

Young speed skater races to overall age-class title at Canada East championships

For Aaralyn McGill, it's more about development than dominance.

With that said, it's not surprising that the up-and-coming speed skater wasn't focused on her two golden performances when discussing last weekend's Canada East short track championships in Ottawa.

"Yeah I'd say that's the one I'm most proud of," said Aaralyn, of her personal-best 2:51.68 finish in the 11-year-old girls' 1,500-metre that was good enough for silver.

Ontario's only skater in an otherwise all Quebec final, the local pre-teen delivered a significant crack to the blue wall — the colour worn by the perennial powerhouse Quebecers.



Aaralyn McGill proudly displays her overall champion's plaque.

Staying to the outside and eventually finding some holes against a Quebec contingent that worked as a team to block her out, Aaralyn made some huge strides over the last eight laps (of 15) and fell just a second short of gold medalist Daphnée Carignan.

"Another couple of laps and I think I would have had her," said the Cambridge Speed Skating Club standout, who shed close to two seconds off her previous best 1,500m and gained some valuable experience in one of the sport's more strategically-challenging distances.

On the heels of a clean sweep at the Provincial A Championships in Clarington, Aaralyn made four trips to the podium in the nation's capital to claim the 11-year-old girls' overall champion's plaque.

She cracked the 42-second barrier for the first time — the only skater in her age group to do so — to win the 400m in 41.42s. Her personal best time of 22.17s in the 200m was also enough for gold, while she took silver in the 2,000m points race.

"I had some pretty terrible practices (before Ottawa), but I usually have a good meet after bad practices so I was actually pretty confident going in," explained Aaralyn, whose sister Ariaiah won the Ontario B & C short track championships for six-year-old girls recently in London. "A lot of people have been telling me my technique has gotten a lot better this season... getting lower and more aerodynamic.

"This (Canada East success) feels great. I think I can do a lot better next season."

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Nurturing her need for speed

Campbellville youth delivers golden debut on national speed skating stage

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By Steve LeBlanc

She stopped in for a quick bite, but had her attention quickly diverted from the menu board.

“I was in a McDonald’s; there was a TV and it (speed skating) was showing,” recalled 12-year-old Aaralyn McGill, of her first exposure to speed skating — a few brief but impactful moments of competition during the 2010 Vancouver Games. “I saw it and thought, ‘This is awesome’.”

The Campbellville youth’s love for the sport has grown by leaps and bounds since that fateful fast-food visit. After all, one tends to enjoy an athletic endeavour more when thriving at it.



Aaralyn McGill competes at the long-track nationals in Edmonton.

And Aaralyn has done quite a bit of that.

Recently promoted to the elite division at Cambridge Speed Skating Club, she delivered a golden debut at the long-track national championships last weekend in Edmonton.

She made it to the top of the podium in both the 300 and 500 m — with personal-best efforts of 31.008s and 52.052s — and raced to third in the 3,000 m with a time of 6:04.944.

With plenty left in the proverbial gas tank, Aaralyn then joined Ontario’s 13-and-14-year-old pursuit squad and held her own within the older ranks — helping her province reign supreme.

“I was really excited about that (winning with older skaters),” said the local speed skater, whose quickness can also be seen with the Brookville Public School track team and in house-league lacrosse.

Progressing to Cambridge after some formative years at the Milton Speed Skating Club, Aaralyn has made consistent strides on both the short and long track since some admittedly humbling — but thoroughly enjoyable — first few practices as an enthusiastic six-year-old.

“I knew I wanted to do this right away.”

That dedication is more than apparent whenever she hits the ice.

“The first thing I noticed (when she joined Cambridge club) was that she wasn’t just messing around (like some other youngsters). She was focused and wanted to do well,” said Speed Skating Canada Hall of Famer Ernie Overland, a father to three Olympic speed skaters. “She works hard and her heart’s in it.”

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While not offering specifics and not wanting to put undue pressure on his young pupil, the Cambridge coach added that he believes Aaralyn's times are on par with those of his Olympic daughter's at that age.

He said, "That tells me something."

"That (comparison) makes me excited," said Aaralyn, who's been unbeaten in Ontario within her own age group since a provincial championship sweep when she was seven. Little sister Ariaiah is now following in her footsteps and has already shown some potential.

Training most days of the week — at either her home club or in Waterloo or Toronto — Aaralyn hopes to represent her country some day, whether that be on the short or long track.

"Whichever takes me the farthest," she said. "I don't know exactly what it is (about speed skating). I just love it."

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