

MacLennan leads York-centered trampoline team at Pan Am Games

By Jake Courtepatte

As thousands of athletes prepare to tackle just under 50 different disciplines at the Pan Am Games in Toronto this summer, the Canadian trampoline team is thriving with local talent.

King City's Rosie MacLennan, a gold medalist in both Pan Am and Olympic competition, will lead three other athletes and two alternates in their quest for the podium, in which Canada swept gold four years ago in Guadalajara.

Canada's golden girl was also the first torch bearer for the Games, when the torch arrived in Toronto recently, before heading on a nation-wide tour. It will be in Caledon this Saturday.

The weather didn't damper the spirits of the onlookers as the torch arrived via canoe in Lake Ontario, with MacLennan grabbing it first and heading through the streets of the downtown core before handing it off to astronaut Chris Hadfield in Toronto's Distillery District to light the community flame.

"It was a real honour," said MacLennan of the experience. "To be the first torch bearer in Canada and knowing it's going all across the country ? it's a special experience."

The 26-year-old has already compiled quite a resume, winning Canada's only gold at the 2012 London Olympics as well as the Canadian National Championship in Ottawa at this time last year. Team Canada has been dominant in trampoline in general since its induction into the Olympics in 2000, coming home from each Games with at least one medal.

Assisting MacLennan in her task is a bevy of local talent from around the York Region. Jason Burnett of Nobleton has won the Canadian Senior Men's Championship eight times, most recently in Ottawa in 2014.

The King City Secondary School graduate is no stranger to the national level, having won a silver medal in the 2008 Olympics in individual trampoline.

"Having the Pan Am Games so close to home, it's nice," said Burnett. "My friends and family can actually come to my competition, having support physically there means a lot."

With veteran Stouffville native Karen Cockburn rounding out the team, Aurora's own Samantha Sendel has been placed as an alternate for the squad. Performing in doubles competitions with MacLennan, the pair has won numerous times on the international stage.

"I'm so excited," said Sendel. "Just to be there will be amazing. You can already feel the atmosphere."

While it may not look like much, Canada's entire trampoline team trains within Skyriders Trampoline Place, in a strip mall in Richmond Hill.

"It's probably the best facility in the world, even though it might not look like it," said MacLennan.

For the Pan Am Games, scheduled to hit York and the GTA in the second week of August, the trampoline team will join gymnastics at Ricoh Coliseum downtown. Tickets can still be purchased at www.toronto2015.org.