

Georgetown curler visits Japan for first taste of international play

HERB GARBUTT
Special to The IFP

Stephanie Leachman of Georgetown traveled more than 10,000 kilometres and across nine time zones for her first taste of international curling competition, only to find herself vying for the championship against a curler she sees every week.

Leachman and rinkmates Julie Reddick of Oakville, Leigh Armstrong of Milton and Jo-Ann Rizzo of Brantford posted a 6-1 mark in the round-robin at last week's Karuizawa International Curling Championship in Japan.

They followed that up by knocking off the Japanese national team 11-6 in the semifinals to earn a rematch with the United States, which handed the Oakville rink its only round-robin loss. Patti Lank's American rink included Oakville resident Erika Brown who, like Leachman, curls in the Oakville Curling Club's Major League.

"She married a Canadian (and) works in the U.S., but unfortunately can't play for Canada," Leachman said of Brown, the vice on the American rink.

It will be Leachman and Reddick who will have bragging rights when the Major League reconvenes, as Canada edged the U.S. for a 6-5 victory in Sunday's final.

"It was a great experience," Leachman said.

For a team with its sights set on qualifying for the Olympics in 2010, throwing rocks at the same rink where the 1998 Nagano Games were contested, defeating a team that has played in the Olympics and getting a taste of what it would be like to stand atop the podium only provided further inspiration.

"The way they put it on with a flower ceremony, the medal presentations and then the (Canadian) flag went up, it definitely lights the



Stephanie Leachman releases a rock during Canada's 6-5 win over the United States in the final of the recent Karuizawa International Curling Championship in Japan. The Georgetown curler normally curls in the Oakville Curling Club's Major League.

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fire to keep on going," Leachman said.

Canada jumped out to an early 4-0 lead in Sunday's final. It followed up a single point in the opening end with steals of one in the second and two more in the third. But the Canadian rink knew all too well it could not sit on that lead. The U.S. had overcome a 4-1 deficit in the round-robin to win 9-5.

True to form, the American rink chipped away at the lead, scoring single points in the fourth, fifth and seventh ends to narrow the gap to 4-3. Canada rebounded to score two in the eighth, which proved crucial after the U.S. countered with two of its own in the ninth. Canada would then blank the final end to secure the victory.

The event was a great opportunity for the rink to get experience, especially since Reddick and Rizzo

swapped spots with Reddick taking over skipping duties.

"It was a really good time for us to mesh together," Leachman said.

That obviously didn't take too long, most likely aided by the fact that all but Rizzo combined to win three junior provincial championships together. They defeated three Japanese teams — including two victories of Japan's entry in the 2006 Olympics — as well as teams from Sweden, China and Germany.

The foursome stayed in Japan for a couple of days after the final, getting a chance to do some sight-seeing. Leachman said they were overwhelmed by how friendly everyone was.

"They really go out of their way for Canadians," Leachman said. "We had a translator and they really supported us. They were all rooting for us unless we were playing a Japanese team."

Five Georgetown skaters to compete this weekend

Five members of the Georgetown Skating Club will compete in the final event for the season, the Boston Pizza Skate Canada Central Ontario Starskate Championships this weekend at Century Gardens in Brampton.

Skaters placing first to third in their respective events at the COS Starskate Championships will advance to represent the section at the 2007 Trillium Starskate Championships at RIM Park in Waterloo March 10-11.

Tanya Carscadden, Kathleen Dennis, Emma Miller, Bethany Rees and Alexandra Smith will represent Georgetown at the COS Starskate Challenge.

Following are the results from the Oshawa Invitational held earlier this month:

Bethany Rees— 2nd in Introductory Interpretive; 4th in Preliminary 1C Freeskate

Emma Miller— 3rd in Preliminary Freeskate 2B & Introductory Interpretive; 4th in Pre-Introductory Interpretive

Caitlyn Mollenhauer— 5th in Bronze Interpretive & Junior Bronze Freeskate

Cameron Commisso— 7th in Pre-Preliminary Freeskate 1A

Madeleine Commisso— 7th in Preliminary Freeskate 2B

Alexandra Smith— 2nd in Pre-Preliminary Freeskate 2B



Hot on the slopes

Ten-year-old Kaitlin Gasparini of Georgetown has been tearing up the slopes this winter in the Alpine Ontario South Nancy Greene League, winning the girls' division of recent races at Devil's Glen, Snow Valley and Beaver Valley. The Grade 5 Silver Creek Public School student has been a member of the Jozo Weider Rockets at Blue Mountain for the past four years and has big races coming up in the next month, including the provincial championships during the March Break.

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Peewee BB Twisters enter playoffs on strong note

The North Halton Peewee BB Twisters took six out of a possible seven points to finish the regular season and are playing their best hockey of the year heading into the playoffs.

North Halton 6, Cambridge Roadrunners 4; Sarahjane Olsen

(2G, A); Vanessa Consiglio (2G); Hannah Hube (G, A); Cassie Broadbent (G); Jessica Delaney, Sarah Simpson (A); Tamara McKelvie (W).

North Halton 1, Cambridge Roadrunners 0; Hube (G); McKelvie

(SO).

North Halton 2, Twin Centre Hericanes 0; Paige Cusack, Hube (G); Olsen (A); Jessie Fariello (SO).

North Halton 2, Woolwich Wild 2; Consiglio, Hube (G); Madison Jenkins, Nathalie Mihalek (A).

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