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Compete in Sweden this week

Acton skaters ready for the world

Acton residents Bronwyn Marshall and Jen May have a lot in common, not the least of which is their desire to compete.

They both say they live to skate, they're both members of the Acton Figure Skating Club, and they're both competing in the World Figure Skating Championships in Sweden this week (April 5-11) as members of the Burlington Ice Image synchronized skating team.

"I've always loved skating," says 18-year-old Marshall, an OAC student at Bishop Reding Secondary School in Milton. "I've been doing it for 11 years, and I really can't imagine life without it."

The pinnacle of Marshall's 11-year skating career came in the first week of March at the National Championships in Montreal, when she and her Ice Image teammates placed second in the country (to Black Ice from Toronto), and qualified for the world championships.

"It was really exciting," says Marshall, of placing second out of 18 teams. "We were third the

year before and didn't qualify, so it's even more rewarding to do it this year."

As for May, Marshall's off-ice friend and on-ice teammate, the experience in Montreal was just as gratifying.

"We worked so hard to put our routine together," says May, a 19-year-old OAC student hoping to study biology in university next year. "It seems like all the hard work finally paid off."

The hard work May refers to is her four to five weekly practices (up to three hours each), frequent weight training, and proper body maintenance.

"We have to stay at a set body weight," says Marshall. "If we let ourselves get overweight, we could be off the team."

For the uninitiated, synchronized figure skating consists of 22 to 24 skaters on the ice at a time, choreographed close to perfection, dancing in unison to a chosen song. A ballet-on-ice of sorts, similar to regular figure skating, a panel of judges grades the teams.

"I love the creativity this

sport allows," says May. "I like to dance, and synchronized skating allows me to express myself on the ice."

Both skaters credit most of their recent on-ice success to similar off-ice influences.

"I have to say my parents have been my biggest supporters," says Marshall, whose mother Jan will be accompanying her to Sweden.

May, whose mother Dianne will also make the trip, shares this sentiment.

"Without the support of my parents there's no way I'd be the skater I am now. They've always been there to give me the help I need."

If there could be possible be a downfall to this trip, it's the timing.

"We'll miss seeing ourselves on TV," Marshall laughs, in reference to CTV airing a tape of the Nationals April 10.

These days both skaters are gearing themselves for what could turn out to be the biggest competition of their lives. According to May, it's best to take things one day at a time.



Acton precision skaters Bronwyn Marshall (left) and Jen May are looking forward to competing this week in the world championships in Sweden. Photo by Herb Garbutt

"Our practices are all fine-tuning right now. We're working on the little things we can improve, and making sure there are no injuries."

Both girls say they would be satisfied to come home with any

color of medal, but, as always, gold is the ultimate aim.

"We're going to give it our best shot," says Marshall. "With a little luck, you never know what can happen."

—By Alan McDonald, special



Sarah Dougall helped Ontario win the Canadian Youth Challenge Five-Pin Bowling Championship last week. Photo by Herb Garbutt

Dougall helps Ontario squad win national title

Records were falling as quick as the pins for Sarah Dougall and her Ontario teammates.

Dougall helped Team Ontario shatter two national records on the way to claiming the Canadian Youth Challenge Five-Pin Bowling Championship in Edmonton last week. The six-member team had a pinfall of 12,028 over 10 games. The 240.56 average per bowler set a new standard and eclipsed the top adult scores at the nationals. The team also set a record with a three-game pinfall of 3,829, for an average of 255 per bowler.

The record-setting performance carried over into the playoffs where Ontario swept the defending champions from Alberta 8-0. Alberta had set itself up as the favorite through the

qualifying round by going undefeated and placing first with 60 points. Ontario was second with 50.5.

"We knew Alberta was going to be a tough one," Dougall said. "We knew we could do it though."

Ontario had shown its ability to turn its game up a notch during the rolloff. Three times it trailed by more than 300 pins through five ends but in each case came back to win.

"I could see that happening once but to do it three times was just incredible," Dougall said. "We just had a team that didn't give up."

Ontario also finished strong in the final. Through five ends it was close but Ontario ended up winning easily, defeating Newfoundland 7-1.

Previous national experience also helped ease some of the nerves for Dougall and Team Ontario. Five of

the six bowlers had been to a Canadian championship before.

It was the second straight trip to the nationals for the 16-year-old. Dougall won the Ontario Youth Bowling Council singles senior girls title last year and finished sixth at nationals.

This year, Dougall had a 261 average at the zone championships, which earned her a spot on the ladies team. After winning a three-game rolloff in Markham, the team advanced to the provincial finals.

At the Ontario championships Dougall posted a 276 average to help the ladies team win the silver medal. Her score put her among the top three female bowlers, earning her a spot on Team Ontario.

—By Herb Garbutt, staff writer



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