



## Acton aerial skier Gerrits is ready for next big leap

By **STEVE LeBLANC**  
*Metroland Media Group*

Travis Gerrits is set to take the next big step in his freestyle aerial skiing career. So getting his season off on the right foot was more than a little encouraging.

While recognizing that the NorAm Cup competition he recently bested isn't exactly on par with the truly elite field he'll soon be facing, the 19-year-old Acton-area resident knows any high-stakes gold is cause for optimism.

Especially when it comes amidst bonafide adversity.

That came on two separate fronts at British Columbia's Apex Mountain, where blustery and snowy conditions made judging take-off speeds more than a little challenging. Throw in the fact that Gerrits was still nursing a sub-dislocated right shoulder—suffered just two weeks ago on a miss-timed landing—and NorAm season kick-off conditions were certainly less than ideal for the young aerialist.

But that hardly reflected in his results.

Delivering personal-best jumps on both days, Gerrits struck silver in the opening round and then upgraded that with a 198.98-point performance that put him on the top of the podium to close out the double NorAm meet.

Executing his triple twist, double backflip jump with career-high precision, he scored strongly in all aspects of judging—including take-off and landing—to secure his first-ever NorAm triumph and help Canada sweep.

"To get personal-bests on back-to-back days like that was a great way to start the season," said Gerrits, who's considered a legitimate contender for the 2014 Olympics in Russia and spent last February as a 'forerunner' (a type of future Olympian in training role) at the Vancouver Games. "And to win in difficult conditions feels good because there's not that many times when you're going to have perfect weath-

er. That's our sport. It's extreme and you've got to be ready to face adversity."

Added coach Nicolas Fontaine, "To have a score like that on a day like this, this early in the season, that's amazing."

While his season is barely underway, Gerrits' training certainly isn't restricted to the winter—or the slopes.

Far from it.

The summer months are every bit as demanding—perhaps more so—for the up-and-coming freestyler, who spends as much as eight hours a day on conditioning work or perfecting his jumps off of water ramps at a Quebec-based training facility.

It's here that Gerrits pushes himself with new and more difficult elements to his jumps and sharpens his timing.

"There's really no off-season. Actually we probably do more work in the summer," explained the Milton District High School graduate, who highlighted last season with a solid international debut in Lake Placid and a bronze-medal effort at the senior national championships in Calgary. "We train five

days a week. Between water ramp work, strength and cardio training there's very little off time."

Not that Gerrits is complaining—especially not after turning in his best summer showing to date and laying the groundwork for what promises to be a breakthrough season.

"I had an excellent summer. I think I really matured physically and I got so much encouragement from coaches and teammates. That's really pushed me to do everything I can to really compete (with the best)."

The Olympic hopeful resumes the NorAm series this weekend in Mont Gabriel and will be part of most of the World Cup events later this winter—including two in Russia.

Said Gerrits, "I'm really excited about this next step. I feel I'm ready to not only compete with these guys, but do well."



**TRAVIS GERRITS**

## On the ball

Goaltender Dominik Wysocki brings down a loose ball with teammate Brody Spencer looking on in support during the Georgetown Soccer Club's Closing Day for the first half of its indoor season at the facility at Acton's Prospect Park. Team Green won the contest over Team Red 4-1 in the under-10 boys' division. It's not too late to register for some of the divisions for the second session for the indoor leagues, which start up this week. Visit [www.georgetownsoccerclub.com](http://www.georgetownsoccerclub.com) for more info.

*Photo by Jon Borgstrom*

## Raider loss tightens Jr. A race

If the Georgetown Raiders plan to have home-ice advantage in their opening playoff round, they'll have to hold off three Ontario Jr. Hockey League teams in close pursuit of their current spot in the standings.

The league's new playoff format dictates that 10 teams in each of the North/West and South/East conferences will qualify for the post-season, with the top six clubs earning first-round byes.

The seventh through 10th seeds will first play a best-of-3 series to determine which two teams move on to the conference quarterfinals.

The Raiders, with 11 regular-season games remaining, now sit fourth in the North/West Conference with 53 points after Monday's 4-3 regulation loss to the Red Wings

in Hamilton, further tightening the race for the last home-ice berth for round two.

Hamilton and Oakville are just four points behind Georgetown while the North's Stouffville Spirit sit at 47 points and all three hold multiple games in hand.

The Raiders will host the Oakville Blades in the fourth of five meetings between the Halton rivals Saturday at the Alcott Arena starting at 7:30 p.m.

Josh Burnell (2) and Duston Hebebrand scored on Monday for Georgetown, which outshot the hosts 35-33 after giving up two goals 2:04 into the game, then surrendered the winner with just over five minutes left in the third period.



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