

Sami Jo's Road to Torino



BY SAMI JO SMALL, TEAM CANADA'S HOCKEY GOALTENDER & 2002 OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALLIST

The road to Torino has been long and difficult; however we're in the final stages now. My update #3 finds me in Calgary after our first couple of days which happens to be all fitness testing; my favourite (not!). Calgary, since the start of August, is my new home for the next seven months as I've had to make the difficult move to leave my boyfriend, my teammates, my friends and family back in Toronto. I can't say leaving was easy, it never is, but this time is different. Seven months is a long time without a support network close at hand, however, I am excited to start training as a team full-time.



eating mosquitoes the trip had its moments, however, if two straight days of driving together doesn't tear a relationship apart I suppose nothing will! We had a nice visit with my family and friends and then Darren had to get back to work in Toronto. I stayed in Winnipeg for a week to run the Sami Jo Small Female Hockey School that I do every summer.

The last five weeks have been quite a whirlwind. Our training regimen since returning to Toronto from "boot camp" in PEI relaxed slightly. We were down to only TWO workouts a day, not the endless training sessions that seemed to go on in PEI. No more seven hour bike trips and no all-day marathon workouts, just an hour on the ice and two hours off the ice. The workouts continued to "build strength and endurance". Whatever that personal trainer jargon meant I was excited to be at home. Excited to leave the gym everyday and drive up the DVP to Richmond Hill where my boyfriend was there to take my mind off hockey for a while. I was also excited to go out for "bubble-tea" or "all you can eat sushi" with my Ontario-based teammates between training sessions. I was excited to live a "normal" life, albeit only for five weeks. And those five weeks seemed to fly by. By the end of it I was as physically ready as I was going to be for centralizing in Calgary.

We had a blast; however, by the end of the week I was exhausted. The hours were long and I was still trying to get my workouts in, but in the end I'm glad I did it and made some money to take with me to Calgary.

I returned to Toronto to pack up the rest of my belongings, say my goodbyes and then hopped on a flight to Calgary with five other girls from Toronto also vying for spots on the National team. My car is still in Winnipeg, but that I'll deal with later, perhaps when we have a break for the weekend I'll fly back and drive it out. For now, I'm just trying to get settled in Calgary. The first day back at the rink brought back so many memories over the past eight years of playing for the National team. It's always a thrill to walk into the locker room adorned with Hockey Canada's logo and find out where my stall is located. I've moved in with one of the other girls on the team, my Toronto Aeros teammate and fellow Winnipegger, Jennifer Botterill.

Darren, my boyfriend, helped me drive my car the 23 hours from Toronto to Winnipeg, half-way to Calgary and also my hometown. With temperatures soaring over 35 C on the highways I sure wished that my little blue Mazda 323 had air-conditioning, however, I think it worked out just fine for Darren who had the windows open all the way, radio blaring and the luxury of conveniently not being able to hear me whilst I babbled away. From soaring heat to man-

We found a nice little place to rent right near the rink. The place is nice, but it's not home yet. I miss my home already, but I know I chose this and this is my dream. I know I have lots of people rooting for me, lots of people who have got me to this point, however, now's my time. It's my time to prove to myself how hard I've worked and how much I want this. My time to make every moment count!... maybe I'll start right after my body recovers from fitness testing, because I can't seem to make any sudden movements without feeling muscle pain from head to toe. Maybe I'll just sit on this couch a little longer... until next time...

SAMI JO SMALL

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