

'IT'S SLOWLY STARTING TO HIT ME'

LOCAL SWIMMER REIGNS SUPREME AT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

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In the month leading up to the world short-course swimming championships, Tessa Cieplucha envisioned herself on the podium with a medal.

"I thought it would be so cool to medal in the 400 IM (individual medley), and I could see myself in that top group," the 23-year-old said.

Since a 14th place finish at the Olympics in July, Cieplucha had been working on the first half of her swims (butterfly and backstroke) and, at the world short-course championships in Abu Dhabi in December, that preparation paid off.

Cieplucha swam a time of 4:25.55, a personal best by 1.8 seconds and the second-fastest time ever recorded by a Canadian woman, to win the world title. It was Canada's first individual gold medal at the short-course worlds in 19 years.

She earned a second gold, swimming in the preliminaries for Canada's winning 4x200m freestyle relay team.

Q: "World champion" has a nice ring to it.

A: Yes, it's slowly starting to hit me. When you step back and reflect on it, it's really, really cool.

Q: How was your Olympic experience?

A: Coming off a year where there were almost no racing opportunities, Tokyo was the first big international meet, and I put a lot of pressure on myself.

It's the Olympics, and it's only every four years. I was pretty nervous, and I didn't know what to expect. That led to me not having the greatest race, but I wouldn't have changed anything. I learned so much from that experience.

Q: How was the preparation for worlds different?

A: The ISL (International Swimming League) season started a month after the Olympics. I didn't have that much time to sit down and take a break and breathe. It was really busy and exhausting at times. Our team (the Toronto Titans) exceeded expectations, and I won some races. It built some great momentum and I started regaining some confidence.

Q: Did you approach the race differently at worlds?

A: I've always had a



Khaldoon Aldway photo

Tessa Cieplucha reacts to her win at the world short-course swim championships in Abu Dhabi.

stronger back half, so I've been working on pushing the front, where there's room for the most improvement. You swim enough races to know when you feel rested and strong. In the final, I knew I could go for it. I knew I could push every stroke and have the swim of my life.

Q: What was the end of that race like?

A: The last 100m, after the breaststroke, I could see (the other swimmers) at my feet (a body length behind). I just thought, 'Hold on, Tess, you can finish this.' I was in pain and it hurt, but it was worth it. It was the coolest feeling ever.

Q: What's ahead in 2022?

A: I'm training in Knoxville now. I'll be home for trials in early April in Victoria. At the end of May is (long course) worlds and Commonwealth Games after that, then another ISL season. I'm really looking forward to it.



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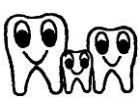
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Q: Is thumb sucking bad?

A: Yes and no. First, it must be understood that thumb sucking is a "natural reflex". An ultrasound test on a developing baby will often show him or her sucking a thumb. When this habit goes on for too long, however, orthodontic problems can often occur. By the age of six or seven, the child's permanent teeth are just beginning to arrive. Before then, thumb sucking will cause few problems. After permanent teeth arrive, abnormal pressure from the thumb can cause the front upper teeth to become "bucked". The bottom front teeth then become crowded backward. A misalignment of the teeth occurs. So, how do you stop thumb sucking for your four or five year old? Some have found gloving the hand, dipping the thumb in vinegar and increased attention to the child help. In the end, though, treatment depends on how long and often the thumb sucking occurs. To avoid any permanent damage, don't delay your attempts to stop this habit.

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