Stephen Maar and Andrew Nembhard named to Canadian Olympic Volleyball and Basketball teams

Two of Sport Aurora's former Athletes of the Year have demonstrated their transition from the playground to the podium.

Stephen Maar has been named for the second time to the Canadian Men's Olympic Volleyball team and Andrew Nembhard has been named for the first time to the Canadian Men's Olympic Basketball team.

Both are jetting to Paris, France, and will don the red and white national team singlets at the 33rd Summer Olympiad.

Sport Aurora President Ron Weese said he couldn't be happier for these homegrown athletes.

?Stephen played for the Aurora Storm Volleyball Club until he was 17 before he transferred to Scarborough for more exposure. He was a multi-sport athlete. So was Andrew, who played volleyball, soccer, and basketball. They played these sports in Aurora and now we're seeing the results of our multi-sport athletes. The best athletes?like Stephen and Andrew ? are excelling in multiple sports experiences. Sports specialization at a young age has fallen out of favor since Sport Canada's change of heart almost twelve years ago. We're now seeing athletes like Stephen and Andrew developing careers and career mindsets. The evidence is very clear that high performance, multisport athletes are driven and have so many opportunities because they're smart and resourceful. Everybody in the community should be proud of the quality coaching and the great opportunities available to our local athletes. We've got high quality folks leading our member organizations and it's aspirational for our younger local athletes to see Stephen and Andrew going to the Olympics.?

Maar, 29, is an outside hitter currently playing professionally for Gas Sales Piacenza in Italy. He starred with the OUA McMaster Marauders and led his team to the CIS championships every year--winning two silver medals and two bronze medals. Maar was named Best Spiker and Best Outside Hitter at the Pan Am Games in 2015 when Canada placed fourth. He led three bronze medal-winning Canadian contingents at the North American championships in 2016, 2017, and 2019. Maar's Olympic debut was in Tokyo in 2020 when Canada reached the quarterfinals. He turned pro in 2016 and has played in the Italian Serie A1 for eight seasons.

Nembhard, 24, a guard who starred for the NCAA Gonzaga University Bulldogs, just completed his second season with the Indiana Pacers of the National Basketball Association. Nembhard's sparkling performances in the NBA Eastern Conference semifinals helped eliminate the New York Knicks and lifted the Pacers into the Conference Finals versus the Boston Celtics.

Nembhard's international experience includes leading Canada to a silver medal at the 2018 U18 Americas where he averaged 15.7 points and 8.8 assists over 6 games. The dynamic passer will complement Team Canada's star-studded backcourt that features Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, Jamaal Murray, and RJ Barrett.

By Jim Stewart