

FILLIER HOPES TO RETURN OLYMPIC GOLD TO CANADA

YOUNGEST PLAYER ON WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM

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Sarah Fillier was still too young to even register for hockey, maybe four or five years old, but she already had a full set of equipment. And every time she got on the ice, she insisted on wearing all of it.

"We would go public skating at Memorial Arena or Alcott and she would wear all the gear," says her dad, Dave. "She would be ripping around the ice and wearing her helmet, gloves and pants."

It would be the first of many times Fillier demonstrated she was ready for the next step in hockey career. Whether it was being

named a finalist for the NCAA player of the year in her freshman season at Princeton, or scoring in her national team debut at the 2018 4 Nations Cup, the Georgetown native has never taken long to make her presence felt.

Most recently, the 21-year-old helped Canada end a nine-year drought by beating the U.S. at the world championship.

In her worlds debut, Fillier's third-period goal, 25 seconds after Finland tied the game 3-3, proved to be the winner in a 5-3 Canada victory.

Now Fillier has the chance to make her mark again — at the Olympics.

"I don't think it's fully set in," said Fillier, who found out she'd made the team on a Zoom call just before Christmas. "Even though the roster has been named, until I step into the

village, I don't think it's going to hit me that I'm part of Team Canada."

Deciding to take the past two years off school, Fillier has been training with a group of Toronto-based players, including national team members she grew up admiring like Natalie Spooner and Brienne Jenner. She said their presence brought a professional approach to workouts.

Despite always being ready for the next challenge, it seems Fillier is always the last to know.

In college, she said she didn't feel comfortable until the latter part of her first season, despite already leading the team in scoring while putting up well over a point per game through the first half. At the world championship, it was the last pre-tournament game that she felt fully confident on the ice.



Matthew Murnaghan/Hockey Canada

The youngest player on the Canadian Olympic women's hockey team, Sarah Fillier has drawn high praise from her teammates.

"I didn't feel like I had to rush or force plays," she said. "It set me up well to know I can play at this level."

She went on to finish in the top 10 in tournament

and three assists, one of those coming on Canada's first goal in its 3-2 comeback overtime victory against the U.S. in the final.

Fillier was 10 years old when she watched Marie-Philip Poulin score both

goals in a 2-0 Canada win in the gold-medal game at the Vancouver Olympics.

"It was so cool to see women on that big stage and all of Canada watching," Fillier said. "I saw that and I wanted to do that — stand on that blue line with a gold medal."

She got a taste of it at worlds, where Poulin called Fillier the future of the Canadian team.

She might not have had to wait so long for that moment. Fillier had been named to two world championship rosters, but both tournaments were cancelled due to COVID-19. At worlds in July, she finally got to show what she's capable of.

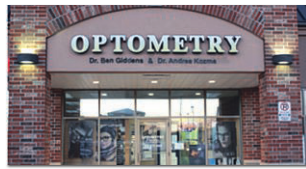
"She's a great talent, a hard worker, a great leader and a smart two-way player," Jenner said of the only Canadian player born in the 2000s. "It's too bad Canadian fans haven't had a chance to see her earlier. We've known how good she is for a long time."

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