provincial crown

By Victoria Klassen

They may only be 9 and 10 years old now, but with the kind of finish the Ottawa Ice Atom 'B' girls experienced at the Ontario Women's Hockey Association Provincial Championships, it created a memory that will surely last a lifetime.

Down 3-1 in the 3rd period to the Flamborough Falcons in the championship game, the Ice managed to force overtime and then scored the gold medal-winning goal in the 2nd OT session.

"It was very nerve-racking," recounts Ottawa forward Olwen Jones. "It was really crazy because it was high tension and we were all tired."

Appropriately, the Ice's miracle victory featured a coach Brooks behind the bench.

"My whole philosophy was that it doesn't matter if you win or lose, as long as you're trying your hardest every game, and every one of you is trying your hardest," indicates Brad Brooks. "When these girls tried their hardest, they succeeded."

The Atom 'B' Ice were one of six Ottawa teams to bring home provincial medals from



Ottawa Ice Atom 'B' girls' hockey team.

PHOTO PROVIDED

the Apr. 7-10 provincials around Toronto.

The Ice Bantam 'AA' team earned the lone local medal at the top level of play, taking silver behind the Saugeen-Maitland Lightning in a 1-0 final.

Champions earlier this season at the Whitby

Tournament of Heroes and the Ottawa Lady Sens tournament, the Ice "had a 50-win season, which is really difficult in girls' hockey," underlines coach Nick Pora, whose team played the final few games of provincials with eight forwards and four defence due to injuries and illnesses.

"(The final) was a great game," Pora adds. "It really highlighted the sportsmanship of the whole season, because both teams were able to take pictures together after, which is something that usually isn't done - most teams, usually, at that point, can't stand each other."

"The whole tournament was one giant amazing moment that I will remember for the rest of my life," echoes 15-year-old assistant captain Jade Todd. "I loved the adrenaline rush that I got

before every game and you could feel everyone on the team feeding off of each other's excitement."

Team captain Jaidynn Forrest will be playing with the Ottawa Lady 67's Intermediate 'AA' team next season, but agrees that her team's run this year is a memory that is guaranteed to linger.

"This has been one of my favourite seasons," notes Forrest. "Right from the first practice, our team bonded like a family."

Nepean Wildcats teams claimed both the silver and bronze medal positions in the Bantam 'B' division. Five of the silver medal-winning Wildcats' six games were decided by one goal, including a triple-overtime quarter-final with Timmins and the 1-0 final against Lindsay.

"The provincial weekend is full of ups and downs. It's like a psychological roller coaster," indicates 14-year-old Nepean goalie Bailey O'Brien. "Playing goalie at provincials was one of the most emotional weekends of my life. Throughout the whole weekend thousands of emotions run through your mind and I find being a goalie you have a little bit more pressure."

For head coach Dean O'Brien, Bailey's father, it's the triple-OT triumph that sticks out most in his mind.

"Amazing game from all the girls," he highlights. "This was easily one of the best in all my years of coaching sports. The girls were unbelievable on and off the ice."

The Wildcats also collected bronze medals in the Midget 'A' and Bantam 'A' divisions.

Griffins, Knights target strong finish to Jr. 'B' lacrosse seasons in quest for nationals berth

By Daniel Prinn

With their province set to host the Founders' Cup national championship this season, the Gloucester Griffins and Nepean Knights would love to be the Ontario Junior 'B' League League's two representatives.

With what he believes is the best rookie class in the league, Griffins coach Jeremy Kearns says the goal for his squad is to be in Orangeville come Aug. 15-21.

Standing most squarely in their way are the defending-champion Akwesasne Indians, not to mention the Kahnawake Hunters, who are also part of the strong OJBLL far east division.

"Winning on the road is tough in this division," signals



Justin Tkachuk.

PHOTO: DANIEL PRINN

Kearns. "Going into Kahnawake and Akwesasne's barns is a bit tougher. They bring out the wood sticks and like to play a dirty game, but I think going in there with the focus that we're as tough as they are and buckling down when we have a

lead will be the key to winning games on the road."

A chief challenge for Gloucester this year will be playing without their 105-point man and the league's MVP from the past two seasons, who's graduated from the junior ranks.

"We can't really rely on a single guy like Fred Hartley score all of our goals," notes second-year Griffin Justin Tkachuk. "We're going to need guys to step up. I'm hoping to step up and try and fill a scoring role."

"It's tough to fill Fred Hartley's shoes," echoes Kearns, who believes Cam Badour just may fit the bill as perhaps the best player in Ontario, however.

LACROSSE cont's on p.4



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Wed May 11, 8 pm vs Cornwall

Sat May 7, 7 pm vs Oakville

Sun May 8, 2 pm vs Halton Hills

Tue May 17, 8 pm vs Nepean

Sat May 28, 7 pm vs Orillia

Sun May 29, 2 pm vs Green Gaels



NEPEAN KNIGHTS

Jr. 'B' Home Games @ Howard Darwin (Merivale) Arena

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Sat May 7, 7 pm vs Halton Hills

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Ottawa paddlers face off in quest for canoe Olympic qualification

By Callum Fraser

He calls himself the old bull.

In 2012, John Hastings was a tiny fraction of a second from reaching the Olympic Games. At the Canadian team trials, a 20-year-old Mike Tayler bested his fellow Ottawa paddler over the course of four whitewater kayak runs by a grand total of .11 seconds to claim Canada's lone canoe slalom Olympic berth.

Hastings decided to retire from the sport after that, got married, had a baby and settled into a job as an investment advisor for the Royal Bank of Canada.

"I was kind of tired," recalls Hastings, now 32. "You've been doing this for eight years full-time and you need to re-focus and do other stuff."

But in 2015, Hastings attempted a comeback for the Pan Am Games in Toronto.

"When you've been doing this for so long it's kind of hard to walk away," explains the Carleton University and Uni-

John Hastings was .11 seconds away from reaching the London 2012 Olympics. Now 32, he leads the Canadian standings for Rio 2016 qualification prior to the season.



versity of Ottawa business grad. "Especially when the sport is your passion."

While he didn't end up getting Canada's lone official Pan Am Games entry, Hastings did compete in the concurrent Continental Olympic Qualifier and was able to qualify Canada's

K-1 spot for the 2016 Games thanks to his 5th place overall finish.

Now atop the national team standings, he's currently leading the charge to represent Canada come July in Rio.

With the help of a supportive wife and an understanding employer, the past RBC Olympian program member is able to train during the week while also leading the life he previously left the sport for.

On weekdays, the Aurora native bikes from his Sparks St. office during his lunch five minutes down the road to the Pumphouse Whitewater Course near Lebreton Flats and trains for an hour. One of the reasons Hastings was able to jump back into competition after a three-year hiatus was because he kept in shape.

"Our sport is very technical," underlines Hastings, who's lived in Ottawa since age 18. "So as long as you maintain a good level of fitness, your technique doesn't really suffer."

Based on a points system for top performances, Canada's Olympic representative will be chosen following the May 21-22 national team trials in B.C. and the season's first World Cups.

Hastings' setup differs from many

of the other athletes gunning for the Olympic spot who are currently training overseas in preparation.

"Guys that do this full-time, if you're a betting man, you'd put your money on one of those guys to win," Hastings acknowledges. "But in this sport, it's not necessarily about how fit you are, it's about where your headspace is. If you're not too stressed about the outcome, what's holding you back from doing your best, right?"

That's a significant change in mentality from four years earlier when all of Hastings' energy was directed towards paddling.

"I really have nothing to lose," explains the athlete who was 8th overall on the 2010 World Cup circuit. "I've got a family, I've got a child; things are good. Going to the Olympics would just be a dream come true."

TAYLER SEEKS 2ND GAMES

The last time the Summer Olympics rolled around, Mike Tayler was packing his bags for the United Kingdom.

He was the rising star who upset the veterans and made both his senior national team and Olympic debut in the

same year.

"It was an incredible experience for me to be able to compete at such a young age," reflects Tayler, who earned a top-20 finish in London. "I believe I was the youngest men's kayak competitor there."

He was the youngest Canadian hopeful then, and he remains the youngest Canadian contender now.

"(Making the Olympics) is something – in this sport in particular – that is so rare and so difficult to do," adds the 24-year-old Carleton University political science student. "To achieve it once is already pretty impressive, but to go again would just be incredible."

HAYWARD HASHES RIO PLAN

The other lead contender for the K-1 berth is former Carleton University architecture student Ben Hayward, Canada's top-ranked canoe slalom kayaker the last three years.

With France as a home base and travel to the southern hemisphere in winter, Hayward is one of several athletes who's pushed to pursue the sport full-time.

"I've been surrounding myself with the best opportunities the last couple years (by) relocating to Europe and trying to train with the European athletes who really have a stronger depth of field than we do," highlights Canada's 2015 Pan Am Games rep and bronze medalist.

Hayward believes consistency will be key given the change in Canadian qualification criteria to include each athlete's best results in four events, and that's what he's been pursuing in Europe.

"When I didn't get to go (to the 2012 Olympics), that defeat was pretty crushing for a while," recalls the 25-year-old Edmonton native. "I was really disappointed to miss out on London, so these past four years have really been just making sure I have the best possible shot at Rio."

Smedley on path to Olympic 'redemption'

For C-1 competitor Cam Smedley, the focus is a bit different. The 25-year-old won't face quite the same domestic competition as the K-1 athletes, though the #2 athletes in the standings happens to be his younger brother Liam, 21.

"I've kind of been setting the bar and Liam's been chasing it," smiles the Toronto 2015 Pan Am Games silver medalist. "And he's definitely slowly closing that gap."

Along with Hayward and fellow Ottawa River Runners paddler Tayler, Smedley has been training on European World



Cup courses in preparation for the Olympics. Rio would be his Olympic debut, though at one time he'd thought he was likely going to London when Canada had anticipated receiving an additional international Olympic berth in men's C-1 only to have

it not materialize.

"It feels like a nice redemption," signals Smedley, a part-time Carleton mechanical engineering student. "Maybe it makes this experience more satisfying that I know I'll actually be competing for Canada."

Team Canada volleyball vet returns from shoulder surgery in time for last-chance Olympic qualifier

By Anil Jhalli

So far, the road to Rio hasn't been very pleasant for Adam Simac, but the Ottawa volleyball player plans to turn that around come Team Canada's last-chance Olympic qualifier May 28-June 5 in Tokyo.

Simac underwent shoulder surgery in December to repair a torn labrum, missing January's continental Olympic qualifier, where Canada fell in the final to Cuba in straight sets and missed its easiest path to the Games.

