

# SPORTS

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## Power tumbler rises to the occasion



PHOTO COURTESY OF ACTIONPIX.CA

**LEAP OF FAITH:** Meghan Hefford competes at the provincial championships in Toronto.

### Hefford pulls off back-to-back gold-medal performances

By Steve LeBlanc  
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Call it her breakout bash. Beginning to live up to her potential of being a major threat on the power tumbling scene, 15-year-old Meghan Hefford delivered golden performances on consecutive weekends late last month — beginning with Elite Canada in Kamloops, B.C.

There she turned back all challengers in the 13-to-17 Youth Women division with a high-energy, technically-proficient showing that put her a comfortable 5.8 points ahead of the runner-up.

"That's actually a lot for this sport," said the Bishop Reding Secondary School 10th grader, who describes power tumbling as gymnastics' floor routine without the

dance element (which see participants showcase eight different skills in 10-second passes). "I felt really good about winning, and kind of surprised actually."

But coach Denis Vachon wasn't. "Meghan's naturally gifted and has a great attitude," said the Burlington Gymnastics Club instructor, whose Milton pupil placed eighth out of 38 competitors at last fall's World Age Group (WAG) championships in Quebec City, missing the finals by just a third of a point. "She's always had the potential and this was just her breakout time."

A model of consistency out west, Hefford bested the competition in all four rounds and saved her best for last, with 29.90 and 31-point efforts in the finals to cement her place atop the podium.

Building on that victory the fol-

lowing weekend, she stepped things up at Toronto's Seneca College, where she reigned supreme at the Ontario championships.

A little sharper with her overall routine — which includes an especially tricky double flip with a twist — Hefford set a new personal record of 123 points, once again averting the glitches that had plagued her earlier this season.

"My execution and speed were about as good as they've ever been, and I really stuck that last landing in the final," she said. "It was definitely my best meet."

Hefford will now look to keep her momentum going at next month's national championships in Calgary, although — like always — she's not setting any specific goals for herself.

"I'm just going to keep working hard and go in and do my best."

## Reding duo in tough at OFSAA

Oh, so close. Hopes of ending the OFSAA badminton championships on a winning note fell heartbreakingly short for Bishop Reding's Brooke Hartwick and Fiona To Friday.

Neck and neck throughout their 'C' flight clash with Linnea Klokars and Emma Farago of Algoma's Michipocoten High School, BR's ladies doubles team were eventually edged in straight 22-20 sets at St. Catharines' Brock University.

"We were even right up until the end," said Hartwick, who reached OFSAA in her final year at Reding with a second-place finish at GHAC late last month. "It was pretty disappointing to come that close and not get a win at OFSAA. It's a whole different level of competition, but we weren't quite at our best. However, it was a good experience, especially for Fiona who'll be back next year."

Just reaching the badminton provincials was an impressive feat for the partners, who gave Reding its

