

Special Ducks swim to gold at National Summer Games



By Jake Courtepatte

The Ducks owned the pool at the 2018 Special Olympics National Summer Games earlier this month.

The prestigious annual event in Antigonish, Nova Scotia hosted a pair of Aurora Special Ducks, the swimming branch of Special Olympics Aurora.

Between the two, they brought home medals in five different categories, reaching the top of the podium three times.

Gary Freeman picked up his first of two gold medals in the 25-metre breaststroke category, swimming in the M2 division to victory with a time of 21.76 seconds, finishing just over a quarter of a second over Team Ontario teammate Kyle Weaver.

His second trip to the top of the podium came in the 400-metre freestyle, a marathon event that saw him finish well above the second-place finisher from Quebec with a score of 521.44.

He closed out his Games participating in the 25-metre and 50-metre freestyle events.

Nathan Kim improved all of his times throughout his five swims, picking up a gold medal himself in the M1 category of the 25-metre breaststroke, with a time of 18.34 seconds.

He added twice more to his collection with a pair of silvers, in both the 100-metre breaststroke and 50-metre freestyle category, while his preliminary times in the 50-metre breaststroke and 25-metre butterfly moved him to a higher division where he finished just outside of the podium.

Aurora Special Ducks coach Lloyd Brown said the pair "swam very well" across their bevy of events, adding that the duo was aided by an extra bout of coaching from mentor Nancy Black before the Games as well.

Both qualified for the National Games after a hefty haul at Ontario Provincial Games in 2016, with six gold medals between the two. Hosting close to 1,000 professional athletes from across Canada with an intellectual disability, the National Summer Games act as a qualifier for the 2019 World Games in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, of which both Freeman and Kim await to see if they qualify.