"At first, I thought to myself, 'This is it. This is the nail in the coffin,'" recalls Simac, who was able to bounce back thanks to support from those around him, especially his wife, former women's national team player Ashley Voth.

"I feel really good now," adds the 32-year-old. "I have some really good people working with me."



If the national team veteran of eight years can return to full form and is chosen to compete in Tokyo, it would provide a major boost for Canada. With Simac and powerful opposite hitter Gavin Schmidt on the sidelines due to injury,

the Canadians struggled to find the form that's seen them rise into the top-10 world rankings.

"It was heartbreaking to lose in Edmonton the way we did," underlines the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School grad. "But now, we have

a chance to go and take care of business. It is within the realm of possibility that we can get one of those spots and head to Rio."

Simac says he's been game-ready for a month now. He's glad to see that the suggested four-month recovery time is holding true, especially with what's at stake.

"We were really careful with getting everything right," notes the athlete who'd targeted Rio as the ideal finish to his career. "It is all up to the coaches now and how I am playing compared to the other guys."

Team Canada is deep at the middle position, so it's no sure bet Simac will be in the lineup for the qualifier, where Canada can claim one of four available berths (including one reserved for an Asian country) amongst Japan, Australia, China, Iran, France, Poland and Venezuela.

VOLLEYBALL continues next page

Final - moments score launches wrestler's international career

By Sebastian Bron

Devan Larkin has long dreamed of sporting a Team Canada wrestling singlet, but back in 2014, a torn ACL knee ligament made it seem a bit more like a pipe dream.

It cost the National Capital Wrestling Club athlete a full year on the sidelines, though he says he took the setback in stride and understood that injuries were part of an athlete's life.

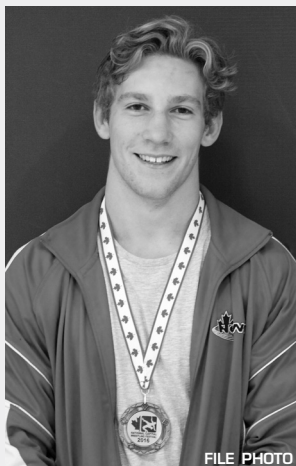
"In rehab I just kept thinking of the first time I'd get to step back out on the mat," recounts Larkin. "I was working like crazy, kept positive and patient, and tried my best to come back strong."

He eventually resumed his 5-6-day per week training schedule with NCWC, and stormed back from his injury to handily win his age group/weight class at the 2015 club provincials.

For 2016 and his final season of eligibility, Larkin set his sights higher.

"My goal for this year was to namely make [Team Canada]" highlights the Grade 11 Cairine Wilson Secondary School student, adding that, as an athlete, he's always looking for a chance to compete at the highest level.

Larkin had a bit of a mediocre start to his season by placing 5th and 3rd respectively at the OFSAA high school and Ontario club provincials – positive finishes, he indicates, but nonetheless motivators to propel himself higher in the future.



FILE PHOTO
Wrestler Devan Larkin.

Come the FILA cadet national team trials Apr. 16 in Calgary, only the top-2 would do – the winner earning Canada's Cadet World Championships entry, and the runner-up heading to the July 1-3 Cadet Pan-American Championship in Peru.

Competing in the 69 kg division, Larkin downed an Edmonton challenger and then fell to a Toronto wrestling to setup a match with a B.C. opponent to decide which athlete would get the second spot on Team Canada.

Down by 2 points with 4 seconds left in the match, Larkin caught his rival with a fake double-leg takedown attempt and was able to jump on top to secure a chest wrap and claim the coveted national team position.

"I've been waiting for this since the day I started wrestling," smiles Larkin. "Seeing these guys wear the Canada singlets with their names on the back, I was like, 'I want one of those.'"

RIO QUALIFIER: 'More nervous than I've ever felt in my life' before final race ⁵

continued from p.1

I didn't even know if I wanted to keep swimming for the end of the year. I didn't think I could make the [Olympic] team. I just kept getting down on myself for everything I was doing. Everything was negative.

"I wouldn't leave the workout and say, 'OK, tomorrow is another day.' It was, 'tomorrow is another day that I also won't want to come out and train.'"

Seltenreich-Hodgson's mental health challenges led to the first true plunge in performance of her career. The 2011 world junior bronze medallist was coming off an outstanding Commonwealth Games debut at Glasgow 2014, finishing just off the podium in the women's 200-metre and 400-metre individual medley.

Seltenreich-Hodgson set new personal-best marks by a wide margin at the event – times she wouldn't approach again in the next two years.

2014 was an exhausting season full of travel, and full of schoolwork. The University of British Columbia student maintained a full course load while also embarking on a new level of training with the national team.

In the past, Seltenreich-Hodgson had experienced days or even a full week of feeling down after writing her final exams, but this time it lingered for several months.

"That's when I realized that this is not normal, it's still happening," recounts the 2014 Canadian university swimmer of the year. "There is a difference between not wanting to go from being tired and sore, and just lacking the motivation to want to do anything but lie in bed.

"It wasn't only swimming I didn't want to do. I didn't want to talk to anyone or have a social life. It was basically everything."

That's when Seltenreich-Hodgson sought help from the Vancouver high-performance centre's psychologist, who identified her symptoms as depression.

"It was actually a relief knowing what was wrong," recalls the 21-year-old from Barrhaven. "Having depression wasn't an amazing thing to find out obviously, and it wasn't something I completely knew how to handle just because I had a name for it, but it at least made me understand more what I was going through."

Getting help from a psychologist was "immensely" valuable, as was the support she received from those around her, she highlights.

Seltenreich-Hodgson received exercises from her psychologist and strategies to employ when she'd begin to experience the hyperventilation-type breathing that would lead to the crying attacks.

"I really like to read," notes the John McCrae Secondary School grad. "As soon as I would feel that feeling coming on, I would say, 'OK, think of five random books.' I'd start listing books and authors in my head, and just taking my mind off of the breathing and feeling bad about myself – the things that would start the downward spiral from continuing to spiral.

"It didn't always help, but some days I would also be able to flip it around."

GETTING THE SPARK BACK

Although her performance in the pool



PHOTO: STEVE KINGSMAN

was certainly connected to her mood, it didn't help the devoted athlete to be swimming poorly at the same time she was trying to recover.

Thanks to her years of training and having reached such a high level, the dip wasn't as damaging as it could have been. Seltenreich-Hodgson was improving from her lowest point come the 2015 national team trials, though she was still far from her form of summer 2014.

Her performance at the trials wasn't quite good enough to make the grade for Canada's World Championships squad, but she was able to maintain her position on the national team and qualified to swim the 200 m IM at the Toronto 2015 Pan Am Games.

"That gave me just enough motivation to know that I still have something special in me," reflects the 16th-place finisher from the 2013 World Championships. "I got a little bit of the spark back. That was an incredibly important moment for me.

"I was pretty close to making worlds, and having the chance to represent my country on home soil was such a relief and I was very happy to be able to do that.

"I just kind of proved to myself that no matter what happens to me, I am a racer and I guess it just reinforced my confidence a little bit."

ONGOING MENTAL BATTLE

Seltenreich-Hodgson was disappointed in her 5th-place swim at the Pan Ams, which led to another down period.

"Once you go through depression, it's not like it's gone forever. It can come back," she signals.

Though Seltenreich-Hodgson now feels much more capable of handling emotions and understanding why she feels certain ways, her mental health remains an ongoing struggle.

A major test of that strength lay ahead in 2016, with the Canadian Olympic team trials set for Apr. 5-10 back in Toronto.

"This year I did a full 180, but there was still a little voice in the back of my head telling me that everything that happened last year was just going to keep happening," recalls Seltenreich-Hodgson.

Her first race of the competition offered another hurdle. With a maximum of two Olympic berths available per event, she was up against a pair of very strong Canadian athletes who will contend for a spot in the women's 400 m IM Olympic final, Sydney Pickrem and Emily Overholt.

Seltenreich-Hodgson was on a faster

pace than her personal-best time at the 200 m mark and led the race after 300, but was gassed for the final freestyle leg and slipped to 3rd.

"I went for it 100%," notes the athlete who placed 4th in two events at the 2012 Olympic trials as a 16-year-old. "I was still pretty proud of myself when I finished that. The result wasn't what I wanted, but the effort was everything I could have wanted."

LAST SHOT AT THE OLYMPICS

So the Olympic qualification quest would then all come down to her final race, the 200 IM.

"I remember being more nervous for it than I've ever felt in my entire life," indicates Seltenreich-Hodgson, who was wheezing, lightheaded and felt like throwing up 15 minutes before the race. "Just the fact that it's the Olympics – this is probably my one chance. I didn't make it in 2012, and four years is a long time. I don't know if I can physically or mentally keep on swimming that long, and I do want to start my after-swimming life.

"This is kind of it for me for certainty."

At the end of the race, there were tears in the pool again, but this time for a different reason. Seltenreich-Hodgson had finished in 2nd place by a safe margin and she overcame with joy.

"I was beside myself with excitement. I'm pretty sure I cried. The pictures make it look like I did," laughs the Rio 2016-nominated athlete. "I feel like I had every emotion in the book – except for sadness. Relief, excitement, just knowing that everything I'd gone through the past couple years led to this moment.

"And the fact I overcame the things that I did and I pushed myself past the hard times and I proved to myself and also everyone else that was there that I could do it. I mean, this dream that I had since I was 10 and started swimming."

Before the biggest race of Seltenreich-Hodgson's career, there had been 2 or 3 minutes where her positive thoughts took over, when she took pride in having done all within her power to make it there, and felt at peace with whatever outcome was about to take place.

"The fact that I made the team this year wasn't the make or break of my happiness," she underlines. "Regardless of the result, I'm very, very happy with where I am in my life. I am so much happier. I know myself a lot better. I know my mind and my emotions a lot better than even before I had depression."

VOLLEYBALL from last page

But he says he feels confident he'll not only be in Tokyo, but also Rio.

"I plan on being on that team, and I plan on helping the team get the job done," Simac underlines. "It is silly to think otherwise. What's at stake is a chance at representing Canada at the Olympics and it is something I don't take for granted.

"It is something that I will truly be honoured to do."



PHOTO: STEVE KINGSMAN

National-champion diver calls it a career, plunges into medicine

By Callum Fraser

Twenty-two is certainly an early age for most to think about retirement, and it seems doubly unusual for someone who recently experienced a major career breakthrough.

But that is nonetheless the path that diver Jamie Bissett has chosen, hardly a year removed from his first Canadian title at any age level – the senior men’s 3-metre crown.

“It wasn’t an easy decision. I went back and forth for awhile,” says the Ottawa native. “But I want to attend medical school, which is a complete, full-time commitment. You can’t do any sport with that.

