



# SPORTS

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FRIDAY MAY 19, 2000

## Porenta preparing for Olympic Trials

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

Miltonian Jennifer Porenta aspires to compete in international waters.

And recent improvements on smaller ponds have ensured the teenage swimmer will get a shot at achieving that goal a little earlier than expected.

The 15-year-old Milton Marlin veteran has made serious progress in the 50 metre freestyle over the past several months — to the point where she's now gearing up for an appearance at the Olympic Trials May 26 to June 4 in Montreal.

The only local swimmer to ever reach this stage, Jennifer delivered her first national qualifying time at December's Youth Cup Championships — stopping the clock in a personal best and gold-medal winning 26.98 seconds at the Etobicoke Olympium.

### Thrived at provincials

Three months later at the same venue, she shed more than three-tenths of a second off that mark with a 26.67s triumph at the Ontario Junior Short Course Championships.

Jennifer would have registered an even better time — of 26.52s — had a time-keeping error not nullified the field's first race of the weekend.

Heading into her biggest challenge to date, the local teen certainly doesn't rank herself among the top contenders to make the national squad.

But considering the amazing headway she's made in a relatively short period of time, it's impossible not to already label her a winner.

"I definitely didn't think I'd be here now," said Jennifer, who'll no doubt be one of the youngest competitors at the Olympic Trials, with some of the odds-on favourites as much as twice her age.

"I'm sure it'll be a little nerve-wracking, swimming against all the people I look up to. But it'll be good experience for next time.

What makes her accomplishments all the more impressive is that the freestyle

wasn't always her event of choice.

For the first few years of her swimming career, Jennifer devoted the lion's share of her energy to the backstroke. But when her progress became stifled, coach Emil Dimitrov steered her in a new direction — literally.

Recalled Jennifer, "I was losing my edge. I just needed a change."

### Extremely driven

Since then, her results have been surpassed only by her commitment — which includes at least a dozen hours in the pool each week during the height of her competitive season.

But as hard as she's trained physically, Jennifer stressed that being mentally prepared remains the key to success — especially in shorter distance races.

"Fifty metres doesn't give you any time to let your mind wonder. You have to be on the whole way."

And although most swimmers would probably be content with the improvement already made, Jennifer feels she still has more to give.

"I did a 26.87 in a long course relay recently, which works out to a low 26 in short course," she explained. "Yeah, I can get better."

Added Dimitrov, "Jennifer has a good shot at the finals (top eight at Olympic Trials) and that would be a big highlight for her. Also she has an excellent shot at qualifying for this year's Commonwealth Games in Scotland.

"Her improvements are not surprising. She's been at the top of her age class the last two or three years. Lately she's just put everything together."

While there has been little to stop her progress in the pool, she does have one dry land obstacle standing in her way.

The week-long trip to Montreal will be fairly expensive. As a result, her family and friends are seeking a little financial support through penny drives and various other fund-raising efforts that'll be held throughout the community over the coming weeks.

Proceeds will also help defray the cost of her voyage to Winnipeg for the senior national championships in August.



File photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Jennifer Porenta is gearing up for her biggest challenge yet — the Olympic Trials, which will be held May 26 to June 4 in Montreal.

## BR stages big comeback

By STEVE LeBLANC

The Champion

Nowhere in high school sports standings is there a column designated for moral victories.

But Bishop Reding's softball team might want to start campaigning for one, after a remarkable comeback against cross-town powerhouse E.C. Drury Tuesday at Lions Park.

Amid constant afternoon drizzle, the much younger Royals rallied from seven and five-run deficits to tie the Spartans 12-12. This spoiled Drury's hopes for a perfect regular season and pushed BR's record to 2-2-1.

Melissa Sheppard provided the heroics for Reding. With one out in

the bottom of the seventh, she stroked a two-run double that evened the count for the last time.

The Royals' reversal of fortune began in the bottom of the fourth when they finally got to Drury's pitching staff with four runs on a handful of hits. From there they turned a big double play in the fifth to add hope to their comeback bid.

Natalie Dawkins delivered some big relief pitching to further fuel BR. The right-handed hurler worked the final four innings — two of which she held the Spartans hitless.

Other standout contributors for the Royals were Carolyn Coates, Tara Elkie, Alexandra Findley, Jamie Humphrey and Alison Kidd.

Meanwhile, Melissa Park led offensively for Drury with a pair of runs and four RBI.

Teammate Marion Jamieson scored three times while driving in a couple of runs and scoring twice herself was Jenn Williams.

The tie, which marked BR's most memorable moment on the softball field in years, all but guaranteed them a playoff berth.

The 4-0-1 Spartans, never in danger of missing post-season play, will now need to upstage the unbeaten Georgetown Rebels in order to finish atop Halton Region's Richardson Division.

That battle of league leaders is set for Thursday, May 25 at Lions Park. Game time is 3:30 p.m.



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