

High school athletes shine

By Amielle Christopherson

When the spotlight shines on big name athletes, it's hard to remember that most of them started out in badly-lit gyms or hockey rinks with no heating.

While none of these local athletes have made it to the big time yet, they might just have what it takes to get there. They play different sports and want different things, but all have the desire to give their best to get there.

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Hanna Bunton

Hanna Bunton plays for her high school hockey team, Saint Theresa's Titans, the Whitby Junior Wolves and the U18 national team. The 16-year-old has a list of achievements that shows a progression of talent and abilities that's built over the last 11 years.

In the 2008-2009 season with the Belleville Bearcats Bantam AA, she was the assistant captain and the leading scorer, as well as with her school team and won the Hockey Canada Skills award.

The 2010-2011 season saw her adding a hockey MVP and Lower Lakes Female Hockey League silver medal to that. Her most recent season is the one that catches eyes, however. Chosen to be on the U18 Canada team and going to development camp in Slovakia, it feels like she's almost there. The scholarship offers that she has received from colleges in the United States just add weight to that.

"It's a first step, being part of that program and hopefully being part of the U22. That brings you to the Olympic program. That's my goal," she said.

Having colleges seeing those achievements and offering her something is another accomplishment.

"It's really exciting that at a young age you have those opportunities and I'm just looking at what's best for me to get to the next level and the best hockey program. There's Division 1 hockey down there, which is the highest for girls at that level, and that's where I want to be," she said.

"I think the main reason I started was because of my dad. He played hockey growing up and I think he wanted to get me started."

The allure of being one of those few female athletes whose name is known packs plenty of determination.

"My favourite player is Hayley Wick-enheiser just because she's really skilled and she's fought through a lot of different things for being a female hockey player," she said.



Laura Horwood

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Laura Horwood is also 16, plays for St. Theresa as well as Durham Lightning, shoots left, plays forward and has her own set of accomplishments that has colleges from the U.S. knocking on her door.

In 2008, she played in the East Coast Selects European tour. In 2010 it was the gold medal at the Ontario Winter Games. Also in 2010 and 2011, she won the Ontario Federation of School Athletics Association (OFSAA) varsity hockey silver medal and made it to the Team Ontario

U18 selection camp and women's prospects tournament.

While she's got several offers from schools to play hockey, she's taking her time making her choice.

"There's a lot to choose from. It can be a long process and I'm narrowing it down to where I want to go," she said.

For Horwood, it's more than just the promise of scholarships or 'maybe one day's. It's being at the rink and playing with her teammates.

"I've just always loved it and wake up excited to go to the rink," she said. There's no one thing that makes it worth being at the rink, either.

"I definitely like being in the dressing room, just around your friends and the girls. Just the sport itself and the competitiveness and being on the team."

She does find inspiration on the Canadian Women's Olympic team, however, in the form of Cassie Campbell, whom Horwood met at a hockey camp. Having that interaction with the captain of the Olympic team and realizing Campbell started out the same way is something that keeps the fire burning.



Alex Moore

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Alex Moore is a little more shy than her teammates and answering questions about herself is something that takes time for her to become comfortable with. She does get comfortable enough to start using hockey terminology in the middle of her answers, backtracking to explain what she's talking about.

Unlike her teammates, she's already committed to a college and plans are fairly set after she graduates in 2013.

"I already committed to a school and it's very exciting and it's close, only two hours away," she said.

She'll be playing with the St. Lawrence Saints in Saint Lawrence County, New York come the fall of 2013 and says colleges are getting interested in athletes earlier on, starting the process years before graduation, as in her case.

"I have goals to make the national team, the U-18 team or maybe Team Canada in the future. I'll have to work hard."

Unlike her teammates, she finds her inspiration in the NHL.

"I really like Sidney Crosby because he always tries hard and just is a really good player. And [Alexander] Ovechkin because he has mad dangles. Like his stick handling - it's amazing," she said.

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Out of the four girls from St. Theresa's, CJ Tipping is the one who plays double duty. Before she decided to commit to one sport, Tipping would start her days early in the pool and end them late at night in the rink.

The forward plays for the Belleville Bearcats and between the swimming and the hockey, her list of accomplishments goes back to 2006 when she was a provincial qualifying swimmer. She won a provincial hockey gold medal in 2007. The 2009-2010 season saw her winning the silver medal at the Ontario Winter Games, and silver at OFSAA with St. Theresa.

Last season was the one that has several



Photo by Devaan Ingraham

St. Theresa's Emily Jukosky tosses a shot on Moira goaltender Bre Bunnett during the second period of play at the Quinte Sports Complex. St. Theresa's managed to take the game in the final seconds of play with a goal from Hanna Healey to secure the OCSSA Championship.

eye-catching accomplishments. She was elected for team Canada's U19 women's floorball team, won a silver medal with the Midget AA Final Four, she was three-time swimming champion at Central Ontario Secondary School Athletics and OFSAA silver medalist and also won first place in the Stan Hope Triathlon. That's after she put swimming on the back burner to focus more on hockey.

