

# Penny hits paydirt in synchro skating

*Part of team earning world championship*

BY ALYSHIA HIGGINS  
Special to the Sun-Tribune

Heather Penny knows what it feels like to be on top of the world. In skating, that is.

Heather's team, Nexxice, placed third at the World Synchronized Skating Championships in London, Ont. Twenty other nations, including Sweden, Australia, Great Britain, Russia and Japan, competed.

Heather has skated on Nexxice, a senior competitive team based in Kitchener-Waterloo and Burlington, for five years.

The team is coached by Shelley Barnett and has members from London, Barrie, St Catharines, Kitchener, Waterloo and Burlington. The 20-member team ranges in age from 16 to 26.

According to Heather, the team practised upwards of 16 hours a week to prepare for the season.

**'I never thought this would happen. I didn't realize how many people were there or how loud it was until I saw it on TV.'**

—Stouffville skater Heather Penny on being part of a world championship synchronized skating team

This was Heather's second trip to worlds. Last year, the team placed ninth. Heather's team is also this year's Canadian National champion.

Heather began skating at age four and synchronized skating in Markham at age 15.

She is in her second year at the

Art Institute in Toronto for Fashion Design.

Besides attending school and skating, she helps coach a novice and junior team in East Gwillimbury.

Some skaters she coached attended the competition and watched her collect the medal.

**'It's not just a four-hour practice, its an hour and a half commuting there and an hour and a half coming back.'**

—Heather Penny, on the challenges of competing with a team based in Kitchener-Waterloo

"To see them excited for me was the best part," she recalled.

Heather's parents, along with many other parents of Nexxice skaters, made the commute to London to watch the competition. Heather admits the reality of the situation didn't sink in until she got home.

"I never thought this would happen," she said. "I didn't realize how many people were there or how loud it was until I saw it on TV."

Her teammates were surprised at how well they placed, including her coach, she said.

"We were just hoping to improve," Heather said. "(The coach) was shocked. Not only was it a great achievement for us, it was a great achievement for her."

Although she admits coming third in the world for synchronized skating is the highlight of her skating career, Heather is undecided as to whether or not she will return to the ice next year.

"It's not just a four-hour practice, its an hour and a half commuting there and an hour and a half coming back," she said.



Stouffville's Heather Penny (left) performs with Nexxice, the world championship synchronized skating team.

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