

Howran named to national team



By Tony Pearson

Tori Howran will soon be putting on the Team Canada sweater again ? and this time, she'll wear it playing for a world championship.

Howran was a member of the Under 18 Team Canada for their exhibition series against the United States in Lake Placid last summer, which they won two games to one.

They'll be seeing this team again in January in St. Catharines; the U.S. plays in their pool, and since every one of the eight gold medal games held to date has pitted Canada against the States, the expectation is that they'll meet again on Friday, Jan. 15, for the title. By the way, the two teams are even in this event: each has won four championships. Last year, Canada lost a heart-breaker by a score of 3-2 in overtime.

?It's a huge honour to represent your country on home soil,? says Howran.

As she has mentioned before, playing for Canada has been her dream and her goal since childhood.

Nonetheless, no matter how exciting the feeling, she knows that she and her teammates will have to ?play in the moment.?

She also points out that although she is thrilled at her selection, hockey is a team game: ?All of us know we have a responsibility to our teammates; playing together has to be a huge component of our game.? She says that coach Lisa Haley emphasizes playing to the team's strengths ? especially its speed and aggressiveness.

Hockey Canada made its choices after the August series and the national U18 championship, won by Howran's Ontario Red team. Overall Women's Team general manager Melody Davidson, who coached Canada to gold medals at both the Turin and Vancouver Olympics, says that she looks at how players perform under pressure, how they accept roles, and their resilience mentally and physically.

?What I want to see is their coachability. Everyone has talent, but can they grasp the style of play the coaches want. If they're quick learners, they're going to do really well,? U18 team coach Lisa Haley says:.

Both Davidson and Haley speak positively about Howran and her teammates: ?We've seen the players' growth and development from selection camp, against the U.S., with their club teams, and most recently at nationals,? said Davidson. ?We believe they'll be ready to compete for a gold medal in St. Catharines.

Head Coach Lisa Haley went on to add: ?The depth of talent at this age group is very impressive, and players have provided plenty of impressive performances throughout the journey from August camp through to U18 Nationals.

?All of these players have the right combination of skills and intangibles that we believe are essential in competing for a world championship on home soil.?

Howran leaves for Ottawa on Dec. 30, where the team will train until they head to St. Catharines on Jan. 5.

In St. Catharines, she also looks forward to meeting again with some of the legends of Canadian women's hockey.

During the tournament, several retiring Olympic team players will be honoured, including superstar Gillian Apps.

?It's an awesome, indescribable feeling to put on the Team Canada jersey,? Howran says.

Needless to say, all of Bancroft will be cheering her as she goes for world gold next month.