

# Sprinter not looking back on injury-plagued seasons

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to running times that I did before I got there."

But when Ms Geiger returned to Stouffville later that summer, the pain wasn't subsiding. Instead, it became progressively worse.

"I wasn't running the same times that I did before so I took the rest of the summer off," she said.

With no improvement to her injury upon returning to the South Bend, Ind. campus for her sophomore term, Ms Geiger had an MRI done with the hope of identifying the problem.

It revealed the cartilage in her right hip was torn. Ms Geiger underwent arthroscopic surgery in South Bend in October to repair a torn labrum.

While the surgery was deemed a success, Ms Geiger encountered difficulty during her rehabilitation process, which attempted to get back the range of motion in her surgically repaired hip.

"The first time I went through rehab I had problems when I got back to running and it was hard for the doctors to assess the root cause in the first place," she said.

Ms Geiger discovered the program was tailored more for longer-distance runners, not sprinters. As a result, she overused the muscle in her hip. That eventually led to her aggravating her left hip.

Fortunately for Ms Geiger, she did not require hip surgery on the other side. However, she experienced soreness in it.

Unable to compete that season, Ms Geiger returned to Stouffville last summer and sought a second medical opinion.

What Ms Geiger received was a different approach to her rehabilitation from what she originally did at Notre Dame.

Under her revised program, Ms Geiger took last summer off from running, a foreign concept to her.

But sitting on the sidelines served its purpose, she said.

"I missed it," she said. "But over the course of time, I learned a lot from all of this."

Entering her junior campaign this past academic year, Ms Geiger began jogging towards the end of October and running the following month before returning to training with her teammates in January.

She eventually returned to the track and ran in some 200m and 400m outdoor events late in the season.

"It was good to get back running and to know I could get back out there," she said.

Recently returning to Stouffville for the summer, Ms Geiger has worked diligently under Dave Hunt, Unionville High School and University of Toronto track and field coach. Ms Geiger has praised Mr. Hunt along with others from the U of T staff in their efforts to help build up her fitness level.

"Dave has been real supportive and believes in me," Ms Geiger

said of Mr. Hunt, who replaced her long-time York Flyers club coach Bill Gairdner when he retired. "And I've been real fortunate to have the support from the University of Toronto track club."

He remains optimistic Ms Geiger, who was Canada's Youth Athlete of the Year in 2007, can make a full recovery to where she once was on the track.

The process, Mr. Hunt said, will be gradual.

"The key is to get Natalie back to where she was prior to entering Notre Dame," he said.

"At this juncture, competition is not the goal. Our immediate plan is for her to be healthy upon going back to Notre Dame and to have a successful year when she's there."

As part of their training regimen, Ms Geiger has competed in some summer events at the U of T track where she ran some 100m and 200m races and as much as 300m in a 400m race.

While it will take time for Ms Geiger to make a full recovery, Mr. Hunt hopes it won't dampen her enthusiasm for all of the work she's put in through the years.

