

# Sami Jo's Road to Torino

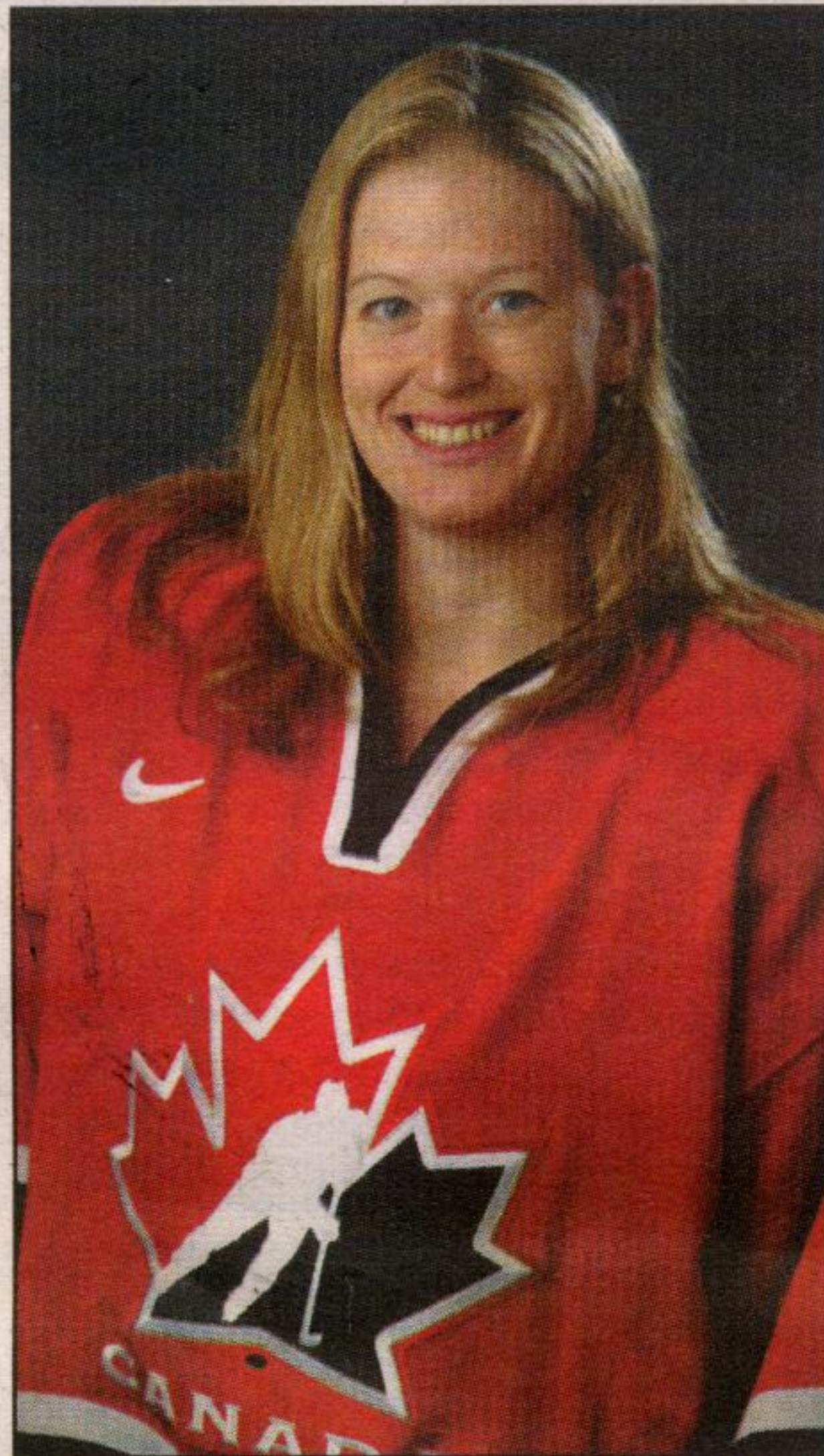


BY SAMI JO SMALL, TEAM CANADA'S HOCKEY GOALTENDER & 2002 OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALLIST

We left for Finland last Saturday from Calgary and arrived in the town of Hameelinna, Finland just north of Helsinki, after layovers in Vancouver and London, 26 hours after our departure! I'll bet that the men's team would never fly through Vancouver to get to Europe, but welcome to the world of amateur sport and budget constraints! Our first game was an exhibition against the host team which I got the start for. Considering we walked all over the Finnish Team with a 6-0 win while in Calgary we didn't really expect them to come out as strong as they did. Their goaltending was quite strong and their team rallied to score the first goal. We ended up with the win; however, it took a couple of 3rd period goals to win by a 3-1 margin.

The game was a real wake-up call for us...there will be no easy games and no team can be taken for granted. Our first game of the tournament was against the Swedes and once again we narrowly escaped with a 3-1 win. Thursday was our big game, the game we had been looking forward to for a long time. Our first game against the American team that had beaten Canada and claimed its first-ever World Championship less than 4 months ago. You could tell my teammates wanted redemption, wanted to make up for the pain they had experienced at worlds. For me, it was my first game against the US in nearly two years and not only did I want to prove something to the coaching staff, I wanted to prove something to myself. I was nervous and anxious; you never really get used to the feeling of a big game.

The game went exactly as planned for us. The girls skated hard but showed great composure with the puck. We took a quick lead on a rookie goaltender the



US started and skated to a fairly easy 4-0 victory. The Americans didn't look themselves. They had only been together for a week prior to flying to Finland, compared to our 2 and half months. Despite this, it was nice to win. However, despite the shutout, it wasn't the most exciting part of the day. The biggest news I received was that my brother's wife gave birth to their first child. I'm an Auntie for the first time to little Annika. Even though they live in California, I think she was born with goalie pads on! I was over the moon, half a world away and trying to get information about the baby out of my brother. Meanwhile, all he wanted to talk about was my shutout.