“It took me a while to figure out that (medicine) is what I was passionate about, and that I wanted to pursue that more than my diving career.”

With the Rio 2016 Olympics approaching fast, Bissett held a legitimate shot at qualifying, but ultimately determined he didn’t want to go for it.

“I came to realize that if I continued diving, it wasn’t because I was enjoying it, it was because other people wanted me to do,” explains the Sir Robert Borden High School grad. “If you’re going to train for the Olympics, you have to be all in, and my heart wasn’t completely in it.”

Looking back on his career, Bissett realizes



he’s been able to accomplish more than he’s ever set out to. One of those accomplishments was a diving scholarship to Purdue University.

“My proudest moment was signing my national letter of intent to come dive (at Purdue) because I was so excited to be part of the team,” recounts the 2015 All-American who was also honoured by the Big Ten conference in his senior year for athletic and academic achievements, including a 3.86 GPA in pre-professional health sciences.

With Purdue, Bissett trained alongside 2012 Olympic gold medalist David Boudia, 2008 Olympian Mary Beth Dunnichay and 2016 Olympic hopeful Steele Johnson, to name a few.

Also making a big impact on the Nepean-Ottawa Diving Club-brewed athlete was Boiler-makers diving head coach Adam Soldati.

“We worked really well together,” indicates Bissett, currently finishing his final year at Purdue. “He’s a very experienced coach, he can take you

wherever you want to go in the sport of diving. He helped me through a lot of hardships and success. I’d say he’s taught me more about myself than diving through our relationship we built here.”

While many may think he’s retiring young, Bissett notes that diving, similar to many gymnastics-like sports, isn’t a career path fit for longevity.

“It’s very easy for people on the outside looking in to critique you, because they don’t understand how hard training is, how demanding it is and how rigorous it is on your body,” he underlines. “When you get older, it’s just harder to keep up with it and I just didn’t have it in me to keep going.”

Bissett is now focused on a new passion, which stemmed from diving in a way, he notes.

“Part of what drove me into medicine was an injury that I had through diving, where I had to have surgery,” details Bissett, who made his international Grand Prix debut in front of friends and family last year in Gatineau. “Getting to know the surgeons and the physicians that helped me through that process was really inspiring.”

Bissett is excited for the next step in his life, having enjoyed his journey in the diving world, while leaving his sport in a way very few retiring athletes do: “I’m walking away from my career with my head up and absolutely no regrets.”

Tumblers gymnast wins club’s 1st provincial women’s title since ‘03

By Dan Plouffe

Juliette Chapman was about two months old the last time a female gymnast from the Tumblers Gymnastics Centre won an all-around provincial title.

Now, 13 years later, she’s etched her name into the record books thanks to her victory in the Novice High-Performance category at the Apr. 7-10 Ontario Artistic Gymnastics Championships in Mississauga.

“All of my routines were very, very good – probably the best I’ve ever done,” indicates Chapman, who won gold medals on floor and uneven bars and silver on vault. “It feels really good. When they called my name in 1st, I was really, really happy.”

The successful performances provided a nice confidence boost prior to the May 31-June 4 Canadian Championships in Edmonton, adds the Grade 7 Béatrice-Desloges high school student.

Earlier this season, she hadn’t lived



up to her potential at Elite Canada, narrowly claiming one of the final available nationals qualification positions.

“After Elite Canada, I came back to the gym and knew I had to work really hard,” recounts Chapman, who tried not to dwell on the letdown too much however. “I put that out of my mind and just thought about the positives and how I could go farther.”

Tumblers coach Alina Florea has been impressed by her athlete’s growth in recent months, though she notes physical growth provided a bit of a hurdle early this season.

“When you grow, you have to learn to adjust your skills and your technique,” highlights Florea, noting that building up confidence was another key hurdle Chapman overcame.

With a nationals berth already locked up, attending provincials wasn’t mandatory, Florea notes, but the event offered the chance to improve difficulty and execution on several apparatuses.

“For me, the most relevant thing is her performing the new skills and being able to focus and learn from her mistakes in previous competitions,” says Florea. “I’m very proud of Juliette.”

Scanlon got called up to her side on the podium in 2nd place.

“We just kind of looked at each other and smiled,” recounts Nizalik, noting their parents had tears in their eyes, and that they later thrilled their coaches (who’d still been working with other athletes during the awards ceremony) when they showed up with gold and silver medals.

Scanlon says she wasn’t surprised to see Nizalik at the top of the podium, but was blown away to be standing beside her teammate given that it was her first provincials and she’d struggled in her first two competitions of the year.

“I knew I had to do really well at my last qualifier to even qualify for provincials,” reflects the Grade 8 Mother Teresa Catholic High School student. “I really didn’t think I was going to come top-3, so when I did, I was really happy.”

Nizalik and Scanlon are in the same training group at Corona, spending

ONTARIO ALL-AROUND MEDALLISTS	
Women's Artistic Gymnastics	
Sophia Nizalik Corona	Jenna Lalonde Ottawa
1st, L6 A12	3rd, Aspire 1 A9-11
Sophia Scanlon Corona	Hanna Nixon Tumblers
2nd, L6 A12	2nd, Aspire 2 A10-11
Robin Tamocai Corona	Juliette Chapman Tumblers
3rd, L7 A10-11	1st, Novice HP
Men's Artistic Gymnastics	
Damien Leroux Tumblers	Philopateer Faltas Ottawa
3rd, L1 A12-13	3rd, L4 -13
Andy Fast Ottawa	Aidan Li Kanata GymnoSphere
2nd, L2 A10-11	3rd Nat'l Elite4 A11-12
Tyson Morton Tumblers	Eric Gauthier Tumblers
3rd, L3 A10-11	2nd, National Sr. HP
Trampoline	
Jasmine Boyer Spring Action	Hugo Lalumière Spring Action
3rd L3, 14-	3rd, DMT L4
Alexandria Nolan Les Sittelles	Paolo Figueroa/ Jasmine Boyer
2nd L3, 15+	Spring Action
Anna Floyd Spring Action	2nd, Synchro L3
3rd, DMT L2, 12-	



Sophia Nizalik (left) & Sophia Scanlon.

SOPHIAS FINISH 1-2

The other local provincial champ came at other end of spectrum in Level 6. Nepean-Corona’s Sophia Nizalik

around 16 hours a week together at the gym.

“We encourage each other, and when one does well, we congratulate each other,” highlights Nizalik, a Grade 8 Westboro Academy student.

Having competed alone in previous years, Scanlon enjoys having a teammate with her at competitions, though it does pose a problem for the pair of Sophias from Corona.

“The judges will always say, ‘Sophia’ when they’re calling us up, and we’ll have to ask, ‘Which Sophia?’” Scanlon smiles.

- COMMUNITY CLUBS -

More careers begin at biggest Tumblers Classic yet

By Dan Plouffe

Tumblers Gymnastics Centre hosted its largest Tumblers Classic yet from Apr. 15-17 in Orleans, featuring over 300 young gymnasts and acting for the first time as a provincial championships qualifier for athletes in the Level 3-5 divisions.

"It's very fulfilling to see the younger athletes competing," underlines Tumblers women's artistic head coach Alina Florea, noting that the event featured athletes as young as age 5 in the Ontario Development Program. "It's great to see how they enjoy their first competition."

Meets like the Tumblers Classic, and a similar event hosted by Club de Gymnastique Les Sittelles Apr. 23-24, serve as a gentle introduction to a competitive gymnastics atmosphere, Florea adds.

"It's building experience for the higher levels," she explains, saluting the efforts of many volunteers to make the event possible, including some of the club's more senior gymnasts.

"When they're younger and at the lower levels, they get to



PHOTO: DAN PLOUFFE

represent the club, and when they're older, they get to help out and see the other kids," Florea details.

One of this year's helpers was Hanna Nixon, who fondly recalls competing in the Tumblers Classic earlier in her career.

"It was good because it was like a practice competition for me. It was at my gym," reflects the Grade 5 St. Theresa Catholic School student who recently qualified to represent Team Ontario at this year's Eastern Canadian Gymnastics Championships.

Keep pushing on further and it might be possible to hit

the biggest gymnastics stages in the world. Just ask Sam Zakutney.

The Ottawa Gymnastics Centre athlete competed for the Canadian men's team at the final Olympic qualifier on Apr. 16 in Rio de Janeiro.

The underdog Canadian men finished a fair bit back of earning one of the tickets to the Games, however Zakutney enjoyed a strong competition individually, competing in all six events for Canada and producing one of the team's top-4 scores on 5 of those 6 apparatuses to finish as the 2nd-highest-ranked Canadian all-around at the event.

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THEME WEEKS A HIT AT POPULAR TUMBLERS CAMPS

Superheroes, magicians, princesses, alien hunters, lions and tigers and bears, oh my!

If you thought gymnastics camp was only about practicing somersaults and walking on the balance beam, then you sure haven't seen Tumblers Gymnastics Centre summer camps.

"Every week has a theme," explains Tumblers Gymnastics Centre General Manager Christine Groleau. "All the activities of the week will be geared towards that theme."

"I remember all the kids coming in disguised as superheroes and just being so excited to fly through the air and act like them during their superhero training. It's really something special to see."

CIRCUS, DISNEY & MORE!

For SURVIVOR week, participants will work on their teamwork skills as they go on a treasure hunt, Little Ray's Reptiles will come by for a special visit, and the gym gets transformed into Survivor Island. Other examples of themes are MYSTERY BOX, CIRQUE DU TUMBLERS and SPIRIT OF THE GAMES (during the Summer Olympics).

"Certain themes we bring back every year because they're so popular," adds Groleau, highlighting that the week centred on each summer's Disney movie is always a guaranteed hit.

Appropriate for beginners and seasoned gymnasts alike, children enjoy seeing the familiar faces of experienced Tumblers camp staff, who have all been trained by High Five – a leading organization in ensuring quality standards for children's recreation and sport.

FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE

"Our staff are really part of our family," underlines Groleau, noting many staff have been present for the bulk of the 10+ years Tumblers summer camps have been in operation. "They've been here a long time, they're well-trained to be camp coordinators, and to run all the camp activities."

It's a bright atmosphere where campers can make new friends and progress their gymnastics skills on



a daily basis.

Crafts and outdoor play time are also part of the equation, not to mention the guest speakers and special events, which all take place on-site at the large Tumblers facility on Vantage Dr. in Orleans.

The week always ends with Friday pizza day, which the campers will have earned after exercising all week.

PRE- & POST-CAMP CARE

The camps run for 10 weeks, from June 27 through Sept. 2. Half days are available for the youngest campers aged 3-5, while single-day rates are possible for parents who may need child care on a particular day.

