

Local archer strikes provincial gold at Ontario Summer Games



By Jake Courtepatte

15-year old archer Hayden Edwards made the trek to Windsor last weekend to compete in the Ontario Summer Games, Ontario's largest multi-sport event now in its 44th year.

Amidst some strong competition, Edwards was able to take home provincial gold in only his first year of competing outdoors.

Held in Windsor from August 7 to 10, the Ontario Summer Games (OSG) was described by team manager Lynn Acri as "a stepping stone for young athletes."

While Edwards had recently competed in the US Nationals for archery in Ohio, he said he found the OSG to be more of a "taste of the Olympics".

"It was a better feel for a wide-range event," said Edwards. "With all the different sports there, and seeing different athletes from different sports, it had that vibe."

Growing up in Aurora, Edwards focused his athletics on minor hockey. When his uncle bought him his first bow three years ago, rep hockey stood in the way.

"I never really got a chance to use it," said Edwards. "Then one day we got a hold of my uncle's coach, and I guess she just paid a lot of attention to me. I picked it up well."

Edwards now plays house league hockey on weekends, choosing to put his focus on his archery.

Edwards' uncle is Rob Rusnov, former Olympic archer and two-time Pan-Am Games gold medalist. Under the wing of Rusnov and Canadian Olympic Archery coach Joan McDonald, Edwards shot strong in the Cadet division of 17 and under. He finished with a final score of 1,578, almost 100 points ahead of second place.

According to Edwards, the gold medal was the culmination of hard work and support from those close to him.

"I think it was everything. My coach was supportive, my uncle was supportive, and my whole family was very supportive. They encourage me to keep doing it."

When asked about his future in archery, Edwards admits that the Olympics are already on his mind.

?I've been thinking about it, and I think it would be a really cool thing. It's something that's always there.?
As for now, Edwards is looking to shoot in as many tournaments as he can to keep excelling.

The Central Zone Team, comprised of archers from Simcoe, Dufferin, Peel, Toronto, and Waterloo, combined for four gold, one silver and two bronze medals at the Games.