Another game against Finland, a tour of the local castle, a couple of motivational videos and suddenly it was Sunday and we were in the final game against the United States. Once again I got the start. It was exciting to be in that situation again, to be given the opportunity to get to play in a big game. The game was exciting, both teams having plenty of chances, I got lucky on more than one occasion, and in the end we actually pulled it off.

Dana Antal scored late in the 3rd period to give us a 2-1 margin of victory.

I was happy about the win; however, I wasn't as excited as I thought I would be. There was no jumping on the goalie, no big party, just a tad bit of self-satisfaction. I don't think I allowed myself to be too excited, I don't think any of us have allowed ourselves to be too excited, knowing that the Olympics are five months away. There are still plenty of hours to put in.

Our plane is inching closer to Toronto. We have six days at home until we have to return to Calgary, a nice, well deserved break. I haven't seen Darren in five weeks and he still has a few hours to clean the house before I get home. I'm excited to just sit on my couch, relax and do nothing. I will likely tell him story after story and annoy him just enough so that he'll be sick of me at the week's end.

Until next time,

SAMI JO

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# A Bird's Eye View



BY RAM NAMBIAR

## Red-Tailed Hawk (Buteo Jamaicensis)



Early spring in particular, we are likely to see across the sky, Red-tailed hawk riding thermal and soaring leisurely in wide circles. Broad rounded wings spread and wide tail feathers fanned circling flight mode of Red-tailed hawk over Halton region's open fields and pastures mixed with scattered woodlots, is an impressive sight.

This seemingly effortless flight, way above, by a lone hawk, is neither for fun nor is it migrating. The buteo, with its powerful eyesight, is actually searching the ground below to detect any movement of its prey, - a mouse, rabbit, squirrel, snake etc to swoop down on with unerring aim.

The Red-tail also hunts by sight in its foraging territory by sitting and waiting on a prominent search post, - a tree, telephone pole, city park etc to spot and dive straight down on its prey.

The Red-tail is large and powerful, and is the most common soaring hawk in our area. The mature bird is largely dark brown above, white under, with dark streaks across the belly. Individual colour variation exists. Nonetheless, in adult hawks, 3 yrs and older, the brick red tail is diagnostic, thus the common name Red-tailed hawk.

Among a few of its colloquial names -like, 'buzzard hawk' 'red hawk' and more, 'hen hawk' has to be a definite misnomer. Only inexperienced young hawks were known to take chickens. But poultry farmers and game protectionists in the past have persecuted them. In fact, being a notorious rodent killer, Red-tailed hawks have been and continue to be beneficial to farmers.

Male and female Red-tails look alike. But the lady is larger and can weigh close to 2 kilos as opposed to her spouse who is less than 1.1/2. This difference is rather obvious when perched side by side during courting.

Many Red-tails drift south in winter. The hardy ones stay back. My new home has a backyard facing open farmland in Milton that turns out to be buteo country. Sited west of 4th line, south of Main St, Milton, the area has a year round resident pair of Red-tailed hawks. Their large bulky stick nest sits high in a partially dead tree, about 200m away, in a straight line from my kitchen. In the summer of 2005 they successfully fledged 2 nestlings at this point.

Red-tails' breeding season in our area begins in early March. Both sexes can be seen together more often now. Red-tails in love engage in elaborate mutual courtship display called 'sky dance'.

Shooting up straight, they circle in pairs with the harsh 'kreeeerr' screams. Male climbs much higher and dives sharply down towards the female. She rolls over to present her talons to him and both lock talons and spin. Unlocking the grip the male climbs again and performs many shallow dives before going to perch. It is here where they mate. The courtship dance not only reinforces their pair bond leading to mating, but also prompts them to built a nest or refurbishing the existing one.

Red-tailed hawks mate for life and the stick nest made by both is used again and again for many years. The hawks bring twigs, bark, evergreen pieces to put on the side, the last one according to Gail R. Grusll, a hawk watcher, from western New York State on Lake Erie, serves as a pesticide. The pair defend their territory vigilantly against other hawks.

Around mid March, female lays her 2 to 4 eggs, one a day, and she does so, by standing upright in the nest. When all the eggs are laid; she will sit on them for a month. Male brings killed rodents and others to feed her. He may even relieve her and take over the incubation. The nestlings are fed by both parents.

Well-adapted and tolerant to human presence, Philip Burton, author of book on birds of prey, cautioned still against anyone climbing the high tree where the Red-tails' active nest is situated. The hawks can strike with an impact harder than that from a thrown brick.

In 45 days the young are on their wings. They still move around with the parents to learn and to perfect the art of hunting. After that, they are on their own. In fall, the young born this year, if not going south, will form their own singles' club.

Red-tailed hawk can be seen being chased and pecked from behind in mid-air by Redwings and other songbirds. These Lilliputians even hitch a ride on the back of Gulliver pricking him ferociously. The giant may appear a little disoriented and confused but nothing seriously happens.

Possible, the hawk inadvertently flew low over these bird's active nests or launched a strike at their young. Crows do mob attack on this hawk in flight or while the latter is perched. This is only a bit of a nuisance to the mighty despot.

Red-tailed hawks, in wild, are known to live for 6 to 7 years. Under carefully controlled conditions in captivity, however, the longevity has been shown to a surprising length of 15 to 20 years.

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