

Young speed skater reigns supreme at long track nationals

*Olympics
continue to
inspire McGill*

STEVE LEBLANC

sleblanc@miltoncanadian
champion.com

Like most speedskating fans across Canada, Aaralyn McGill lost more than a few hours sleep watching the world's elite performers chase down glory in Pyeongchang.

For someone just starting to write her own success story in the sport, what she got back from those early-morning viewings was immeasurable.

"Every time I watch the Olympics, it's phenomenal," said the young Campbellville resident, whose love affair with speedskating began when she caught a glimpse of it on a McDonald's TV screen during the 2010 Vancouver Games. "Each

time, I want it (to represent my country) even more."

Aaralyn may well get that opportunity, if results as of late are any indication.

Enjoying a sharp upward trajectory in the sport since taking it up at age six, she recently returned from Quebec City as the overall 12-year-old golden girl at the Canadian Age Class Long Track Championships.

Gaining extra motivation from a heartbreaking razor-thin loss in the 3,000 metre - in which she delivered a personal best time of 5:19.690 and led until the second last turn - Aaralyn capped the weekend with impressive victories in the 500 m (49.450 seconds) and 1,500 m (2:40.280).

That plus a tournament-opening 30.310 s finish to win the 300 m was enough to put her atop the overall podium in a field of 18 competitors.

"Honestly, it (all-



Aaralyn McGill photo

Aaralyn McGill competes at the Canadian Age Class Long Track Championships in Quebec City.

around victory) was a relief. I didn't know what to expect," said the newly-

minted Canadian champ, who'd follow up those national exploits with her

sixth straight provincial title the next weekend in Newmarket.

Making great strides in her form since joining the Cambridge Speed Skating Club - after years laying a solid foundation at her hometown club - Aaralyn's 2017-18 season highlights include a 5:24.41 Olympic start effort in the 3,000 m at Lake Placid.

That has her seated 10th in the world rankings for her age group.

"The improvements I've made in my technique are phenomenal," said Aaralyn, who's also especially encouraged about breaking the 500 m 50-second barrier a few times this season - starting back at her own club in September. "Everything's changed from how I skate to the way I look at how I want to do in competition."

Up next for the young speedskater are the Ontario Winter Games in Orillia March 1 to 4 and the Canada East championships later in the month in Quebec.

ARE YOU THE NEXT BLUE DEVIL?



To learn more please visit
bluedevilsacademy.com/trials