

Grade 9 student makes giant steps in field

BY MICHAEL HAYAKAWA
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When Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans track and field coach Steve Jimmo first laid eyes on Greg Barker, he had a good inclination the Grade 9 student could be an impact performer on his team.

With the strapping six-foot, three-inch, 205-pound 15-year-old possessing a high degree of athleticism that included a season of playing minor hockey with the Spartans junior boys' team and Toronto Red Wings AAA major bantams, Jimmo felt he had a potential medal contender to work with.

At the York Region Athletic Association outdoor championships last week at York University, Barker didn't disappoint.

Entered in the midget boys' discus event, he captured the gold medal and set a YRAA record in doing so with a personal best toss of 42.39 metres.

That surpassed the mark set by Kevin Wyszatko of Dr. J.M. Denison (Newmarket) in 2009 of 41.09m.

Entering the competition, Barker revealed he didn't set any objectives in terms of rewriting the record book.

"I was certainly pleased with what I accomplished," Barker said. "I knew that I had a good throw.

Once it left my hand it felt good and when the official read out the score of 42, I said 'wow'. It was a personal best for me."

Although this is just Barker's first year of throwing the discus at the high school level, he did compete in the shot put while attending Stouffville Christian School.

'He's a hockey player, he's fast and well co-ordinated.

In discus that means a lot. He has a good genetic base.'

Barker credits the coaching of Jimmo, who also introduced him to the javelin this year.

He won the silver medal in javelin at the YRAA championships along with bronze in a talented field in the shot put.

"It's really no surprise as to what he's accomplished," Jimmo said of Barker's feats.

"He's a hockey player, he's fast and well co-ordinated. In discus that means a lot. He has a good genetic base."

Jimmo said Barker's short-term goal is to eclipse the school discus record of 45m.

"If he learns to turn properly he should be able to throw in the 50m range," Jimmo said.

With the Central Regionals set to take place today and Friday at York University, Jimmo had a week to make further improvements to Barker's throwing form.

Acknowledging the discus is his favourite track and field discipline, Barker hopes he can qualify for this year's Ontario Federation of School Athletic Association

championships June 2 to 4 in Sudbury.

"Then next year I want to do well at OFSAA," he said.

Spartans' senior boys' runner Michael Bourgeois established a YRAA record in the 2000m open boys' steeplechase when he won this year's event in 6:26.09.

That eclipsed the prior best set by Eduardo Paolini of St. Theresa of Lisieux (Richmond Hill) of 6:27.30 in 2007.



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Greg Barker hopes to qualify for the provincial high school track and field championships this week.

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