"For us, it's really about being there for the community and meeting their needs," indicates the director of the not-for-profit club that has served the community for 25+ years.

"And the demand is there. Our camps have proven to be really popular as a way to keep kids active, and having fun, over the summer."

Pre- and post-camp care is included with registration, with drop-off as early as 7:30 a.m. and pick-up as late as 5:30 p.m. for the 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. scheduled activities.

Oftentimes, convincing the campers that it's time to go home can prove to be a challenge.

"If the parents come early, it's like, 'Aww, c'mon, it's not finished yet!'" Groleau smiles. "They love it. They're never ready to leave."

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BYTOWN STORM BULLETIN

Ottawa Triathlon introduces Age Group Draft Legal Racing

In 2016, the International Triathlon Union will introduce Draft Legal racing in the Age Group sprint distance triathlon at the World Championships in Cozumel, Mexico. The Draft Legal format is the style of racing for professional triathletes, and the format used at the Olympic Games.

The Ottawa Triathlon will be the inaugural Canadian event offering Draft Legal (DL) racing to age group athletes. The dynamic atmosphere and the skill sets required for DL mean the ITU and Triathlon Canada highly recommend that athletes taking part in a DL event take an introductory course such as the **MAY 15 DRAFTING CLINIC** being offered by the Bytown Triathlon Club around the Canadian Tire Centre.

WHAT IS DRAFTING?

If you spend most of your time riding alone, you may not appreciate the benefits of drafting. Drafting is when a group of cyclists work together to conserve energy.

The most important concept in drafting is maintaining a constant speed throughout the group. A pace line can save anywhere from 15-30% on energy expenditure depending on the number of people and efficiency of the group.

Drafting is a skill, and like any other skill, it needs to be developed properly and practiced often.



Being comfortable with balance, braking and pedal mechanics are all important when riding in close proximity to others.

Ideally, to draft properly and to maximize its benefits, cyclists rotate through a line, taking turns riding up front or taking a "pull" before peeling off and tucking in behind the last rider in the group at the back.

Pulling is not a thankless job. Research shows that the first cyclist in a pack enjoys up to a 3% reduction in wind resistance courtesy of a low-pressure air bubble that is created between riders, pushing the leader along. Therefore it's important to keep a steady pace on the front to avoid surging away from the boost – and splintering the group.

To get the maximum benefit of a pace line, each rider needs to keep their front wheel as close as possible to the rear wheel in front of them. At the introductory level, for increased safety, athletes should

ride in a staggered position with the front wheel just behind and to the side of the rear wheel of the rider ahead without overlapping the wheel in front.

As the skill level of the athlete increases, they should ride directly behind the wheel of the cyclist in front to gain maximum benefit. The further back a rider is, the less benefit they will enjoy, however, they can be as far back as 3/4 of a wheel length and still experience the benefit of conserving energy.

Athletes should maintain their comfort zone and with improved cycling skills, move closer.

The back of a pace line can get sloppy as riders accelerate and decelerate like an accordion in an effort to stay with the pack. As a cyclist moves to the back of the pace line, they should begin to increase their cadence starting at least two people before the back so that when they are ready to slide in they won't have to play catch-up.

The July 23-24 Ottawa Triathlon will have a very friendly course for drafting, and spectators will be able to view the athletes three times during the bike course.

Come out on the Saturday to see the elite athletes race in a Draft Legal format, and on Sunday we showcase the Age Group DL event. Lots of high octane excitement during Triathlon Canada's National Championships.

- COMMUNITY CLUBS -

3 rookie Kanata Rhythmic national-level gymnasts qualify for Canadian Champs

By Curtis Penke

Three of Ottawa's top young gymnasts will perform on the national stage for the first time at the May 18-22 Canadian Rhythmic Gymnastics Championships.

Haley Miller, 12, Erika Lin, 14, and Cynthia Zhang, 11, from the Kanata Rhythmic Sportive Gymnastics Club will head to Winnipeg after a season where they experienced a new level of dedication and hard work as part of the club's new national-level program.

"We've been working so hard together all year and we've seen each other's ups and downs," notes Miller. "To be able to go to nationals together is really exciting."

Miller says it was a "very surreal moment" when she learned she'd qualified for nationals through the Apr. 15-17 Eastern Regional Rhythmic Gymnastics Championships in Toronto.

On the heels of her 2nd-place performance at Elite Ontario, Miller placed 2nd



Coach Yuliana Korolyova and Eastern Canadian Regional silver medallist Haley Miller.

PHOTO: DAN PLOUFFE

overall in her Junior category and was the highest-ranked Ontario gymnast. Lin also competed at the Junior level, placing 8th overall, while Zhang finished 11th in the Novice division, just ahead of KRSG teammate Emma Yau, who narrowly missed the nationals cut.

"These results are beyond the club's expectations," KRSG founder Dasa Lelli states proudly. "Simply because it's the first time they've entered this stream."

Before this season, the club had no national program, competing only in the provincial stream and the recreational

level. Lelli recalls having to send gymnasts to other clubs once they got to a certain point in their development. As the KRSG coach of 40+ years noticed the talent increasing at her club, "we had to enter the national stream" in order for her athletes to reach their full potential, she details.

That meant hiring Yuliana Korolyova – a well-known coach and national judge from Toronto "who could take talented gymnasts to the next level," Lelli explains.

KRSG continues next page



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"Yuliana pushed us a lot," Miller highlights. "She supports and praises us a lot. She makes sure that we're working and doing our best."

Lisa Miller, Haley's mother, believes the strong coaching at KRSB is behind the gymnasts' success, as well as the "strong base and foundation Dasa's helped create, the culture in the club, and how they train the girls not just physically but mentally."

Korolyova, meanwhile, says it's all about the athletes.

"When the girls are so hard-working, it's easier to give them all the tools for success," indicates the Russian-born coach. "They're the ones doing all the hard work and I'm happy very happy to work with such a great team."

With their nationals debut on tap, Miller says she's excited to perform in a new environment – one she witnessed firsthand as a spectator/helper when Ottawa hosted the Canadian Gymnastics Championships in 2013 and 2014 at Carleton University.

"I would look at the gymnasts and be like, 'I want to be there one day,' Miller recalls. "Now I'm happy that it's my turn to be on the carpet."

- JUNIOR LEAGUES -

Soccer sides ready to contend again for top of Ontario

By Dan Plouffe

In the new normal for local provincial-level soccer, a number of Ottawa teams enter the 2016 campaign with legitimate hopes for championships, which marks a stark contrast from just a few short years ago.

"That's the progression we've seen over the last three years – we are seen as genuine challengers in basically every league," notes Ottawa South United technical director Paul Harris, whose club has averaged about two provincial crowns a season since they first broke through in 2012. "We're always looking towards the top. It's not about surviving relegation or just competing and getting by. Our aspirations going into the season are high."

The high hopes start with the decorated OSU Force U16 boys' side, winners of 2014 Ontario Youth Soccer League and 2015 Ontario Cup titles.

"We'll be trying to win both this year," signals Harris. "We want to retain the Ontario Cup in a nationals year (the U15 level is an age group not featured at the Canadian Championships), and we want to have a better run in the OYSL this year."

OSU's path will be made easier with the disbandment of the Gloucester Hornets side that went 14-1 last season, brought on by a clash in developmental philosophies between the club's technical leadership and the team's coach.

Harris says he expects nothing less than an Ontario Player Development League east division crown from his U15 boys, while the U14 boys would have topped the standings that aren't officially tracked at the U13 level last season and will hope to challenge for a title



that counts this year.

Amongst the most promising local girls' sides are OSU's U17 group – runners-up last year and now under

the leadership of former Fury W-League coach Dom Oliveri – and the Force U16s, who went 7-4-3 last year despite a number of injuries. Each of those divisions will feature a trio of Ottawa teams – Cumberland United in U17, Gloucester in U16 and West Ottawa in both.

While the top prospects for the top wear Force blue and black, there are a number of other local entries expected to be competitive amongst the province's best, starting with the West Ottawa Warriors U15 boys, who finished on OSU's heels in a 1-2 Ottawa finish last year and have added more talent to their lineup for 2016.

The Fury will seek to replicate their 2014 title in the girls' U18 ranks, West Ottawa and Gloucester will seek to make some noise in the U17 boys' league, and the Nepean Hotspurs are expecting stronger entries in this year's OPDL alongside West Ottawa and OSU.

"Of course I'm big on OSU, but I'm also aware that there's other clubs in the area that are doing a good job," Harris underlines. "We've set the benchmark high and they're trying to stay with us by providing more for their coaches and players as well."

"We are raising the standards, and we're definitely putting Ottawa on the map."

BLUE DEVILS BOUNCE PAST FAVOURED FOES AT HOME CUP



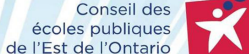
PHOTO: STEVE KINGSMAN

Morgan Fecteau and the host Nepean Blue Devils blew past favoured Transway Basketball of Hamilton to open their Ontario Cup under-16 girls' provincial championship tournament, held Apr. 29-May 1 in Ottawa.

Competing in the top division, the 7th-seeded Blue Devils outperformed expectations, dropping a 53-34 contest to the Ancaster Blitz and winning another match 50-37 over the Kitchener-Waterloo Vipers en route to the bronze medal match, where they fell 48-36 to the Caledon Cougars.

Timmins Select won the Div. 1 provincial crown over Ancaster. Two local teams met in the Div. 3 final, with the Ottawa Shooting Stars topping the Goulbourn Hornets 41-36.





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Rebelles Wrap



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Rockin' Rebelle Profile: Basketball world giant David Quinn



David Quinn is starting to see the world through basketball, and the basketball world is starting to see this Louis-Riel Rebelle as a rising talent.

One of the Grade 11 sports-études student's most recent stops brought him all the way to Milan for the Lissone Junior International Tournament. Playing alongside a Toronto group led by Ryerson University coach Patrick Tatham, Quinn faced off against talented and well-organized European sides while staying with a host Italian family (and eating very well, he notes).

"We learned a bit about their culture and their way of life," highlights the 6' 10 1/2" centre. "It was a super great experience, I really, really enjoyed it. I'd never been outside Canada, except for maybe Syracuse – that's the farthest I'd been."

Quinn is starting to make a name for himself abroad, though his talents are already well known within Canada.

This past summer, he played for silver medal-winning Team Ontario at the Canadian Under-17 Championships in Halifax, and the Ottawa Elite player also helped lift his club to a provincial title ahead of all challengers from Canada's basketball hotbed in the Greater Toronto Area.