"I quit because I wanted to have more of a commitment to hockey because I started getting tired of swimming in the morning. I'd get up at 4:30 and then had late-night hockey practice," she explained. However, she does still swim with the high school team and she said quitting competitive swimming is strategic.

"I know if I stay out of it, I'll be more successful in swimming. I know it sounds weird, but if you swim competitively in high school, you have to swim with the competitive swimmers in college. If you have no record, you don't."

There is the chance that other swimmers did the same as she has, but when she left, she was ranked in the top 10 nationally and thinks with keeping it up at school, she'll still be up there.

"My favourite part of swimming is definitely being nervous before races. I love that feeling of, I don't know. I just swim my best races when I'm nervous," she said.

Keeping swimming as an option means that she's got a backup plan for the possibility of hockey not working out.

"I kind of see myself in swimming as well, kind of a backup, I guess. But I would rather see myself in hockey."

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Chase Peck

Chase Peck started out playing hockey, but after watching basketball on TV with his dad, he got into the after-dinner league and stopped playing hockey.

"It's a team game so everyone's got to work together and if everyone around you."

The six-foot-three Grade 10 student from Centennial Secondary School answers all his question thoughtfully and objectively, despite his investment. It's especially obvious when he talks about who his favourite player is.

"I started watching LeBron [James] when he first came in the league and he was a young guy and everything and I saw him a little bit in high school game films and this guy was just amazing coming into the NBA. He was my favourite player. My favourite player now is Derrick

[Rose]. I've always liked him but, LeBron, he's in it for the money, he doesn't play the game anymore."

Last year, Peck went to Brazil to play for the Ontario U15 team and was more than ready to accept the change and the challenge that came from playing with a more competitive team at a higher level.

"I've always liked playing around the arc, and I play a little bit on the post here, but I liked it a little more than here. I got a little bit more feel for the ball. It's nice having other big guys on the court who can rebound and you're not always rebounding the ball."

Going to Brazil gave Peck a little hint of what could be. Right now though, it's a waiting game. He qualified for the U15, but the U16 national team is invite-only and even though he did make it with the younger age group and has a good shot because of it, it's not guaranteed.

"I have no idea if I'm going to get a spot. I'm hoping I will though," he said.

Until he hears about that, there is always something to work on and last year he played up an age group with the Kingston AA recreation team and is planning on doing so again this year.

"There's always that next level. That was provincial and the next level is national," he said and he has his eyes set on getting there.

Wednesday's game critical for Bulls

Win will put them that much closer to the playoffs

By Andre Lodder

Wednesday night's game against the Peterborough Petes is quite possibly the most important game of the season for the Belleville Bulls.

The implications from Wednesday night's game are going to be huge for both teams. A Bulls loss means the Petes will pull to within two points of the Bulls and the Mississauga St. Michael's Majors, who hold the final two spots for the Ontario Hockey League's Eastern Conference playoffs.

A Bulls win moves them six points ahead of the Petes and that much closer to the playoffs.

The Bulls are currently tied for seventh place with the Mississauga St. Michael's Majors with a total of 63 points. Meanwhile, the Petes are on the outside looking in but sit only four points behind both the Bulls and the Majors.

Bulls Assistant Coach Jake Grimes believes the added pressure in the standings will inspire a strong outing from the Bulls.

"It should pump us up. You have to respect how hard they work. They're down a couple of key players too, but that should really get us fired up. If anything will, that should," said Grimes.

The Petes have won four out of the five times the two teams have met so far this season, including the last game which saw the Bulls downed 4-3 in Peterborough.

"We really thought we outplayed them last game in Peterborough, but they were able to get the win. It hurt us, and helped them immensely. We want to get back at them for that reason and also to put some room between us and make sure we get in the playoffs, and that's a big step," said Grimes.

The team has been working hard with high-paced practices to keep the team in shape and ready for the onslaught of games that is the OHL playoffs. The Bulls have also been trying to fix a power play that has struggled all year and currently ranks third last in the OHL.

According to Grimes, it's not whether the glass is half empty, but rather half full.

"We can't look at it as though it's been a huge problem. I think that we have to look at it that there's still yet opportunity to be earned and to be gained on it," said Grimes.

With only six games left in the regular season, the Bulls are looking to secure a playoff spot after a rollercoaster season, which included a solid first half, a sub-par January and injuries to top players including their number one goaltender Malcolm Subban.

It's a season that Grimes hopes will be a stepping stone heading into the playoffs.

"We'll know we've learned in this stretch drive. Has it got us to a point



Photo by Dan Pearce

John Chartrand eyes the puck in Saturday night's game against the Niagara IceDogs. The Bulls lost 10-3 but are looking to rebound with a win in an important game against the Peterborough Petes this Wednesday. The Bulls are currently in seventh place with only six games left in the regular season.

where it hurts our confidence to a level where we just don't come around and we play average hockey? Or has it been a situation where we've learned certain things from it?

"We never want it to happen again and

we want to show what we really have, and I think we're leaning toward the second answer," said Grimes.