

SAS Cygnet Noelle Simpson wins CISSA gold in javelin, anchors 100M relay team to silver, and captures two silvers in hurdles



Tri-sport student-athlete Noelle Simpson is completing a spectacular sophomore year at St. Anne's School.

The talented basketball, volleyball, and track athlete—who plays the harp and aspires to an Economics degree at Cambridge—delivered a virtuoso performance at the CISSA track and field championships last week.

SAS Cygnets Community Track Coach Dave Hunt summarized Simpson's medal haul and applauded her superior work ethic.

At the CISAA track and field championships last week, Noelle won gold in the Junior Girls Javelin with a personal best throw of 27.80 metres and won the silver medal in both the 80m and 300m hurdles, while anchoring the Junior Girls 4 x 100m relay to a silver medal as well. Such a treat to coach, as she works so hard to be the best she can be at every practice.

Coach Hunt, who has mentored Canadian Olympians, has developed dozens of world class athletes in his 40-year track and field coaching career at UT, King City SS, Unionville HS, SAC, and most recently at SAS.

The Aurora resident delineated what makes Simpson a superior student-athlete: "I love the fact that she leads, she is inquiring, she is resilient, and she competes to be the best she can be. Noelle makes coaching a dream."

Hunt will be coaching Simpson at OFSAA in St. Catharine's this week as the SAS Cygnet looks to pick up valuable experience at the Provincial High School Championships.

Simpson acknowledged Hunt's expertise and outlined mechanical improvements that the veteran coach put in place to help bolster her medal haul at the Conference of Independent Schools Athletic Association track championships.

"As a team, it's great to see how we've improved in the hurdles. [Coach Hunt] has really helped me with sprint hurdles. He's improved my three-step to improve my quickness in the sprint and he's helped me develop my non-dominant left leg."

In addition to being a track and field star at SAS, Simpson has contributed mightily to her school community in numerous ways during her sophomore year at the independent school in northwest Aurora.

Her staff advisor JJ Patterson offered superlatives in her description of Noelle: 'She's an outstanding student. Highly motivated and academically driven. She's on the Head of School Honor Roll which means she's one of the top ten students at St. Anne's.'

Simpson's prowess in the classroom is matched by her performances as a three-sport athlete at St. Anne's. She played for the Cygnets basketball team in the Fall and the volleyball team in the Winter.

Off-campus, she honed her skills in basketball as a power forward for YNBA, competed in the rep provincial playoffs in Niagara Falls, and enjoyed a recent Toronto Tempo WNBA game at Coca Cola Coliseum.

However, excellent sports performances for off-campus teams and on-campus teams are only one facet of this talented Grade 10 student's life. Simpson's connection to her school community is evident both in word and deed.

'It's a great community. The teachers are supportive and we're enjoying a high level of learning. There are so many activities here. There's never a 'normal' week with House competitions and fun activities. I've served this year as a Grade 10 rep on Student Council, a Student Ambassador at Open House events and Parent-Teacher Interviews, and I'm going to be House Captain of Aestas which is Latin for summer. All our Houses here are based on seasons and our students are grouped by the seasons in which they were born. When I started here, there were only 20 students in Grade 8, but now our class is up to 50. I was looking for opportunities in a new school and found them.'

Simpson described some overseas opportunities she'll be availing herself of this summer and described her post-secondary aspirations: 'I'm doing a summer program at Cambridge. I'd like to study in England. I was born in England. My dream university is Cambridge where I would like to study Economics.'

With these kind of lofty and practical goals, the sky is the limit for Noelle Simpson. After our interview in SAS's elegant Blue Room with three supportive staff members, it felt like the chat had been a sneak preview into the early formation of a Canadian leader. All three staff members extolled Simpson's virtues as a student-athlete.

SAS Track Coach Emily Williams described Noelle's impact on the track and field team: 'Noelle won our Most Valuable Teammate Award which is not only about skill. Unfortunately, she was too busy to get her award because she was busy qualifying for OFSAA. She runs every practice and is an all-round leader. She has this real internal competitive drive and is always looking for a PB.'

Simpson's quest for excellent daily performances was elaborated on by Head Track Coach Brianna Nguyen who offered a humorous anecdote at her star athlete's expense, but praised her MVT's impact: 'She leaves everything on the track - even her puffer jacket'. But the greatest thing about Noelle is how coachable she is, how willing she is to push for new heights in performance. She's often remarked, 'This is the hardest I've ever run.' Every single practice she shows that she is our most consistent athlete. Her peers look up to her because of that consistency and because she has such a great attitude - she's in competition with herself and she's always looking for ways to improve. She seems to have a lot of fun being part of the relay team, too. Most of all, she shows lots of self-direction.'

Part of that self-direction manifests itself in Simpson's sophisticated recreational pursuits which include playing the harp: 'I've been playing for five years. It's one of my greatest passions - I look forward to getting a new piece of music and learning it. I'll be competing in the International Harp Festival in mid-July.'

The next three months will be momentous ones for Simpson who took time just before her Business exam to conduct this interview and exuded calm prior to her two-hour date with academic destiny. Her immediate goals are clear - go for the gold in St. Catharine's, finish this year's slate of exams, prepare for a summer Economics course in England at one of the world's most prestigious universities, and compete in an international harp contest.

The pride of the Cygnets, indeed.

By Jim Stewart