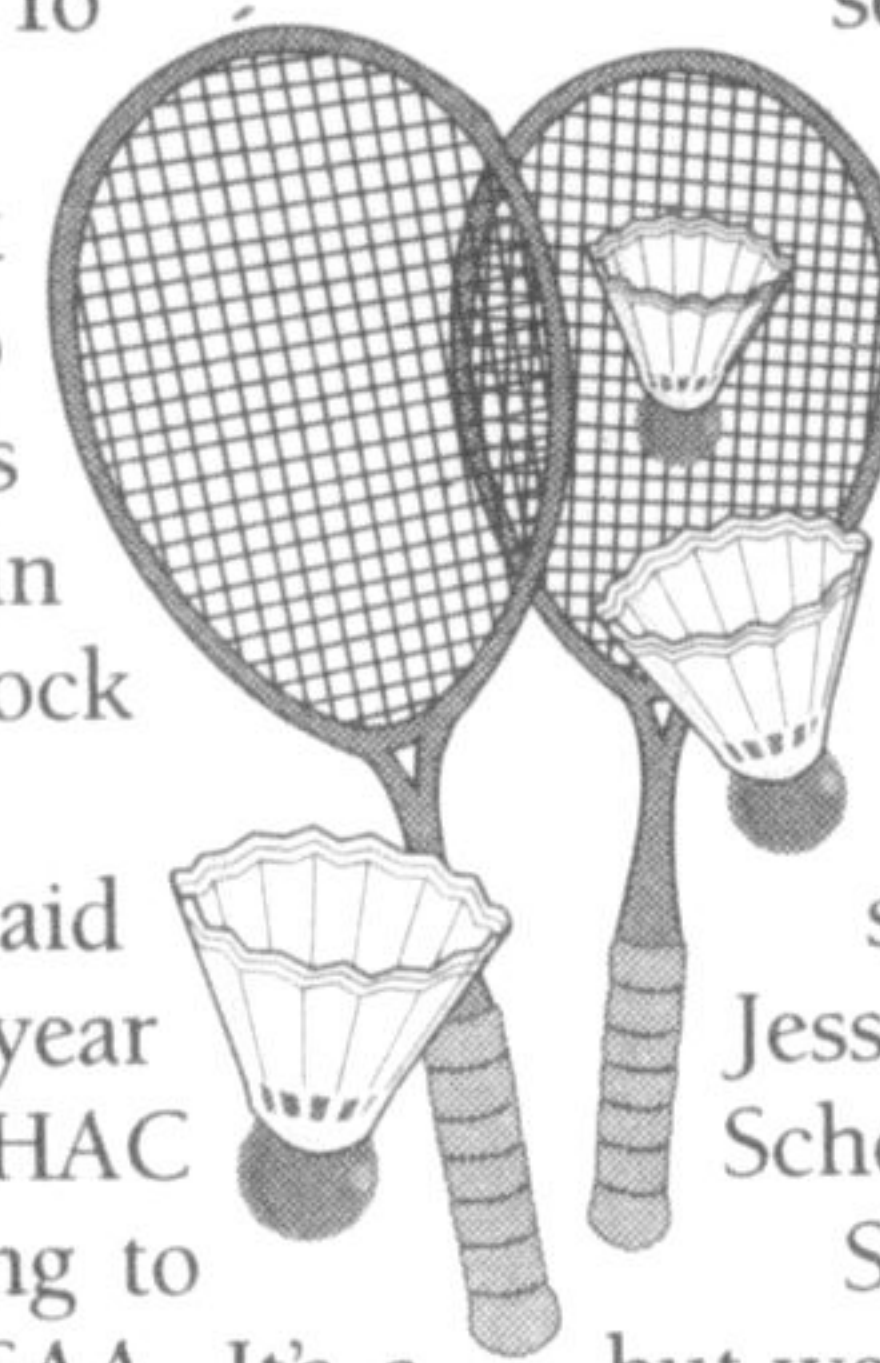
seventh straight OFSAA berth in as many years and provided a fitting swan song for head coach Jodie Rideout.

"They (Hartwick and To) improved continuously all season and were able to get to OFSAA and play in some awesome match-ups," said Rideout, who'll be taking over as head of phys-ed at Georgetown's Christ the King in the fall. "To go to OFSAA one last time and be able to share it with two great kids like Brooke and Fiona was terrific."

A rather unfavourable draw in the first round saw the BR duo face third seed Renee Yip and Jessica Yao of Markham's Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School, who knocked them off 21-8, 21-10.

Said Hartwick, "That was a tough draw, all right, but we were happy with how we did against them."

From there, Reding's latest OFSAA qualifiers offered a stiffer challenge in 'B' fight play to sisters Yumna and Nida Ahmed of host A.N. Myer Secondary School of Niagara Falls — coming up on the short end of a 21-19, 21-15 decision.



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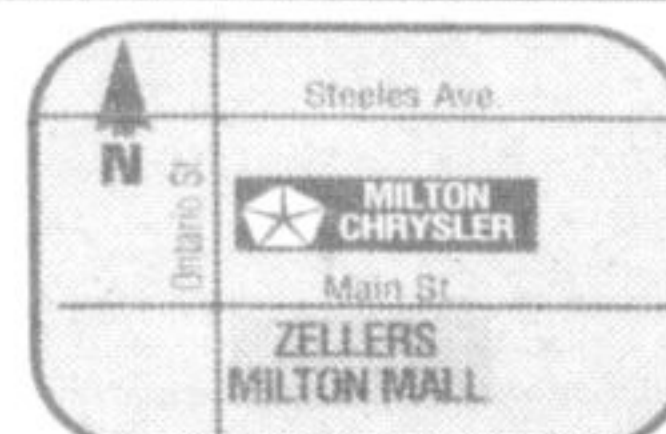
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