

Olympian MacLennan tells students to pursue their dreams

By Jeff Doner



King City Secondary School students were treated to a special presentation recently as King's own Olympic gold medalist Rosie MacLennan stopped by for a visit.

Visiting her old school for the first time since graduating in 2006, MacLennan spoke to students about pursuing their dreams and achieving their goals.

'It's really cool to be back to see some of my teachers that were here when I went here and also have the chance to meet some of the students that go here now. It's a huge honour to come back and be inducted into the case of distinction,' she said, looking out into the crowd.

'If you had told me as a student sitting in a gym, it doesn't seem that long ago that I was in your place, that I would be back up here with an Olympic gold medal, I would have thought you were nuts.'

MacLennan, just 25 years old, spoke about her journey to winning Canada's only Olympic gold medal at the 2012 London Summer Games and the hardship and determination it took to get there.

She started getting into trampoline at age seven. Four years later she would become the Canadian National women's champion in 2005 and again in 2009 and 2011.

In winning her Olympic gold, MacLennan set a personal record in London to crown her the world's best.

'I could very easily stand up here and tell you what it felt like on Aug. 4, 2012 to stand on top of the podium, but that would only be sharing with a very small part of that experience,' she said. 'The most valuable and fulfilling parts of that moment are what you can't see on TV.'

'It's the other 90 per cent of the journey where you learn, you grow, and how you respond to all the challenges and obstacles. It's how you interact with the people around you and how you face each and every day that ultimately shape you.'

Some words of encouragement for students to chase their own dreams followed.

'There's an inner voice inside each of us that makes us do what we do. What is it telling you? Do you even listen to it? It's easy to follow this voice as a kid, because you have no fear of dreaming the really big dreams. You can say to someone, 'I want to be a super hero and not feel ashamed,' because you're taught if you work hard enough and dream big enough, you can be anyone and you can do anything, but at some point there's this white noise that starts to creep in and you start questioning the validity of that voice and you start leaning back.'

She admitted to never really having the dream of being a trampolinist when she was a little girl, but said being an Olympian of some sort was always the goal and gave her something to chase.

'I wanted to be a part of it,' she said. 'I sat in this very gym with the dream of being an Olympian. That's what kept me going.'

An inspiring speech about facing those challenges and obstacles stood as good advice for the hundreds of students with dreams and goals of their own.

She referenced a memory of when she fell at a World Championship competition in Germany where she realized her dreams could at any moment be taken away with a slight mistake.

“Everyone faces challenges and in that moment you have two choices: let that mistake defeat you or look at that mistake as an opportunity to learn and to grow,” she said.

“In those moments where you face an obstacle, it's so clear that each mistake, each challenge that we face is kind of like a test to see how much you really want something. It's easy to get knocked down and it sucks and it hurts your ego and confidence, but getting through those challenges makes you stronger and more capable.

“Experiencing a challenge is not a weakness, it's an opportunity. Falling down is a critical step in any path.”

Now that she has her first Olympic gold medal under her belt, MacLennan is forging ahead to face a new set of goals and challenges to remain the world's Olympic champion in women's trampoline.

And she left students with a serious question to ponder: “Why not strive for your own goals and dreams?”

“This morning, we are not only celebrating Rosie's unique and distinctive achievements, but we're also taking the opportunity to recognize her for being an individual who embodies and understands that commitment, dedication and perseverance can empower an individual like nothing else can.”

“The desire and ability Rosie has demonstrated in setting and pursuing her goals to the greatest degree possible, are characteristics that we now only highly value, but we also want to instill and foster in all of our current KCSS students,” said principal Tod Dungy.