Stewart is in sync with national team

Unionville synchro swimmer is set to make debut with national team in a pre-Olympic international event

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Sports Editor

Reflecting on her time auditioning at the recent national synchronized swim team trials in Edmonton, Courtenay Stewart felt the best thing that happened to her was to miss making the youth team.

For a lot of youthful competitors, that bit of adversity would be a painful experience.

The 15-year-old Unionville resident, however, turned that negative into a positive.

With the national team creating a B squad, Stewart made the most of her opportunity by gaining one of 10 vacancies on the line.

COURTENAY STEWART: Was selected to the Canadian national B team that will compete in Rome.

"Once I didn't make the youth team it was motivating for me to make the B team," said Stewart from Edmonton, where she's been for the last month at the trials and in training with the newly formed squad.

Entering the trials with the intention of establishing her presence before the selection committee, Stewart came within an eyelash of making the youth team, comprised of 15 to 18-year-olds.

"To make the youth team, you have to do figures before your routine and the top 20 in figures make the youth team," she explained. "I was 21st."

To make the B team, Stewart pointed out performers had to execute elements instead of figures. From there, Stewart said the top 25 performers advanced to perform a routine set twice before a group of officials. Based on those results, the top 10 were selected to the B team.

Stewart acknowledged she was a bit nervous at first. But she felt it became easier once she had to repeat her routines.

"I was just hoping that I'd make the team. If I didn't make it I wouldn't be upset," she revealed.

The youngest performer to make the team, Stewart and her teammates have been training diligently over the last few weeks to prepare for a three-day international competition in Rome.

The event, scheduled to take place this week, will feature at least eight countries, including the Mexican Olympic team.

A member of the Olympium Synchro Swim Club, Stewart will be making her debut at an international event, while representing Canada.

Stewart hopes this competition will be the first big step toward achieving her ultimate goal: representing Canada at the 2004 Summer Olympics.

"It'll be really exciting," said the former two-time junior national synchro champion of the upcoming event.

"I'm really happy with the progress that I've made. They say the B team is supposed to be the next Olympic team so I'm really happy."

Crediting her coaches for the success she's attained, Stewart will find herself in new surroundings this fall.

With her parents moving to Huntington Beach, Calif. this week due to work commitments, Stewart will find herself in a new school and have a new coach as she intends to continue her synchro career.

Stewart will compete in the U.S., but will remain listed as a member of a Canadian club, which in turn will enable her to compete in next year's nationals.

"It'll be a different experience," Stewart conceded.

"But I'm excited."

STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

A BIG WINNER ON THE LINKS

Chad Wright proudly hoists the CPGA trophy that he earned after winning the Samsung CPGA championship Sunday at the King's Riding Golf Club in King City. The 24-year-old Ventura, California native edged out Jason Bohn and Chris Anderson by one stroke with a four-round total of 268 to win his first professional event. Wright pocketed $27,000 with his win.

Ruffolo is ready to play baseball

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Sports Editor

Call it pure luck.

Nonetheless, Paul Ruffolo will be doing something that no other Markham youngster has done.

And that's to be selected as one of 255 boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 11 representing 25 countries that will attend the 11th annual World Children's Baseball Fair in Regina.

The 11-year-old Markham resident was one of five youngsters who had their names picked at random to represent Ontario at this year's event, which began yesterday and continues to Aug. 9, and which is being held for the first time in Canada.

A second baseman and pitcher with the Tritech Mechanical peewee houseleague team in Markham, Ruffolo received the unexpected good news in May through a telephone call from Bob McKillop, executive director of Baseball Ontario.

Playing ball since he was four years old, Ruffolo is excited with the prospect of going to improve his baseball skills and to make new acquaintances.

"I want to learn to pitch better than I do now and to field better," he said.

McKillop noted the selection process for this year's camp began last year, when every youngster who registered with Baseball Ontario had an equal opportunity to be selected.

"We just pulled the names of five youngsters out of a hat and Paul was one of them. It was absolute pure chance," McKillop acknowledged.

Founded by former baseball greats Hank Aaron and Saduharu Oh, the World Children's Baseball Fair was staged in the U.S. and Japan for the first 10 years.

The event is a world youth camp that utilizes baseball as its main theme and has several former major league players in attendance. One of those, McKillop revealed, is former Minnesota Twins all star Harmon Killebrew.

"In the morning it's a fundamentals camp. And then in the afternoon and evenings there's social and cultural events for the youngsters. It's a tremendous experience for the kids," said McKillop.

Perry Curiston

Taking heads-up approach

It's a scene that sounds all too familiar to golfers.

"I continually top the ball because I can't help lifting my head. I try so hard to keep my head down that I'm even looking at the ground after I take a swing at the ball. I still manage to hit the top of the ball, and sometimes I even miss it."

Your playing partner then pipes up and says "you keep your head down and I'll watch where the ball goes".

This is the worst possible advice anyone can give.

Over the years I've videotaped thousands of swings and have yet to find someone who has actually lifted their head, although I've seen countless people take a swing and top the ball.

Wouldn't you think that if you've been playing golf for the past 20 years or more and have been trying to keep your head down all that time that you could?

Perhaps you are not working on the correct thing.

The reason many people miss and or top the ball is because they are trying to scoop it up into the air.

In reality, you should swing the club down and through the ball. This will create a divot.

When you play golf you should take a divot after you hit the ball. To get this feeling, take some practice swings when you are on the range.

If you are swinging correctly you should be able to brush the ground in front of where the ball would be lying.

To visualize this, try placing a tee in the ground, and set up to it as though you were going to hit the tee. Now take a swing. Your club should leave a divot on the ground in front of the tee.

Address your letters to: Impact Golf Schools, c/o Perry Curiston, 19 Mill St., Stouffville, Ont. L4A 1C6. Or e-mail your comments to impactgolfperryc@3web.net

Perry Curiston is director of Impact Golf Schools and was the 1996 and 1998 Ontario PGA Teacher of the Year.

RCGA not moving to Angus Glen

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Sports Editor

Any rumours suggesting the Angus Glen Golf Club will become the new home to the Royal Canadian Golf Association are just that, for now.

That's what Kevin Thistle, general manager and director of golf operations at the Markham-based public course, insists.

Known as the governing body of golf in Canada, the RCGA currently has its offices on the grounds of the Glen Abbey Golf Club in Oakville and is in the midst of a three-year lease with an option to extend for five since the course was taken over by ClubLink Corp. in February 1999.

Rumours persist the RCGA is seeking a new home once its current lease expires.

"I don't think it's an emergency rush for those guys," said Thistle of the RCGA's possible move.

The expansion of the Angus Glen course next spring with the addition of another 18-hole playing facility and a renovated 50,000-square-foot clubhouse would seem to make it a possible candidate. Thistle insists there's no room whatsoever for the RCGA. At least for the time being.

"The RCGA and us became good friends due to the Canadian Open (which Angus Glen was awarded in 2002 and 2007)," he acknowledged. "Someone started a rumour. I didn't start it. Right now we're not even close."

If the RCGA were to move, Thistle noted it would be forced to relocate the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame, which is part of the facility located on the current premesis. Thistle reiterated space to accommodate the hall of fame would be non-existent.