

# Dynamite debut at figure skating nationals for Carle

## Georgetown resident breaks own Canadian record for decisive Novice Women victory

By Steve LeBlanc

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Having joined the national figure skating champions fraternity just two days earlier, Catherine Carle was more than pleased to meet one of its most popular members.

I was really excited, said the 13-year-old Milton Skating Club standout, of a brief encounter with Canadian skating darling Kaetlyn Osmond with introductions made by Miltonian and former national golden girl Madelyn Dunley. She's someone I really enjoy watching (compete).

Carle no doubt gained her own set of fans this past week at Ottawa's TD Place.

That tends to happen when one not only captures gold on the national stage, but does so in record-breaking fashion.

Having set the Novice Women's Canadian benchmark at December's Challenge in Pierrefonds, Que., the Georgetown resident upstaged that mark by two-and-a-half points for a commanding overall victory.

With what the commentator characterized as a knock-em, sock-em, want-to-win free program, Carle finished with an all-around score of 133.73 — 11 points ahead of silver medalist Emma Bulawka of Kelowna, B.C.

I was very happy with myself, said the newly crowned national champion, who admits she was feeling the pressure of her top-ranked status heading into competition, but that nailing her first major jump — the double axel, triple toe — set the stage for a near flawless free program, one



**Georgetown's Catherine Carle competes at the national championships in Ottawa this past week. With her golden campaign in Ottawa, Carle has earned her first international assignment. She'll join Skate Canada for the mid-February Bavarian Open in Oberstdorf, Germany.**

Photo by Sean McKinnon

choreographed by Joey Russell and set to Anastasia's *Once Upon A December*. It made Carle just the second national champ in local club history, following Dunley's Novice Women's triumph in 2012.

Feeling that breaking the Canadian record again was doable, coach Nancy Lemaire noted Carle had a bit better flow compared to the Challenge and engaged the audience more.

The quality of her jumps was higher as well, said the longtime Milton Skating Club instructor, whose national champion had just one glitch — almost imperceptible to the untrained eye — in her seven jumps and punctuated her routine with some highly impressive spin work.

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Milton Skating Club mates Natalie Walker and Hélene Carle also showed strongly at nationals — both moving up several spots from their finish at Challenge.

Landing both her triple toe and triple salchow this time around, Walker jumped up seven places for fifth in the Novice Women's ranks with a 117.31 overall score.

My goal was top-10, so I was excited to come top five, said the 13-year-old, who like Catharine Carle is a former Pre-Novice silver medalist at Challenge.

Two well-executed triple salchows provided a big confidence boost for 15-year-old Hélene Carle, whose 130.87 all-around scoring was good enough for seventh.

That's six spots better than at Challenge. This marked the club's biggest-ever representation at nationals, and the first time it had two top-five finishes in the same category.

This was definitely our best national championships and it should inspire a lot of the younger skaters, said Lemaire.

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