

Tessier shines in academics, sports and community work

By David Grossman



A flood of memories, overwhelmingly good and inspirational, consumes the mind of Arielle Tessier these days.

Still, there is something that stirs her emotions. Tessier knows the inevitable is not far off.

The 16-year-old whiz kid, confident and determined, will soon enter her final year of high school at Villanova College in King City before shuffling off to university ? and one that will help her benefit from bigger things leading to a career in the legal world.

For now, though, a vibrant Tessier nurtures her thoughts and shows a positive attitude, at an experience she describes as ?enjoying my home away from home.?

?I have always had a passion for learning, wanting a better education and found it all at Villanova,? said Tessier. ?From the wonderful teachers to the serenity of the campus ? this place has been everything to me and I will miss it.?

A unique school that basks in an opulent history of Catholic education, Tessier is one of the many students that have also benefitted from Villanova's richness in a variety of non-classroom activities.

?When I look around, I often see how fortunate I am and there is a need to give back,? she said. ?I have helped feed the homeless, raised money for kids in need in Africa and was involved in a special spiritual study weekend.?

Tessier has worked hard to earn scholarly grades for years, and while her thirst for knowledge and excellence has carried over to other school-related cultural and community programs including chosen as a Mayor's Youth Award winner, she has a special fondness for a particular form of sport: competitive short distance sprinting.

Give her a team uniform, a pair of shoes or cleats, and Tessier has become one of the top sprinters, for her age, in Canada devoting her attention to the 100 and 200-metres.

?It goes back to Grade 4, a coach spotted something I was doing well, my mother encouraged me to build on it and I just took a liking to it,? recalled Tessier. ?I worked at it and saw the rewards start to come. I also learned how easy it is to give up in tough situations, with a bad time or something like that, but I've stayed focused and positive at everything I do.?

How good is Tessier? Time will tell, but the youngster has piled up the awards in a short span of time. She has won six Conference of Independent School Athletic Association titles, five more at the Metro Regional level, is a two-time Ontario high school champ and stood first on the winners podium in several other provincial events.

At the 2015 IAAF World Youth Championship in Cali, Colombia, in her first major international race, she wasn't able to run the personal best she had hoped to achieve. In the summer of 2014, she suffered a nasty hamstring injury while representing Team Ontario at the summer Canadian Youth Legion Nationals in Langley, B.C.

Despite shutting down for the indoor season allowing for rehabilitation and full recovery, but thereby delaying her training, Tessier settled for a 100-metre time of 12.24 in a negative wind.

?I was honored to make Team Canada and remember being quite emotional when my mother told me the good news,? recalled Tessier. ?They are special moments you want to hang on to forever.?

Her success on the track is more like a marvel as Tessier battles an exercised-induced asthma ? a narrowing of the airways in her lungs that medical practitioners claim is triggered by strenuous training and conditioning.

Tessier's personal best time for the 100 metres is 11.97 seconds ? recorded in 2015 at the Sacred Heart Classic in Toronto. She has also run the 60 metres indoors and was focused on doing well at a U.S. indoor meet in New York ? but false-started and was disqualified.

On the fast track to success, Tessier is also quite articulate in a conversation on the topics of pride and perseverance.

"Things happen and I learned from it," said Tessier, who trains six days a week and often puts in four hours a day after school. "You have to put things in perspective and work harder. For me, when I am at my lowest, I turn to faith and it gets me through tough times."

Tessier is already on the recruiting list of more than 40 schools in the National Collegiate Athletic Association. If her wish comes true, she'll pass on a Canadian university and start classes in the fall of 2017 at either an Ivy League or other highly selective Division One school.

"I am quite proud at what I have accomplished while at Villanova," she said. "When I leave as a student, I know there will be a time when I return to re-live the wonderful times."