Profil Rebelle: David Quinn, un géant dans le monde du basket

David Quinn commence à voir le monde grâce au basket-ball, et le monde du basket commence à voir ce Rebelle de Louis-Riel comme un talent prometteur.

Une des destinations ultimes pour l'élève de 11e année fut Milan, site du Tournoi international junior Lissone.

Aux côtés d'un groupe torontois mené par Patrick Tatham, l'entraîneur des Rams de l'Université Ryerson, Quinn s'est frotté à des adversaires européens talentueux et bien organisés. Il a d'ailleurs logé durant tout le tournoi chez une famille italienne (et il a très bien mangé, a-t-il dit).

« On a appris un peu de leur culture et leur façon de vivre », note Quinn. « C'était super bon. J'ai beaucoup aimé ça. Je n'étais jamais parti du Canada sauf pour aller à Syracuse, c'était le plus loin ».

UN NOM À RETENIR

Le centre de 6 pieds 10 pouces et demie commence à être connu à l'étranger. Ses exploits sont toutefois déjà bien connus au Canada.

L'été dernier, Quinn a gagné une médaille d'argent avec l'équipe de l'Ontario aux Championnats canadiens des moins de 17 ans à Halifax.

Il a aussi remporté un championnat provincial avec son club Ottawa Elite, battant toutes les équipes de Toronto, l'épicentre du basket-ball canadien.



Grâce à ses exploits, Quinn a attiré l'attention d'un club de

Quinn caught the eye of many in the GTA with his performances, earning an invite to join the Canada Elite program for four top tournaments in the Under Armour circuit, which included an April event in New York City.

With many university/college scouts watching, Quinn's dream of a basketball scholarship is drawing nearer, and he hopes that may lead to more opportunities to travel the globe down the road.

SPORTS-ÉTUDES IMPACT

The Rockland native recalls that the first big step on that journey was deciding to attend Louis-Riel.

"It was in Grade 9 that it started getting serious for me," recounts Quinn, who followed his older brother Michael into the sport. "They have a really great sports-study program here."

Being able to train during school hours – one day for basketball, and the next for physical training – is highly beneficial, explains the 245-lb. athlete who still wants to add more weight in order to be ready to take on men.

It also helps having teachers who go the extra mile to connect with students and ensure they succeed in their studies, adds Quinn, noting he's gained a tonne from working with Louis-Riel basketball coach André Desjardins as well.

"I learned how to play here," he underlines. "(The program) is opening doors for me to the university level, it's training me, and it's making me play better no matter where I'm playing."

Toronto, le Canada Élite, et il a reçu une invitation pour une série de quatre tournois du circuit Under Armour, dont l'un d'eux a eu lieu en avril à New York.

Avec autant de recruteurs présents, son rêve de voir ses frais universitaires couverts grâce au basket semble à portée de main. Il espère que d'autres opportunités de parcourir le monde s'offriront à lui.

L'IMPACT SPORTS-ÉTUDES

Le natif de Rockland a entamé son parcours à Louis-Riel.

« C'est en 9e année que c'est devenu sérieux », raconte Quinn, lui qui a suivi son frère aîné dans le basket. « Ils ont un très bon programme sports-études ici. »

Pouvoir s'entraîner durant sa journée scolaire – un jour dans son sport, l'autre en musculation – c'est très avantageux, explique l'athlète de 245 livres qui désire encore prendre de la masse pour mieux rivaliser avec les adultes.

En plus, ça aide d'avoir des enseignants qui se plient en quatre pour s'assurer que les athlètes puissent réussir leurs études, rajoute Quinn, en notant qu'il a beaucoup appris en travaillant avec son entraîneur de basket André Desjardins.

« J'ai appris comment jouer ici », souligne-t-il. « (Le programme) m'ouvre des portes pour l'université, ça m'entraîne, et ça me fait mieux jouer ».

- COMMUNITY CLUBS -

Local soccer stars excel in Ontario caps

By Brennan MacDonald

The Ontario vs Quebec provincial team series provided the latest stage for local soccer player Angelina Gendreau to shine in high-level competition, though the standout Ottawa Fury FC girls' academy player has already been making a name for herself for several years.

"I am happy with how I played all weekend," says Gendreau, who was credited with a goal and set-up three more as her Ontario under-16 girls recorded 5-1 and 5-2 wins and a 4-4 draw in three matches against their Quebec counterparts Apr. 22-24 in Vaughan.

The 5' 4" attacking midfielder vaulted herself into the spotlight last season when she won the Ontario Youth Soccer League U18 girls' scoring race with 13 goals in 10 games – as a 14-year-old.

"It was last year that I saw the most growth and development from Angelina - physically, mentally, tactically, technically," highlights Fury coach Audra Sherman. "It was kind of the year that put her on the map."

Sherman explains that Gendreau's ability to read and adapt to situations on the soccer field is part of what sets her apart, along with a nose for the goal and an unselfishness to drag defenders away and then distribute the ball to teammates.

"She assists as many times as she scores," Sherman notes. "She is just an all-around player and teammate."

Gendreau's drive is also key to her success – not just her motivation, but also the trips she makes into town from Cornwall several times a week to train with the Fury.



Angelina Gendreau.

PHOTO PROVIDED

"She will do her homework and she is organized and she will do what she has to do because she knows she has soccer," underlines Gendreau's father, Guy. "She'll go to the gym when she has to because it is all about the soccer. That is what drives her."

The 2016 club season kicks off in May and Gendreau has her sights set winning the league scoring crown once again.

"I always try to be a better player than I was," she indicates.

The Grade 10 student is also ready to plot out the next step in her career, which she hopes includes playing NCAA Div. 1 soccer.

Last year, Gendreau and her Fury teammates travelled to New York to play several exhibition games against college teams, including Columbia University.

"It was very exciting and it was interesting too because I want to play for an NCAA Division 1 school, so it was good to know how they play," recounts Gendreau, who may like to study journalism or physiotherapy at either Michigan State, South Carolina or Michigan. "They were obviously faster and stronger, but skill level, I think at times we could outplay them."

Sherman also envisions

greater stages beyond the provincial level for her young prospect.

"I would love to see her get an opportunity to be invited to the next national team camp because I truly believe in that environment, she would thrive," Sherman indicates. "This is the year that she is really going to show how dangerous she is and what she can offer at the next level."

BIG OTTAWA CREW

A total of 20 local players competed in the provincial series across the six Ontario teams from U15 through U17 on the boys' and girls' sides.

Also a goal scorer for Canada's U17 national team during an April match vs USA, Louis-Riel high school student Jonathan David scored seven goals in three games for the Ontario U16 boys' team, while Ottawa South United's Daniel Assaf tallied twice for the U15 boys and Fury's Olivia Cooke also got on the scoresheet for the U15 girls.

Ontario won each series over Quebec at all levels, earning a combined record of 9-3-6 in the contests.

"I think it shows the strength and depth in Ontario," underlines OSU technical director Paul Harris, whose club had 12 representatives in the provincial series.

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- HIGH SCHOOLS -

Louis-Riel forges new path in independent girls' basketball loop

By Dan Plouffe

Louis-Riel high school will be one of eight schools competing in the inaugural season of a new elite-level girls' basketball league, the Ontario Scholastic Basketball Association.

"I think it'll be good for the growth of the game in the city," says Louis-Riel Rebelles coach André Desjardins. "It's pretty exciting to be a part of it."

Louis-Riel will compete against Toronto-area prep schools, academies and other schools with specialized sports programs similar to Louis-Riel's sports-études.

Though it operates independently of the traditional OFSAA high school sports stream, the OSBA is ultimately governed by the Ontario Basketball Association, which saw a need for a league of that nature.

"For the last 10 years, Ontario has probably had the most insane non-periodized training system for athletes, especially high school athletes," Desjardins states, recalling an OFSAA final where his Rebelles, playing their 21st game of the year, matched up against a school playing their 62nd contest.

"It didn't seem to make a big difference," adds the coach of the 2009 and 2010 provincial 'AAA' champions. "We still ended up winning."

Desjardins describes a scenario where high school season leads straight into club season,

Louis-Riel high school seeks to create even more next-level players such as former Rebelle and University of Ottawa Gee-Gee Catherine Traer.



meaning players have kept up an exhausting pace before summer hits – when the biggest opportunities are in front of them with provincial or national teams. Injuries and drops in performance often strike as a result, he highlights.

"Where is their off-season? Where are they getting their physical training? Where are they getting their little basketball vacation where they can work on their other athletic abilities?" Desjardins explains. "The idea here is now it's one-stop shopping."

Some players involved in the Louis-Riel basketball academy may still elect to play club basketball, and many may choose not to since "it's still very demanding," Desjardins notes.

The OSBA is likely to feature a schedule of just under 20 games, played every couple weeks, and a 2 1/2-month pre-season for training. Outside of league play, Louis-Riel plans to attend several NCAA exposure events in the U.S.

"We're trying to give these kids back their

time to focus on school, and recovery. You're getting the chance to build the athletes so they're at the top of their game," indicates Desjardins, a teacher at Louis-Riel since 2000. "For those who really want to get that extra level and are targeted by Ontario or Canada Basketball, this gives them the opportunity to get their training in and aspire to something bigger."

The Rebelles will continue to field a second girls' basketball team in the national capital high school league outside of the academy setting.

While OFSAA restricts the participation of athletes that attend a school with a specialized sports program if they live outside its regular boundaries, OSBA has no such policy.

"They're about the athletes," Desjardins underlines. "It's not about adult egos and rules, it's about the athletes to give them the best experience possible."

It's a bit of a flip from the norm to debut with a female program first – Desjardins notes that it would be a "natural fit" for Louis-Riel to add a boys' basketball academy in the future – though it's not unexpected given the school's history of producing talent for the university/college level.

"In girls' basketball, I feel like they don't get enough," signals Desjardins, who's been involved with the women's national team program for the better part of a decade. "There's not a lot of opportunities for them, and I think we're missing the boat on a lot of good athletes who have a lot of potential for growth."

2015 silver-medallist St. Peter Knights seek return to OFSAA for home provincials

By Daniel Prinn

The reigning OFSAA 'AAA' silver-medallist St. Peter Knights are hungry to take another crack at the top of the provincial high school girls' rugby circuit, doubly famished by the dangling carrot of playing in OFSAA at home.

The national capital association will host the OFSAA girls' rugby championships May 30-June 1 at Twin Elm Rugby Park in Richmond, and the Knights want back on the podium, though they face the challenge of injuries to key leaders, and a number of strong players who graduated last year.

"It's definitely possible," says Pat Thompson, in his 10th year coaching the squad. "It's a bit different from last year (but) if they put their mind to it, it's definitely achievable. It's a matter of how bad they want it."

