

Local snowboarder heading to Canada Winter Games



Photo by Kyler Lang

By Jake Courtepatte

Aurora's Natalie Maugeri is ready to hit the slopes to represent Ontario in the Canada Winter Games this week, hoping to spin, grind, grab and flip her way to the podium in snowboarding slopestyle.

A gymnast for twelve years, Maugeri only took up the sport of snowboarding five years ago, entering her first competition only two years later.

She credits her gymnastic background with giving her the basic tools to become a competitive snowboarder.

"That helped a lot, with the slopestyle and the jumping," said Maugeri. "The air awareness in snowboarding is like gymnastics." She also played rep soccer for six years.

Now she hones her sport mainly at Mount St. Louis Moonstone near Barrie, where she trains four days a week with her team Icarus Shrededucation, one of the premier snowboard coaching programs in Canada.

From there, they head to the park and work on one-upping the competition.

"We'll just go to the park and work on new tricks," said Maugeri. "There's a lot of different things to work on."

Slopestyle has grown immensely in popularity in recent years, first becoming an Olympic event at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. While Americans owned the podium in the snowboarding form, Huntsville resident Dara Howell took home gold for Canada in skiing slopestyle.

As with many young Canadian athletes in winter sports, Maugeri hopes to one day compete in the Olympics herself.

"That's the dream. You just have to keep on practicing and competing."

As for Maugeri, the Canada Winter Games are her biggest stage so far.

"I'm excited, I love travelling," she said.

Held in British Columbia for the first time in its history, the bi-annual event is host to over 2,400 athletes and 4,500 volunteers from

across Canada.

Maugeri competed at the Ontario Winter Games last year, also doing a number of provincial competitions as well as nationals in Whistler, B.C.

After an injury plagued her in nationals last year, she hopes to regain her form when she heads back to Whistler next month for this year's nationals.

?I just kind of did the minimum, so I'm looking to do a lot better this year.?

Maugeri was also invited just this week to represent Canada at the Junior World Cup in Yabuli, China, which get underway mid-March.

This week's Canada Winter Games kicks off the competition Friday, while as of press time, Maugeri hadn't gotten the chance to practice or scope out the competition.

?It's so warm here, there's not much snow,? said Maugeri. ?We haven't gotten to practice yet, so we'll see how that goes.?

You can follow the action at www.canadagames2015.ca.