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National team keeper was 'noticed from start' in local league

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who played in the NHL and Bobby Hughes (in the American League). Hopefully, I'm not the last person from Stouffville to earn such an honour," she said.

Her career was launched at age seven through the encouragement of her grand-

dad, Bev McIver.

"My grandfather bought my first hockey stick and first Maple Leafs' jersey," Knox said. "But he also co-owned a hockey camp and put me in my first camp. I was the only girl in it. But he still co-owns the camp and when I'm there to help him out, there's now about a 50-50 split between boys and girls."

She played a variety of positions in house league during her first year in the Stouffville Markham Girls Hockey Association.

In her second season, with a girls' select team, Ed Wilkinson, the father of teammate Maddie Wilkinson and a former goalkeeper himself, suggested she stay in net.

Knox went on to play nine seasons in net with the Stouffville-Markham Stars.

She also played two years of boys rep in the Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association. In 2002, Knox was on the Clippers peewee boys' team that won the Ontario Hockey Federation A title.

She credits Clippers' coach Rick Sooley with making those two seasons special.

"Rick provided plenty of motivation for me. He taught me to be mentally tough, especially since I was a girl playing against boys and a lot of times the opposition would give me a hard time," Knox said.

She returned to girls' hockey with the Stars' midgets and intermediates. Dianne White, Stouffville Markham Girls Hockey Association president, isn't surprised.

"We noticed her from the start that some good things would happen with her. As an organization, we're proud of what Liz accomplished in making the under-22 team," she said.

At Stouffville District Secondary School in 2006, she backstopped the Spartans girls to their first Ontario championship.

As a sophomore at Wilfrid Laurier in Waterloo, she helped the Golden Hawks finish second in the nation this year and was chosen to the CIS championship tournament all-star team. During the Ontario University Athletics campaign, she was a second-team all-star.

At the week-long national under-22 team camp this month at York University, Knox was hungry, and ready.

"When I got invited last year, I was unprepared. I didn't think of it too much. Now I know a lot more about the junior program and I committed myself this year to doing extra workouts in the gym and being more careful about my nutrition and post-game recovery," she said.

Once the tryouts concluded, Knox still wasn't sure if she had made the team.

Not until Sunday when players were forced to get up at 5 a.m. for meetings with the coaching staff.

"When I went into the coaches' room I was shaking," Knox said. "But when they said congratulations and gave us log books, that was it. I went back to my room and tried to sleep, because we didn't have to get up for breakfast until 9 a.m., but I couldn't. I was so wired."

The team will reconvene in December for an under-22 tournament in Germany.

The experience has been worth the hard work she's put in. Work that wouldn't have been possible without the support from her parents, Doug and Gwen.



LIZ KNOX: Stouffville hockey product named to national under-22 hockey team this week.

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