



Danielle Earl Photography

Georgetown's Ethan Rutherford and Brampton's Lindsay Wilson will compete at this week's Skate Canada Challenge in Edmonton. The pair have made a marked improvement in their second season in pre-novice dance and will head west on the heels of a gold-medal win at the Skate Ontario Sectionals earlier this month in Oakville.

GEORGETOWN'S RUTHERFORD SETS SIGHTS HIGH AT SKATE CANADA CHALLENGE

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If last year was about gaining an understanding of what it takes to compete at the next level, then this year is about putting those lessons into action.

"Last year was more of a learning experience," says Georgetown's Ethan Rutherford, who will compete at Skate Canada Challenge for the second year in a row later this week. "This year, we are going in trying to win it."

Rutherford and partner Lindsay Wilson positioned themselves well after winning the pre-novice dance gold at the Skate Ontario Sectionals in Oakville earlier this month. The pair, who skate out of Skate Canada Brampton-Chinguacousy, earned the highest marks for both compulsory dances as well as their free dance to finish with a total score of 71.76, more than four points ahead of their nearest rival.

It was a significant step forward after finishing 11th at sectionals the previ-

ous year, and one made possible by going to last year's Skate Canada Challenge in Montreal.

"Having that experience and knowing what we needed to do really helped," Rutherford said. "Last year, it was good to see what was out there, what other skaters bring to the table. It's not just one style of skating."

They put those lessons into their free dance. The Grade 11 Georgetown District High School student said their new free program has an upbeat beginning, transitions into a slower waltzy section and wraps up with a jazz-inspired finish. He said they also experimented with twizzle sequences to find the one that felt comfortable, but also maximized their score.

After working more on skills last year, Rutherford said he and Wilson have had more opportunity to concentrate on the choreography and performance aspect of their program.

"We had a good solid base on the technical side,

so that let us focus on interpreting the music," the 16-year-old said. "There are other skaters that use the same music as us, but you have to be able to play to the audience and the judges and make a connection with them. You have to really sell it to everyone."

Their progress has been easy to trace, from bronze medals at competitions in Ottawa in July and North York in August, to gold in Paris, Ont. in September, to their victory at sectionals in Oakville.

It has taken dedication on their part. They are on the ice in Brampton from 6 to 8 a.m. four times a week, practice twice on the weekend, and with the Skate Canada Challenge approaching, there have been additional after-school training sessions with coaches Matt Doleman, Pam Krolick, Asher Hill and Gina Doleman.

"We push each other to do better," Rutherford said.

Rutherford and Wilson will compete Friday and Saturday in Edmonton.

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August 31, 2018
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