In 2014, the Knights placed 5th at OFSAA. In 2015, they broke through to reach the final, but lost in the final minute by one try to Oakville Trafalgar in the OFSAA championship game.

The 2nd-place finish landed the program their first medal finish at OFSAA, but the girls felt mixed emotions.

"Our goal was to make top-3, so we met our goal," signals Emma Crivello, one of the team's captains and seniors. "Once we realized we were so close to being able to win the



whole thing – and to be able to give that to the grads – it's heartbreaking to say we lost by one try in the last few seconds."

With many rookies in the lineup, a big part of the Knights' focus in on

"getting them experience in a competitive situation," notes Thompson, whose squad participated in a late-April pre-season tournament in Kingston, posting a 2-1 record.

"It was a first rugby experience for

a lot of them," he adds.

Injuries have already plagued the Knights – key player Vanessa Macias is out with a bad shoulder and Team Ontario/Team Canada star Rachel McCallan will likely be out until OFSAA, nursing a serious ankle injury from March's National U18 Sevens Championships.

"That just means other players have to step up and they know that," Thompson underlines. "They'll fill in and do the job."

The Knights' top local rivals are smaller 'A/AA'-classified schools – the Ashbury Colts and Merivale Marauders will take host and champion berths at that level – which leaves St. Pete's some breathing room as they challenge Glebe, Longfields-Davidson Heights and Holy Trinity for the 'AAA' berths.

Last year's provincial silver medal win most definitely serves a confidence-booster going into this year, indicates Knight Emily Tippins.

"I think it's going to help us now that we've had that experience to go in and hopefully win gold this year," says the flanker and co-captain.

Ranked in the top-10 provincially for the past five years, St. Peter now expects to win every year or at least be a major competitor, Crivello maintains.

"The expectation is high because of those teams who have come before us," she explains. "They've built a culture of excellence, and it brings a

lot of expectation as well to continue that legacy other teams that have left behind."

That provides an obligation "to bust our asses essentially," Crivello laughs. "We're not expecting anything other than giving it everything we have. It's what defines our team. I didn't really understand the meaning of 'hard work pays off' until I was on this team."

SPK COACH TO LEAD RAVENS

Steering the ship to develop that type of environment is Thompson, who was recently appointed head coach of the Carleton University Ravens women's team.

"It's different but it'll be exciting," says Thompson, previously an assistant with the program. "I've been lucky to coach a lot of good players here, so I think that's prepared me to take on that next challenge."

That challenge will soon include finding a way to shut down one of his current stars, Taylor Donato, a University of Ottawa-bound centre who's only ever been coached by Thompson in rugby.

But before that, the Knights would like to accomplish something big in their hometown as a final high school memory.

"Every year we look forward to 'Oh, we have next year.' But this is the last one," Crivello underlines. "You'll never be on a team like this, so it's very bittersweet coming to an end."

- COMMUNITY CLUBS -

Mavs 14U boys collect Ontario silver on eve of home Eastern Cdns

By Megan Lalonde

The Maverick 14-and-under boys' team produced Ottawa's top result at April's Ontario Volleyball Association provincial championships in Kitchener-Waterloo, and they'll carry the torch as the region's top hope once again come the Eastern Canadian Volleyball 14U Championships, set for May 5-8 at Carleton University.

The OVA silver medal win marks the second consecutive provincial medal win for this Mavs group, on the heels of a 13U title last season.

"I think that the boys are quite proud of their achievement," indicates 14U boys' coach Paul Gratton, whose team won 8 of 9 matches to reach the championship game. "There are many very strong teams in Ontario and we had a long and difficult journey to make it once more to the finals."

Maverick club president Kerry MacLean says that while the team's silver medal was "a highlight of the season," the sting of a loss can feel sharper when coming into the tournament as defending champions.

"When you set the bar that high, it is tough to repeat," he adds.

Of course, coach Gratton is no stranger to exciting wins and tough losses. As a former cap-



tain of Team Canada, an Olympian, and an all-star who played for professional teams around the world, he has been referred to as the "Gordie Howe of volleyball."

Gratton, who first became involved with the Maverick organization in 2007, officially took on the role of head coach when his son Maxime joined the club's first-ever 13U boys' team two years ago.

Since then, the program for the youngest

competitive players has only grown. Last year, so many boys attended the 13U tryouts that the Mavericks decided to make two teams – one a competitive squad, and another concentrating more on skill development. The formula remained intact this year, with the Maverick club's 14U division comprised of two entries called the Bandits and the Renegades.

The Renegades wound up finishing 9th in the top provincial tier, with the Bandits taking silver.

"For both teams to finish in the top pool is quite rare," underlines Gratton, who works alongside fellow coaches Sylvain Ducharme, Réjean Godmaire, Claude Ferland and Mark Matheson.

A number of other local teams had successful showings at provincials. Recording top-8 finishes were the Maverick Diamondbacks 13U boys, the Maverick Blackjacks 16U girls, the Maverick 18U boys, the Ottawa Fusion 16U boys and the bronze-medallist Maverick 17U boys, who made their third consecutive podium appearance at provincials.

Next up are the Eastern Canadians for the 14U, 15U and 16U levels, and the Volleyball Canada National Championships for the 17U and 18U divisions.

The home Easterns are another opportunity for Gratton's group to go after a medal, though the priority always remains focused on developing his players' volleyball and life skills over competition results.

"I think that it contributes a lot to having a successful team, on and off the scoreboards," he explains. "Apart from from all the technical and tactical aspects of the game, there needs to be passion and fun and challenges, and with the help of all the coaches involved in our program, we try to bring this to the gym at every practice."

Ottawa Elite girls debut as unbeaten champs

By Josh Bell

They hadn't lost once up to that point – 18 wins in 18 games – but suddenly the Ottawa Elite under-19 girls' basketball team was behind 11-0 in the Apr. 10 championship game at the Mattamy Athletic Centre in Toronto.

No matter in the end for the team that outscored its Canadian Youth Basketball League senior girls' opponents by a 956-482 margin this year. A run of 15 consecutive points of their own put Ottawa back in the driver's seat as the league's rookie participants walked off with an eventual 55-50 victory over Toronto-based Canada Elite.

"I was really proud of the girls," signals Ottawa Elite coach Jaime McLean. "It was a pretty exciting start in the first year venturing into the girls' side and being able to go 19-0 and win the CYBL Championship, it's pretty special."

Madison Reid, with 28 points in the final including a league-record eight 3-pointers, was named championship MVP. Earlier in the tournament, Ottawa Elite downed Crunch Time Basketball 64-20 and then put up another 64 in demolishing the regular season's highest scoring team, the Jayhawks, 64-18.

"Our defence was where we focused," McLean underlines. "Being able to shut teams down almost completely and stopping them from running any other offences or sets, that really made those margins (of victory) as big as they were."

Not everything came easily to the team this year, however. The Ottawa Elite girls had a completely different experience at a pre-season tournament in Montreal.

"We started off with four straight losses," McLean recounts. "But it set a tone for the girls and showed them that if they wanted to be playing at this level and



competing like this, having a goal of playing university basketball, this is what it's going to be like.

"They stepped up and were able to complete a really good season."

Future York University Lions player Jenica Klassen, a Longfields-Davidson Heights Secondary School senior, is one of five graduating players who will move on from the Ottawa Elite program next season.

With many players returning to the senior girls' level league-wide, McLean expects that'll make a title that much more difficult to attain next year.

"It should make things very exciting," notes the vice-president of the Nepean Blue Devils community club, a feeder to the Ottawa Elite program. "Realistically, I think now that we've set the bar as senior division champions, we have to fight to go back and repeat. That's going to be the toughest part: everyone is going to know us as the #1 team and having the target on our back. Being the number one isn't always easy, it's probably the hardest spot to play in."

"So I think that's going to give some motivation to the girls, to really fight and keep going."

Kevin Nelson Soccer Academy gains Ottawa's 1st provincially-recognized non-club sanctioning



The KNSA U14 and U17 boys' teams will both travel to Sweden this summer for the Gothia Cup.

By Callum Fraser

The 2016 soccer season is young, but the local Kevin Nelson Soccer Academy already has a big victory under its belt from the off-season boardroom.

KNSA has been granted status as an Ontario Soccer Association-Recognized Non-Club Academy (ORNCA) – a relatively new classification the provincial sport governing body created in order to sanction the academies that don't follow the traditional not-for-profit community club model.

The academies' popularity has been on the rise, particularly in Toronto, and serves as a sign that the Canadian public is getting more serious about soccer.

"The academy structure is giving the players more of a professional feel, similar to that of European academies," says Nelson, who founded his academy three years ago and has seen his membership swell to nearly 100 registered players for this season.

The initial adversarial stance between the OSA and the academies has since thawed a little, and with ORNCA recognition, KNSA players are now eligible for selection to provincial team programs, and the academy can schedule exhibition matches against local clubs that compete in regional or provincial leagues, for example.

That's a big win, notes Nelson, since his teams in the past would only be able to get their competition in by traveling to face other academies in the Toronto area. It was a long, but worthwhile, process to gain ORNCA status, Nelson adds.

"Getting licensed coaches was the biggest challenge," recalls the National 'B'-licensed coach whose staff included many high-level former pro and semi-pro players who were younger in their coaching careers. "Because without licensed coaching, they won't even give you the time of day."

KNSA is now recognized as a Soccer Academy Alliance Canada member as well. While

a handful of KNSA players competed in the SAAC league previously, it was under another team's banner, whereas now two entries will wear KNSA colours.

While the academy philosophy is to place less emphasis on the team and greater attention on each player, it is important to face good competition, Nelson underlines.

His under-14 and U17 boys' groups are expecting to get a major taste for that this July when they head to the Gothia Cup in Sweden, an international tournament featuring around 1,600 teams from 80 nations.

"So many teams are going to be there from all over the world – from Africa, South America and Europe," highlights Nelson, a past international player for his native Trinidad & Tobago. "It's going to be a great experience to show these kids what it takes to play at that level."

KNSA continues next page

- COMMUNITY CLUBS -

2 local clubs hit cheer worlds in Orlando



Black Widow Cheer Gym's 'Love' team was granted entry to the cheerleading worlds in Orlando thanks to a solid performance at April's nationals in Niagara Falls (above).

By Alex Quevillon

It was a magical few days at Disney World for a pair of local cheer clubs attending a massive gathering of their sport in Orlando for the Apr. 21-22 International Cheer Union World Cheerleading Championships.

