

Ebbinge's commitment something to cheer about

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

When CheerForce Jaguars' head coach Frank Vurro was asked about his latest pupil to be selected to represent Canada at the world competitive cheerleading championships, he can't help but bring up Desiray Ebbinge's attendance record.

"With practices five times a week, nothing speaks volumes to her commitment more than the fact that in five years in our program, I cannot remember a missed practice," Vurro said of the Grade 12 Acton High School honours' student.

While that isn't entirely correct, there's no questioning the commitment of Ebbinge in her physically demanding role in the "stunting" position for both the Georgetown-based Jaguars and Team Canada, as she lifts and throws her teammates during their lightning-quick routines.

There was a day a couple of years ago when an ill Ebbinge was unable to go to school, but didn't want to let her

teammates down by being absent for a three-hour workout just prior to a big competition— until mom Angie had the final say.

"I hate missing practice," said the 17-year-old Ebbinge, who aspires to study business and cheerlead at either Western, Guelph or Wilfrid Laurier next year.

"It's just not me being there myself, but it's the commitment you make to the team. In cheerleading, in order for a pyramid to work properly, everybody has to be connected somehow, so if someone's missing, part of it doesn't go right. You really depend on



DESIRAY EBBINGE

each person on the team, so it's hard not being there when you know everybody else is working hard."

Ebbinge was chosen for Team Canada's all-girl entry that will compete in Orlando, Fla. on April 29 in the World Cheer Union Championship.

She actually made the Canadian team two years ago and traveled to Florida as an alternate. Although Ebbinge didn't get the call to compete with the starting group, she feels the experience of just practising and joining her teammates on stage before they performed

prepared her well for the intense atmosphere in which 60 countries will be taking part.

"I wasn't even on the team and I was in tears," she recalled.

"It was just an unbelievable experience. There was a parade the day before the competition and there were so many different countries, some of them I'd never heard of before. I can't wait until the opening ceremonies."

On top of her weekly practice times, traveling to national all-star-level competitions usually take her to places such as Dallas, Texas eight or nine times a year as a member of the CheerForce WolfPack Gold team that draws athletes from around the GTA.

"There's a lot of strength training involved and during the summer, there are no competitions so the practices are pretty much full-out conditioning, sprinting and push-ups," she added.

"I was a gymnast for 10 years and one of my coaches was Frank's wife. She said I should try it, and I said, 'Why not,' and after that first tryout I was hooked."

'Toy Shoppe' wows Acton audience

The Acton Skating Club presented its 47th annual skating carnival last weekend and both shows were sold out. (Right) Deanna Fidlin and Emma Hollings were Mario & Luigi and were among the more than 200 skaters from tiny tots to seniors who thrilled the audience with this year's theme 'Toy Shoppe'.



Submitted photo



GSC Showcase

The Georgetown Skating Club held its annual year-end Showcase last Friday with skaters of all ages taking part. (Above) Skaters react as one of the coaches falls during the coach's "performance" while (left) a skater executes a difficult spin.

Photos by Jon Borgstrom



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