

Knox keeping national team dream alive

BY MICHAEL HAYAKAWA
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Liz Knox wouldn't have it any other way.

For the Stouffville resident, to play with and against some of the best female hockey players and at the highest competitive level is what has kept her competitive fire burning.

This after Knox had a stellar career guarding the twine for the Wilfrid Laurier University Golden Hawks and on the international stage with various Canadian national age group teams and with Team Canada at the 2011 Winter Universiade.

'BEST LEAGUE IN WORLD'

These days, Knox plays for the Brampton Thunder of the Canadian Women's Hockey League.

She's in her second year with the Thunder. The league also includes defending league champion Montreal, Toronto, Boston and Alberta, Knox. She's grateful an opportunity exists for her to continue her pursuit of a game she loves to play.

And to do it alongside some elite players, including neighbouring

Markham residents and 2010 Canadian Olympic gold medallists Gillian Apps and Cherie Piper, makes it even more exciting.

"The Canadian Women's Hockey League is unarguably the most elite senior women's league in the world," the Stouffville District Secondary School graduate, said. "It's the most competitive league I've ever played in and the players have really created a name for the league."

"Any given team has a handful of current Olympians, a few previous Olympians and another few national team prospects for the Canadian and U.S. programs. And with all the young talent coming out of U.S. and Canadian universities in the years to come it will only get better."

Knox arrived in Brampton straight out of Laurier where she was a big part of four Ontario University Athletics championship teams.

She was the CIS MVP for 2009-10, OUA Player of the Year in 2010 and the 2010 Outstanding Woman of Laurier.

"It was pretty standard procedure to get into the league," she said. "There was some contact between Brampton general manager Jody Katz, following my last



LIZ KNOX: Stouffville hockey graduate prepping for Clarkson Cup event in Markham next month.

season at Laurier. Then I trained over the summer and got invited to camp in the fall."

Making her debut with the Thunder last season in which she saw duty in 20 games and recorded a 2.94 goals against average, one shutout and a .828 save percentage. Knox played a vital role in helping them reach the Clarkson Cup final before falling to the first-place Montreal Stars.

"Last year was very special for our team. We were definitely the underdogs and I think certainly some people who followed the league would have doubted us making an appearance in the finals," she said of their third-place regular season record (18-7-2).

The Thunder is in fourth place. "We are going to have to work hard to earn that spot again and it can be done," she said. "For now my focus is on winning regular season games to put us in a good spot going into post season," she said.

With this year's Clarkson Cup championships to be held in Markham in March, Knox said there's even more incentive.

Especially since Knox played in the Stouffville-Markham Stars organization as a youth. She also played on Stouffville Clippers' boys teams.

"I am so excited to have the Clarkson Cup on home turf," she said. "Brad Morris, who is the chairman of the Canadian Women's Hockey League and father of two Markham-Stouffville Stars, has worked so hard for our league this year at spreading the awareness of our game."

"As one of the fastest growing communities of girls hockey in

Ontario, I couldn't agree with him more to have Markham host our championship this year. It's a community that has given me so much opportunity to do what I love and I am excited to hopefully, have my year end here as well."

Knox hopes to play for Canada again. Especially since Hockey Canada keeps tabs on players in the CWHL.

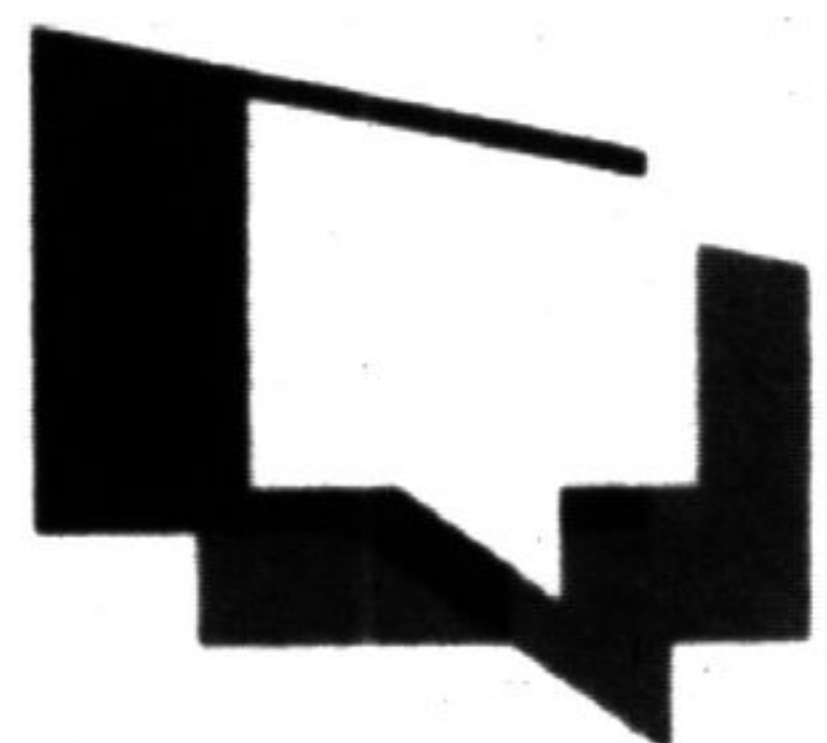
"Anything is possible but I am realistic about my chances for playing on the national team," she said. "At this stage in the game, they're getting ready to gear up for the 2014 Winter Olympics and being in the top five or six just isn't enough at this point."

LULULEMON EMPLOYEE

"I have the utmost respect for the top four goalies that they've recognized and am excited to see how the roles pan out for them."

Knox works at Lululemon in Thornhill when not playing for the Thunder. She hasn't set any timetable as for how long she wants to remain active in the game.

"I might be able to answer that better at the end of the season," she said with a laugh.



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