

## Aurora students clean up with Athletic Awards at Pickering College



By Brock Weir

Grace Robinson was off to what she describes as a ?rough start? when she first stepped on the volleyball court last year, but it has been nothing but smooth serves ever since.

The Aurora teen, a Grade 11 student at Newmarket's Pickering College, was one of 10 Aurora students who took home top honours at the school's recent Athletic Awards, which recognize significant achievements over the winter sports program.

?I definitely wasn't a huge volleyball fan before I came here. I was into basketball and I played outside of school, but last year I decided to try out for the team because my friends asked me to,? says Grace, who was awarded Most Improved Player in Senior Volleyball. ?It was a rough start, but it was fun, I could play, and my teammates pushed me to be a better player. This year, recognized as Most Improved Player, really said a lot because I had the same coaches last year as well. Starting off not as a volleyball player and evolving into the player I am now really means something.?

Joining Grace among the honourees were:

Adam Murphy, Coach's Award, Senior Basketball

Omar Ozturk, MVP, Junior Basketball

Sameer Bardai, Most Improved Player, Senior Basketball

Harper James, Captain's Award, Senior Volleyball

Mia Smith, Coach's Award, U12 Volleyball

Caylie Powell, Coach's Award, U14 Volleyball

Coco Cao, Most Improved Player, U14 Volleyball

Daniel Rabito, Coach's Award, U12 Hockey

Benjamin Milligan, MVP, U14 Basketball

?There are a lot of good players on the basketball team, so it is an honour to get an award over some of them who are also very good,? says Adam, adding that beating TMS by two points in the ?last couple of seconds? of one game was a season highlight.

Grade 12 student Harper had been playing volleyball since Grade 9, but only on a team outside of Pickering College.

?It is an honour to be recognized, and it is just nice to get an award in my last year,? she says. ?I think that is very prestigious.?

Sameer also got in a lot of practice before joining the athletic ranks at Pickering College as well, putting in time on the basketball court for a team in Markham.

?I never thought I would get recognized because the team was very good this year, with a lot of good players,? he says. ?The season highlight for me was winning the Championship after two years of training hard and getting to know my teammates. I started playing basketball when I was three, and it's just that adrenaline rush ? whenever you're in the game, you think, ?Oh my God, this is amazing!?

Although her game is volleyball, a similar passion is shared by Mia, who has been playing for two years at the school and now serves as co-captain of her team.

?I was the only Grade 4 (student) the first year I played volleyball and it was hard to play because I was with all the bigger girls,? she recalls. ?Now, I am the Captain and it is nice to be recognized as a really good player. We won our home games this season, we didn't win our away games, but it was good to win at home because most everybody was new to the sport. There were only two girls who really knew how to play. We worked together and had all of our friends working together, so it was really fun.?

Pickering College is committed to building competitive athletic programs where students are provided with increasing levels of competition as they move through the Junior School to the Senior School in a way that supports their skills development, commitment and good sportsmanship.

?Emphasis is placed on developing fundamental movement skills, cooperation, and fair play,? they say. ?Therefore,

many of our competitive athletic teams welcome players of all abilities from beginners to those who have played before. Through coaching, guidance, and instruction, students are encouraged to continue with the sport throughout their time at Pickering College in a fun, supportive and safe environment.?