

# Stouffville athletes shone on big stages in 2015

BY MICHAEL HAYAKAWA

mhayakawa@yrmg.com

For athletes who resided in Whitchurch-Stouffville or who once made their home here, the 2015 calendar year was one they won't soon forget.

A big part of that was experienced by those who represented Canada and were spurred on by the hometown crowd when the 2015 Pan American Games were con-

ducted in the Greater Toronto Area.

Coming off the heels of helping Canada capture the men's world softball championship in Saskatoon, pitchers **Paul Koert** and **Andy Skelton** rode that momentum just a couple of weeks later at the Pan Ams by helping Canada capture the gold medal that culminated with a 2-1 victory over Venezuela in the final played in Ajax.

The win by Canada enabled them to continue an

impressive streak in which they've won the gold medal at the Pan American Games each time men's softball was conducted during the games.

In the women's competition, former Gormley resident **Jenna Caira's** live arm helped Canada win the gold medal. She fanned eight batters in the final elimination game to help Canada defeat Puerto Rico 7-4 to earn a berth in the gold medal game.

In the pool, Gormley resident **Lisa Saunders**, 21, was a member of Canada's synchronized swimming team that won the gold medal in the team competition.

In equestrian, **Belinda Trussell** rode off with a silver medal after she was part of Canada's dressage entry that finished second in the team competition at the OLG Caledon Pan Am Equestrian Park.

The owner of Oakcrest Farm on Ninth Line near Ballantree, Trussell just missed out on her second medal of the Toronto 2015 Pan Am Games after finishing fourth in the individual dressage event.

In gymnastics, three-time Olympic medalist **Karen Cockburn** came off a broken ankle incurred last November prior to participating in the world championships to bounce and somersault her way to the bronze medal in the women's trampoline competition that was won by her Skyriders Trampoline Club teammate and King City resident Rosie MacLennan.

For the 34-year-old Cockburn, who also lit the Pan Am cauldron Stouffville, winning the bronze made amends from her appearance in the 2011 Pan American Games where she was forced to withdraw due to illness.

While the Pan American Games was a major sporting event in 2015, there were other competitions that saw local competitors rise to the occasion.

On the curling rink, Stouffville resident **Julie Hastings** skipped her Bayview Golf and Country Club foursome that included fellow Stouffville resident and lead **Katrina Collins** along with vice **Christy Trembly** and second **Stacey Smith** to their first-ever Ontario Scotties.

That victory qualified them for the 2015 Scotties Tournament of Hearts where they represented Ontario in the event held in Moose Jaw, Sask. Entering the 2015-16 season, the foursome were ranked 17th in the world in the World Curling Tour's Order of Merit rankings.

On the links, Ballantree resident and University of Waterloo student **Gajan Sivabalasingham** successfully retained his Ontario University Athletics men's golf championship after carding a one-under par 143 (72-71) during the two-round competition.

Currently in his senior year, the 21-year-old Sivabalasingham's score also helped his University of Waterloo men's golf team retain their OUA team title.

In lacrosse, Stouffville resident **Jim Veltman** was honoured by his peers in the game when he was inducted into the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame.

A former member of the Toronto Rock, the 49-year-old Veltman also left his position as commissioner of the Canadian Lacrosse League to serve as an assistant coach in the upcoming National Lacrosse League season with the New England Black Wolves.

In the high school sports scene, the **Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans senior girls' volleyball team** captured the school's first York Region Athletic Association tier one title and served up a silver medal at the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Association's AAA championships after suffering a heartbreaking 3-2 loss to Abbey Park (Oakville).

On the ice, **Shawn Hulshof** was named men's hockey player of the year by the State University of New York Athletic Conference.

The 21-year-old sophomore forward led Oswego State with 40 points (19 goals and 21 assists), helping the Lakers to an 18-3-4 overall and 12-2-2 regular season conference record and a second place finish in the SUNYAC tournament.

Hulshof, who receives the MVP Herb Hammond award, played Jr. A for the Trenton Golden Hawks. He led St. Brother Andre in Markham to an Ontario high school championship in 2011.

Three Stouffville Spirit graduates joined Hulshof on the SUNYAC all-conference teams.

Goaltender **Jon Hall** (Potsdam), a member of the Spirit's 2012 Ontario Junior Hockey League championship team, is on the first team with Hulshof.

Forward **Alex Botten** (Oswego) is on the second team and defenceman **Jack Caradonna** (Geneseo) the third team.

The awards were voted on by the head coaches in the conference.

Former Spirit forward **Drake Caggiula** played an instrumental role in helping the University of North Dakota reach their second straight National Collegiate Athletic Association Frozen Four berth.

During the 2014-15 campaign, Caggiula, who was in his junior year, was also named to the All-National Collegiate Hockey Conference second team.

A member of the Spirit from 2010-12, Caggiula tied for the conference goal-scoring lead with 13 en route to collecting a team-leading 22 points during NCHC games.

Entering his senior year this season, Caggiula was named to the six-player National College Hockey Conference's preseason All-Conference Team.

The 2014-15 year was also one of promise as evidenced by the Stouffville Spirit, who made their first Ontario Junior Hockey League playoff appearance after a two-year postseason drought where they played in the first round before being eliminated by the Kingston Voyageurs.

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