"This is the competition that everyone in the cheerleading industry works toward as this is open to the entire world," underlines Cheer Sport Sharks coach Missy Prosper. "You have to qualify to be able to attend this competition. Many cheerleaders look for gyms to have the opportunity

to go to worlds."

There are many different divisions at worlds, including pom and hip hop categories for coed and all-girl national team and club entries alike.

While the local clubs didn't hound the hardware at worlds, they had a successful event nonetheless, Prosper indicates.

"We weren't concerned about placements—they had a great performance," she says, though their 'Great White' Sharks group nonetheless collected a division title at this year's Cheer Evolution National Championships Apr. 8-10 in Niagara Falls.

The Sharks also had a 'Grey Reefs' squad in Florida, while Black Widow Cheer Gym sent its 'Love' team.

"Having two competitive cheer gyms in Ottawa is great for the city," Prosper adds. "I think it is wonderful that Ottawa was represented by two different gyms at worlds, as we can show that our city is producing athletes that have competed at the highest level in the industry. Our goal for Ottawa Sharks is to keep working towards training athletes with a love for the sport and reaching the highest level individually and of course as a team."



Participants blast off in the 1k walk/run event at the Alive to Strive Race to support kidney fitness, held Apr. 14 out of Terry Fox Athletic Facility. With a record turnout of around 900, the 6th-annual event again supported the organization's active living grant program to benefit individuals in the Ottawa area with chronic kidney disease.

Notable participants included London 2012 Paralympic Games silver medallist Patrice Dagenais, who led a group of Ottawa Stingers wheelchair rugby players in the 5k wheelchair event, and five-time Paralympic medallist Jason Dunkerley, who put in a leisurely Sunday 5k. Last year's Canada Army Run 5k champ Matt Setlack dominated the 10k race with a time of 32:56.7.

KNESA cont'd from previous page

But more than competition, Nelson hopes the event will provide inspiration.

"I had the chance to play in my first big tournament in El Salvador, and sitting in the stands I said to myself, 'Wow, these Mexican kids and these Costa Rican kids are good and I'm not at that level,'" recalls the former pro player who competed in places such as Australia,

Venezuela, T & T and even Stittsville, with the now-defunct Ottawa Wizards of the Canadian Soccer League.

"My ultimate goal is for them to experience the culture of soccer," he adds. "To see how these other kids live the game, how they eat, sleep and breathe the game.

"Because that's the culture I came from, and I want to provide the same opportunities for these kids."

OTTAWA SPORTSPAGE SNAPSHOTS

WATER POLO DEFEATS, SELECTIONS & SWIM QUALIFIERS IN BUSY AQUATICS MONTH

A late surge wasn't enough to lift the Canadian men's water polo team to Rio 2016, as Ottawa native John Conway missed out on earning one of four available Olympic berths with an 8-7 quarter-final defeat to Spain at the Apr. 3-10 qualification tournament in Italy. Underdog Canada went undefeated in the round robin portion of the event with wins over Russia, Slovakia and France and draws against Romania and tournament-champion Hungary.

"The difference in qualifying was one goal. As much of a heartbreak as that is, it can still be seen as a huge positive as we are within inches of qualifying for the Olympics," Conway said in a Canadian Sport Institute Calgary media release (composed by Ottawa speed skating legend Kristina Groves). "Our group has known for a while that we could do great things. Canada has been, and will continue to be, a top contending team in the sport of water polo."

Three local water polos were selected to be part of Canada's centralized 19-and-under national team programs this summer: Megan MacCormack of the Capital Wave Water Polo Club, and Ottawa Titans Milan Duhaime and Aleksa Gardijan. The Wave's Rodrigo Rojas will serve as manager for the men's team, while past Wave coach Dan Békhazi will act as assistant for the women's squad.

At the 16U Eastern National Championship Apr. 29-May 1 in Etobicoke, the Wave girls and Titans boys both earned bronze medals. The Titans won their bronze medal match 8-6 over Montreal's CAMO, while the Wave downed Toronto's Mavericks 7-6.

It was a disappointing weekend for the local sides as the Wave hosted the 19U men's and women's Eastern conference National Championship League finals Apr. 15-17 in Gatineau. The Wave women and Titans men both finished 4th and missed the two available berths in their national finals competitions.

At the Apr. 5-10 Canadian Olympic Swimming Trials in Toronto, 23-year-old swimmer Ashton Baumann, who spent several years of his youth training for swimming in town while his father (and Canadian Olympic legend) Alex worked for Own The Podium, claimed the first Olympic berth of his career thanks to his victory in the men's 200-metre breaststroke.



BIG BICYCLE WINS FOR PAIR OF LOCAL ATHLETES

Julia Gibson of the Ottawa Bicycle Club won five medals (three silver and two bronze) at the Apr. 1-3 Canadian Track Cycling Championships in Milton, while OBC's Marie-Alexandre Lemire earned a bronze. With a stringent focus on women's endurance athletes, Gibson was bypassed as a sprinter in the selections for this summer's Canadian World Junior Championships team.

Ottawa native Matteo Dal Cin became the first Canadian to win the Redlands Bicycle Classic in the 34-year history of the continental pro cycling stage race in California. The 25-year-old Silber Pro Cycling athlete finished atop the general classification standings over the course of the five-stage competition.

"I'm over the moon," Dal Cin said in a Silber news post, highlighting the instrumental role his teammates played in the victory. "Words can't describe how great it was to have the guys looking out for me all week.

It really helps you dig in that little bit more when you know your teammates have put their trust in you — you have to do your best ride, after they sacrifice for you all day."

LOCAL FENCER & CANADIAN COACH PLACE 9TH AT TEAM WORLDS

Ottawa native Kelleigh Ryan and the Paul ApSimon-coached Canadian women's foil team placed 9th at the Team World Championships on Apr. 25 in Rio de Janeiro in what amounts to their discipline's Olympic competition for 2016.

Due to limitations in the number of athletes the International Olympic Committee allows in fencing, one men's and one women's team event is excluded from each Olympic cycle, and for 2016, it was men's sabre and women's foil's turn to sit out. In another Olympic year, 44th world-ranked Ryan would have been in line to make her Olympic debut, however world #25 Eleanor Harvey of Hamilton will instead be Canada's lone representative in the women's foil individual event.

"It sucks," Ryan stated flatly while competing in the Toronto 2015 Pan American Games. "I'm really glad that women's sabre was added (to the Olympics in 1996), but it's really unfortunate that fencing loses for that."

Gold medallists thanks to a massive upset over USA in Toronto, the Canadian foil women have consistently shown they are amongst the best in the world, and they are a young group that could still challenge for the Olympic podium come 2020.

"We really hope that we'll all stay together," added Ryan, the eldest member of the team, who would be 33 come the Tokyo Olympics. "It's not old in the fencing world. As long as I've got funding, I can keep going, and I really want to. Hopefully life just doesn't get in the way — careers and stuff like that."

OTTAWA ROWER OPENS OLYMPIC SEASON WITH WORLD CUP SILVER

University of Ottawa grad Cristy Nurse of the Ottawa Rowing Club kicked off her Olympic season with a silver medal win in the women's eight at the first World Cup of 2016 Apr. 15-17 in Italy. Canada finished within a quarter-second of champion Netherlands.

BROWN 2ND IN PRO TRIATHLON DEBUT

Carp native Joanna Brown debuted with a 2nd-place finish in the first-ever Major League Triathlon event on Apr. 16 in Texas. Competing for a team out of Sarasota, FL, Brown was one of 16 women chosen for the inaugural season of the pro triathlon series.

The 23-year-old former world under-23 medallist has an outside shot at claiming an Olympic berth. In a tight race to determine the final qualification standings, the Canadian women could claim anywhere from one to three entries depending on their performances at the May 14-15 World Triathlon Series race in Yokohama.

HOLLOWAY GETS CALL TO CANADA SPORTS HALL

Four-time Olympian Sue Holloway of Ottawa was unveiled as one of this year's seven inductees into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame on Apr. 26 in Toronto. Now a tireless volunteer in the local sports community, Holloway was the first woman to represent Canada at both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games in the same year, competing in both kayaking and cross-country skiing in 1976.

OTTAWA RESIDENT TO PLAY IN SOFTBALL WORLDS

Long-time national team player and 2015 Pan Am Games champion Jen Yee has had her spot confirmed on the 2016 Canadian women's softball team.

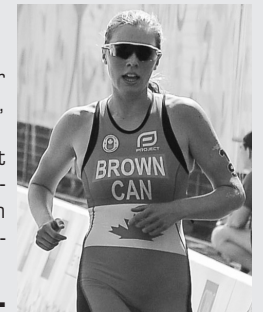
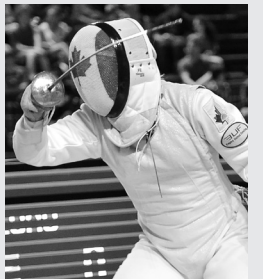
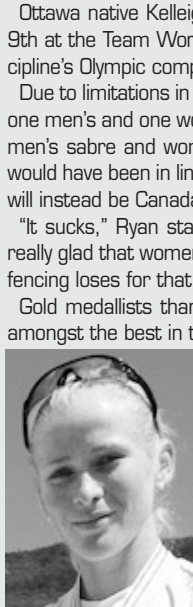
The Ottawa resident from North Delta, B.C. will have the opportunity to play in the Women's World Softball Championship next door to her hometown from July 15-24 in Surrey, B.C.

OUTGOING MYERS RIDERS FOOTBALL COACH CELEBRATED

Myers Riders football coach Max Palladino was named the Ontario Football Alliance's coach of the year at an April banquet in Guelph. The past Ontario Varsity Football League champion was also inducted into the OVFL Hall of Fame. The 49-year-old plans to step aside from head coaching duties this season.

LOCAL VOLLEYBALL COACH TO DIRECT CANADA

Maverick Volleyball Club and Louis-Riel high school coach Frank St-Denis will serve as a member of the Canadian junior national team coaching staff this summer. Player selections will occur at a June 5-9 camp in Gatineau.



OTTAWA SPORTSPAGE

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Under the direction of the Ottawa Community Sport Media Team, our group also promotes access-to-sports initiatives for local youth who live in social housing communities.

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



Team of the Month: Ottawa Elite U19 Women's Basketball Team

Team Members: Sarah Benoit, Katie Elliot, Morganna Hinds, Emma Kieseckamp, Amanda Lloyd, Jennica Klassen, Madison Reid, Kennedy Thompson, Rielly Thompson, Sasha Thomson, Gabrielle Tourigny, Darien Wrona, Coaches Jaime McLean, Anthony Carter and Jeff Heath.

