

# SPORTS AND LEISURE

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## Track-blazing Aron ends racing career

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Staff Writer

At 45 years of age, local resident Shawna Aron says she's planning on gearing down her involvement with motorcycle racing after a remarkable six-year run in the sport.

And she's leaving the intensely competitive racing circuit in Ontario at places such as Mosport and Shannonville having had no serious crashes— she's never spilled her own blood or broken any bones on the track and ranks torn ligaments in her pinky finger as one of the few injuries.

The 2004-05 Canadian Women's Cup Open Expert Champion is also proud to be considered an ambassador in sport bike racing; when she first jumped on a 600CC Yamaha back in 2000 on a dare, Aron was the only female

to line up against the men, reaching top speeds of 270 kilometres an hour. Now, there are several women across the country competing and they have had their own race division for the last three years, thanks in part to Aron's track-blazing.

"I'm a business owner and I have a house and assets. I'm now retiring because I kept thinking of the what-ifs," said Aron, who runs an international forwarding company that helps support her Gecko Racing enterprise.

"I started in the game very late and nobody is winning championships in their forties. Usually the men I'm racing with are half my age. I was fortunate to have a natural ability and it's something that's addictive, but what if I got hurt? It's amazing that in



Shawna Aron, the 2004-05 Canadian Women's Cup Open Expert Champion, leans into a curve at Mosport race track. She first jumped on a 600CC Yamaha back in 2000 on a dare but during the next six years helped blaze a trail for women to race against men. Aron is giving up competitive racing but hopes to perhaps coach in the future. Submitted photo

six years of racing and hundreds and hundreds of races that there hasn't been a serious injury, because the odds are so long against it."

Crashes have happened, however, and she's been knocked unconscious on more than one occasion. Aron has been run over by bikes three times and thought she was finished for good in Shannonville this past summer when she slid on her bike several hundred feet into a wall, but jumped back onto her bike uninjured and continued racing, to the amazement of spectators.

Aron explained that, although her bike weighs over twice as much as she does, her ability to manoeuvre her 5-foot-3 frame aerodynamically around the course at high speed can mean an advantage of a few horsepower over her competitors.

"The thrill is getting to the fastest speed you can in the shortest distance, but anyone can go fast. Turning is the hard part," the North York native added. "Throw in a corner at high speed and see what you'll do. You have such a short time period to process what's coming at you and that's the difference between a good and ordinary racer."

Sponsors and manufacturers have pleaded with Aron to continue racing just on a part-time basis but she said she

made a formal announcement at the start of last season that 2006 would be her last competitive year on the track. Her distinctive pink-coloured outfit and bike, along with the long pony-tail hanging out the back of her helmet, earned Aron a lot of recognition and celebrity on the circuits, but she also came to garner the respect of many of the male competitors for her racing prowess. She was also named the Max Award recipient in 2005 as the top women's racer in Canada.

A former ski instructor in Banff, Aron said that she will likely remain as a volunteer on race days and may compete in a couple of events per year, at Mosport and Mont Tremblant, but she has no interest in starting up her own team.

"I would just like to spend more time with my friends. I joined Clublink five years ago and I haven't hit a ball, and that's coming from someone who used to be an avid golfer," she added. "There are six or seven racers in the women's division now and every one of them I have coached or helped in some way. It would be nice to just be a coach for the younger riders coming up."

(Eamonn Maher can be reached at emaher@independentfreepress.com)



Shawna Aron says she's beaten the odds of not having suffered a serious injury in her motorcycle racing career.

Photo by Eamonn Maher

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