

## Local sports heroes Johnston, Thomas, and D'Andrea shine in soccer, hockey, and karate

What a week for achievements by local athletes on the soccer pitch, hockey rink, and karate mat.

Aurora-raised international soccer player Alistair Johnston celebrated his team's Scottish Premiership title on Friday night.

Johnston's Celtic defeated Heart of Midlothian 3-1 to finish first and win the league.

The Glasgow-based Celtic captured the championship for the fifth year in a row and 14th time in 15 seasons. Celtic and its city rival Rangers have won every Scottish national soccer title since 1986.

Interviewed after the climactic victory over Hearts during Sportsnet's Central Sixty, the green-and-white-clad Johnston was awed by teammate Daizen Maeda's dramatic, match-winning goal in the 87th minute: "What in the world was that? It's the greatest league win? It's got to be-- of all-time."

The exultant Johnston, who attended Aurora High School and played for Aurora FC, will represent Canada at the World Cup next month in matches to be played at BMO Field.

Aurora's Robert Thomas is representing red-hot Canada at the IIHF World Championships in Switzerland.

The veteran NHLer, who won the Stanley Cup with the St. Louis Blues in 2019, has recorded two points in Canada's 5-3 and 6-0 wins over Sweden and Italy, respectively.

It's Thomas's first opportunity to play at the World Championships and he has centred two very productive Team Canada lines during the national team's opening games. Thomas has been tasked by Head Coach Misha Donskov to set up Blues teammate Dylan Holloway and Islanders winger Mathew Barzal. However, the productive centre was matched with wingers Mark Scheifele and Gabe Vilardi versus Team Italy.

Thomas and his swift-skating teammates are looking to end a three-year gold medal drought at the Worlds.

Another local Aurora athlete heading to the world stage and suiting up for Team Canada is Mikaela D'Andrea. The 16-year-old martial artist earned a bronze medal at the Karate Canada Junior National Championships in Edmonton at the Expo Centre in mid-May and will represent Canada at the Worlds.

**By Jim Stewart**