About: In their first season in the Canadian Youth Basketball League, the Ottawa Elite U19 Women's Basketball Team earned a perfect 16-0 regular season and went on to win all three of their matches during the league's championship weekend. Ottawa trounced their first two opponents 64-20 and 64-18 to setup a final against Toronto-based Canada Elite. Down 11-0, Ottawa responded with 15 consecutive points of their own as the rivals traded the lead back and forth until championship MVP Madison Reid took control en route to a 28-point performance in her team's 55-50 triumph.

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.



Athlete of the Month: Haydn Bechthold

Sport: Soccer

Club: Ottawa South United Soccer Club

School/Grade: Grade 12 ESP Louis-Riel

About: It's been a busy spring season for soccer player Haydn Bechthold. The OSU college prep program participant recently spent a week training with Stoke City FC and Wolverhampton FC academies in England. Set to graduate with honours this spring from Louis-Riel high school, Bechthold, upon his return home, committed to play post-secondary soccer with NCAA Div. II side Flagler College in St. Augustine, FL. The midfielder will major in honours business.

ELITE

Silver-medallist Devils break through for 1st NRL medal, Ice win bronze

By Austin Stanton

It was a bittersweet ending to a fantastic run for the Gloucester Devils at the Apr. 3-9 Canadian Ringette Championships in London, Ont.

The Devils went undefeated during the seven-game round robin portion of the tournament before falling 5-3 to the Cambridge Turbos in the National Ringette League's gold medal game.

"When you go to a tournament where you're only playing the top teams and it's a round robin, every single game is tough," notes Devils head coach Paul Youldon, whose club celebrated its historic first national medal win in the NRL division with the silver.

The Devils brought a high level of professionalism to an amateur sport, gathering to go through video on each of their rivals.

ONE GOAL FROM GLORY



PHOTO: CALLUM FRASER

The Ottawa Jr. Senators were on the wrong side of the fifth one-goal game of the series in the deciding contest of the Central Canada Jr. 'A' Hockey League Bogart Cup championship final against the Carleton Place Canadians.

Visit SportsOttawa.com for full coverage.



PHOTO PROVIDED

"We would talk about who we needed to stop and what tactics we needed to employ," outlines Youldon, who was assisted by Art Marcotte, Cheryl Youldon and former Carleton Ravens and University of Ottawa Gee-Gees women's hockey coach Shelley Coolidge. "I have some serious leaders on this team who would step up and say, 'Here's what we need to do.'"

Youldon got a helping hand from the likes of Team Canada veterans Colleen Hagan, Kaitlyn Youldon and Dom Scapillati, an NCAA soccer player.

A key for the Devils was to not get too carried away after earning victories over Edmonton, Cambridge and Montreal – the NRL's top-3-ranked teams – within their first four games.

Amongst their future opponents was their long-time nemesis, the 2014 national-champion

Ottawa Ice, who'd always been a step ahead of Gloucester in recent years, and were putting together a run of their own at the tournament.

"We were able to refocus quite well as a group by having a team meeting before every game," highlights Kaitlyn Youldon, Paul's daughter. "We would make sure to put the previous games out of our mind and think about our next opponent."

2 LOCAL CLUBS ON RINGETTE PODIUM

The Devils wound up beating the Ice 5-3 to conclude the robin round at 7-0 and advance directly to the championship game. Cambridge downed Ottawa in the semi-final to leave the Ice with the bronze medal, and went on to break a 3-3 tie at halftime with a goal in each of the 3rd and 4th quarters in the championship contest with the Ice.

Despite the defeat, coach Youldon was pleased with his team's effort and reminded them once the initial heartbreak subsided a little that there was plenty to celebrate.

That included three tournament all-star selections – goalie Jasmine Leblanc on the second team, and sisters Kaitlyn and Kelsey Youldon on the first team.

Kaitlyn Youldon says it was amazing to be a part of the Devils' groundbreaking season, and doing so alongside her family made the experience that much more special.

"We have always been a ringette family," underlines the former Nepean Ravens youth player who hadn't been coached by her father for six years until he took the reins for the Devils NRL team last season. "I honestly can't imagine it any other way."

SUPER SCHOOL SPORTS MONTH



PHOTO: DAN PLOUFFE

A talk for students in the sports-études program by 1996 Olympic gold medallist Bruny Surin was one highlight of many during a super sports month at Louis-Riel high school.

Visit SportsOttawa.com for full details.

- ELITE -

Field hockey player debuts with Team Canada

By Mat LaBranche

At the Apr. 2-10 Hawke's Bay Cup in New Zealand, Team Canada goalkeeper Rowan Harris stood tall against some of the world's top women's field hockey players. Half-a-decade ago, the Ottawa native could barely stand up.

That was the result of two concussions that brought an end to her soccer career.

"I was pretty much on bedrest for the next two or three years," recalls Harris. "When I was in Grade 10 I still wasn't able to do much running because of the headaches, which was driving me crazy."

At her parents' suggestion, Harris tried playing goalie in field hockey, since running was minimal and she could wear a helmet.

"Once my concussion symptoms started to go away, I just kind of stuck with it," the Glebe Collegiate Institute grad adds. "I guess I wasn't too bad at it and it really just took off from there."

After touring three local field hockey clubs in Ottawa, Harris began travelling back-and-forth from Ottawa to Toronto almost every weekend for tournaments, practices and showcases. She would eventually become the provincial team's starting goalie, earning the nod ahead of seven others.

RAPID CIS CHAMP

Harris then moved on to the University of British Columbia, backstopping the Thunderbirds to a Canadian Interuniversity Sport national title this past fall – their fifth national crown in a row.

With the national team training centre in Vancouver as well, the 19-year-old caught the eye of Team Canada coaches, initially earning a spot on the Canadian junior development squad and then getting the call from the senior side for a four-game series against USA in February, followed by the tournament in New Zealand.

"It's a pretty big step-up in competition," Harris indicates. "Everything is just so much faster and shots are coming in so much harder. It's a totally different environment."

"You overthink how you're playing against some of the top players in the world. You just



PHOTO: RICH LAMB, UPS THUNDERBIRDS

have to simplify things and go in knowing your role: stop the ball and ignore everything else around you."

The lowest-ranked participant in the eight-team event, Canada went winless at the Hawke's Bay Cup to place 8th. The Canadians fell by four goals to Japan and Australia, but had a 2-1 contest with South Korea and 1-0 games against both India and world #5 China, in the quarter-final.

"We were kind of expecting to finish where we did," Harris signals. "A couple years ago, we were losing to these same teams by scores of 6 or 7-0. But this year we showed a lot of improvement with much better performances and that's all

you can ask for is baby steps.

"From a No. 19 (world ranking), you can't expect to jump up to No. 1 in the world right away, but it was nice to see that all of our hard work has paid off, as we're slowly starting to catch up to these teams."

For Harris, the opportunity to play for Canada in a top-flight international tournament was reason enough to celebrate.

"It's a huge honour every single time you step on the field or put the jersey on," she underlines. "This was my first time competing in a large tournament like this, and I was just so excited to play some of these top-10 teams, some of

which will be heading to the Olympics.

"This is something you don't take for granted. You work hard to earn your spot to get here, so once you do and get to play, it's really something special."

NIGHTHAWKS SWOOP TO U.S. SWEEP

The Nepean Nighthawks Field Hockey Club – with whom Harris played during her final year of high school – enjoyed a breakthrough performance at a large tournament hosted by Syracuse University.

The Nighthawks under-14 girls went undefeated at the competition, allowing just one goal against in five victories.

Nepean products Liam Manning, Braedon Muldoon, Rohan Chopra and Algonquin College student Gurtej Dhaliwal will compete for Canada at the May 20-28 Junior Men's Pan American Championship in Toronto.

The team has been centralized in Vancouver prior to the event that will qualify two countries for the Junior World Cup.



OSU Force Academy Zone

12 OSU players power Ontario to sweep



(From left) Team Ontario U15 boys Nana Nuama-Mensah, Mehdi Essoussi, Coach Paul Harris, Antonio Carlini & Daniel Assaf.



The biggest collection of Ottawa South United Force Academy players to pull on Team Ontario jerseys yet helped their province to a clean sweep at all age groups in their series against Quebec Apr. 22-24 in Vaughan.

"That number always seems to be increasing year over year," underlines OSU Club Head Coach Paul Harris, whose club had a tidy dozen Force members on six Ontario sides. "Across the province, people are seeing that the OSU teams are successful at the provincial level and therefore they must have some players that are good and can compete at that level and go into those environments."

"It shows the work that's going on here. It's really good to see."

The OSU contingent included Isabella Hanisch (U14 girls), Matteo de Brienne (U14 boys), Kayza Massey (U15 girls), Daniel Assaf, Antonio Carlini, Mehdi Essoussi and Nana Nuama-Mensah (U15 boys), Emily Amano and Mollie Eriksson (U16 girls), and Barou Mbuyamba, Tony Mikhael and Monther Mohsen (U16 boys).

Harris was impressed by all the Force players' showings at the event, noting they played significant roles in the game action. In particular, Hanisch stood out by playing all 90 minutes in matches on three consecutive days and serving as team captain, while the OSU contingent drove the U15 boys' attack, led by a pair of goals from Assaf.

Despite the impressive numbers, Harris believes several more Force players could have made an impact for Team Ontario, emphasizing to those who weren't selected that involvement in the provincial program isn't the "be-all and end-all," noting that some of the club's past stars such as Millwall FC and Czech Republic youth international Kris Twardek never played for Ontario.

"There are many different routes for development, and it can happen at different times and different ways and ages," Harris underlines. "The important part is to keep working hard."

INTERNATIONAL & PRO OPPORTUNITIES

A pair of the OSU provincial series participants have since gone on to earn opportunities with national team programs.

Assaf was one of a select few players not part of Canadian Major League Soccer academies invited to Montreal for the May 3-5 U15 Canada Showcase event, while goalkeeper Eriksson was selected to be a member of Sweden's U16 women's national team thanks to her family's Swedish roots.

It's been a busy pre-season all around for OSU. Along with several other Force products, Mohsen and Carlini participated in trials with the Vancouver Whitecaps academy, and many more OSU boys and girls attended trials with European clubs as well.

Several Force groups made trips to the U.K. to train with top English clubs and to the U.S. with NCAA teams – setting up all of the OSU sides to challenge for the top of table again this season, and to continue to create more next-level opportunities for the club's players, Harris explains.

"Sometimes we think it's amazing how far we have come," reflects the OSU coach of 3 1/2 years. "We do think we're different and that we provide opportunities that would never have existed and been dreamed of in Canada with the network and the work that we do."



Team Ontario U14 girls' captain Isabella Hanisch never left the field in her team's three matches.

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