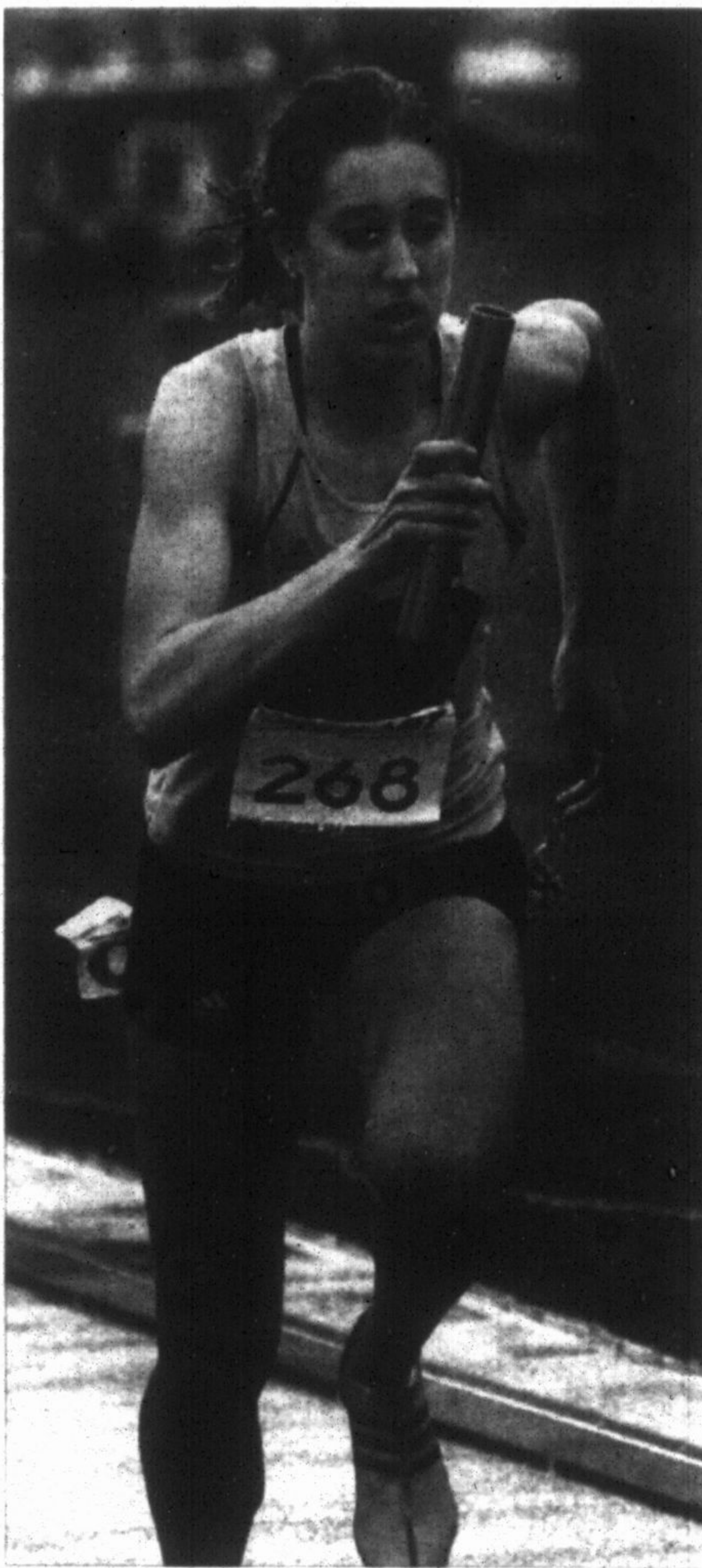
He hopes what Ms Geiger is going through will serve as an incentive for bigger things down the road.

"I'm hoping by 2016 if she's still interested in running she'll be a part of our national team," he said.

Majoring in marketing with a minor in anthropology at Notre Dame, Ms Geiger accepts what she's been going through.

But with time, she is confident she can have a good senior campaign and continue to get back on the fast track to success.

"It's frustrating for sure, but it happens to athletes," she said. "It's been a real process but I'm working through it and happy to be back running. I want to contribute to our team next year and continue to move forward and not look back."



NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY PHOTO

Stouffville runner Natalie Geiger is home for the summer preparing for her senior year at Notre Dame.

**'I'm hoping by 2016 if she's still interested in running she'll be a part of our national team.'**

**Dave Hunt, Unionville High School and University of Toronto track and field coach on Natalie Geiger.**

## ASK THE Experts

Stouffville Taekwondo Karate Inc.

Chris Ridabock



**What role should competition play in our kids' sporting lives?**



I'm potentially in the minority here, because I do not believe excessive competition at too early an age is healthy for children. I am a big believer that non-competitive play helps foster creativity and positive social interaction. While we have students who love to compete in Taekwondo, we put very little emphasis on their result as opposed to how hard they tried. We use sport competition as a tool for kids to build their self confidence just by trying - hopefully that confidence will serve them someday in the future in the classroom, boardroom, even in the House of Parliament! We feel strongly that success in sport is an excellent vehicle for growth and fun, not necessarily an end result or needed goal. Keeping these tenets as children mature can help them to keep their perspective when confronted with both success and failure. One of our instructors medalled in the Olympics, yet is still focused on finishing her Philosophy degree - the Olympics was just a stepping stone toward the next amazing things she'll accomplish! Taekwondo competition can teach the skills of self confidence, discipline, patience, strategic thinking and a drive to succeed - but these skills need to translate outside of sports to show their real value.



**Chris Ridabock is a Taekwondo black belt and instructor at STK.**  
www.s-t-k.ca 905.591.45TK

## Jeweller

Scott Silver



**Why is a "tennis bracelet" called a "tennis bracelet"?**



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