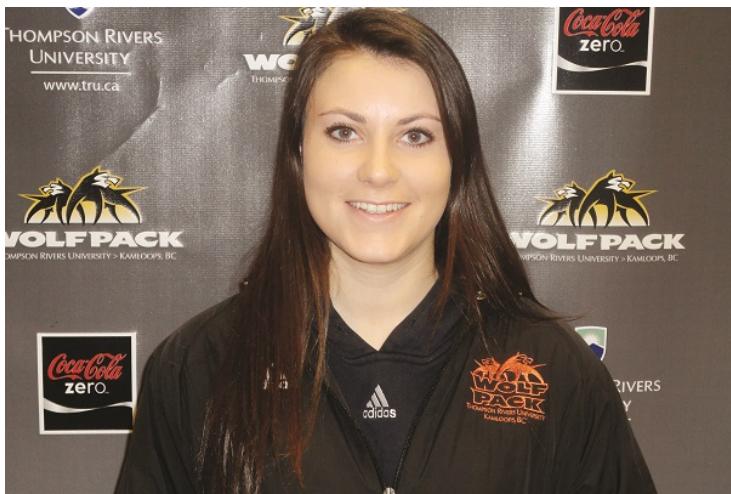


Soccer is in the blood for Ciara Ambrose



By Jeff Doner

For a young athlete, turning years of hard work into something bigger is always a benchmark, and that is exactly what 17-year-old Ciara Ambrose has done.

The Aurora resident and student at Country Day School in King recently signed on with the Thompson Rivers University WolfPack in Kamloops, British Columbia to play soccer and also study for a degree in hospitality and tourism management. She plans to pursue a post-graduate degree in sports management.

?It's little nerve-racking, but really exciting,? she said. ?I trained a lot with my dad and put in a lot of extra hours with my teams training, so that and good coaching has paid off a lot.?

Ambrose is coming off a few very competitive and noteworthy seasons, including a championship title with her team at CDS and also some solid seasons playing with the Markham U18 squad, the Vaughan U18 OYSL and U21 OWSL teams.

Before that, she developed her game playing in house leagues since the age of four and then moved into rep at 10 years of age in Aurora Youth Soccer.

Her family history in the sport of soccer has also helped her along the way and has kept her focused on moving forward.

?My granddad played internationally in Ireland. He also played for the Shamrock Rovers, so having that as part of my family, soccer just seems like it has always been a part of my family and a part of me,? she said. ?I don't know what I would do if I didn't play.?

Last year, she was also given a great opportunity to play with the National Champion women's team in Ireland while on vacation.

Her dad, Martin, has spent a lot of time training her and said the experience she has gained over the past couple of years has been a huge help in her development.

?She got a lot of exposure to some high competition last year, so it was a pretty good year for her, notwithstanding her CDS team won the nationals, so it was a very positive year,? he said.

?Ciara has done tremendously well to keep her focus on the game. She's always sort of had that bite in her. We lived in Australia for a couple years when she was six or seven and she played for her sister's team who is three years older, so there was always an

exposure to competitiveness and she sort of continued on that way.?

As her dad and training partner, he said it's her competitiveness and discipline that keeps her powering forward toward her goals.

?I'm very pleased for her,? he said. ?It's something she has always wanted and for someone who develops and matures and they sort of look to achieve and I think it's through that independence that they can achieve and I think Ciara is entering into that phase.?

Playing with the WolfPack will be a big part of that phase for Ambrose and she said she couldn't be any more excited to be going out west to a place she is already familiar with.

Her family has gone out to Kamloops to ski every year since 2000 and her sister was also looking at the school a few years ago.

?This Christmas we went to look around and we got in touch with Tom McManus, the coach, and I just really liked everything about it.?

This year, the soccer program at Thompson Rivers University will be moving into the Canadian Interuniversity Sport [CIS] loop, so Ambrose will be expecting the competition to be high.

Training starts at the school on August 12, but she will be working hard and playing here at home throughout the summer to make sure she's ready.