

Howran's team wins national championship



Bancroft's [Tori Howran](#), a North Hastings High School student, celebrates with Team Ontario Red after winning the 2015 National Women's Under-18 Championship on Sunday, Nov. 8 in Huntsville. Photo by Matthew Murnaghan/Hockey Canada Images. Submitted by Hockey Canada

By Darren Lum

Bancroft's [Tori Howran](#) is relishing her recent victory with the Ontario Red ice hockey team at the U18 Women's National Championship this past weekend in Huntsville.

Howran, who was still elated days after, played defence for the championship winning team that beat Manitoba 2-1 in overtime. "It's an incredible feeling. We have a great group of girls. I wouldn't have done it with any other group. We definitely came together as a team and put our individual skills to create something bigger and achieve our end goal," she said.

The provincial team faced some adversity early in the tournament during the round robin against Manitoba when it faced a 4-1 deficit at the start of the third period.

"Our coach never had a doubt throughout the whole game," she said. "She just kept repeating, 'get traffic. Get bodies in front and shots to the net.' We weren't doing a great job on getting shots through to the net. Once we started doing that in the third period we knew we just needed that one goal for a spark and we got it in just under 10 minutes in the third and kept going from there."

This win assured the team of first place in the pool and bolstered their confidence for the rest of the tournament.

"That game definitely showed who we were and what we wanted to become," she said.

Ontario Red cruised past British Columbia in the semi-finals, beating the western opponent 3-0.

"It's almost indescribable to win a national championship. Not too many get to do it," she said.

Everybody on the team fulfilled their roles, which was a major factor in the national title.

The Bancroft teen, who finished with one assist in the tournament, calls herself a "puck moving defenceman" who takes care of her own end. She said her strength is in winning the puck battles in the corner and gaining position in front of her own net.

The Ontario Red team came together quite quickly. It held its selection camp in mid-July and then it held another camp during Thanksgiving weekend last month.

The win is another step for the PWHL Whitby Wolves player on her ice hockey journey to make the Olympics.

She's hopeful she will be added to the under-18 national team to play this winter in the upcoming 2016 IIHF Ice Hockey U18 Women's World Championship starting Jan. 8 in St. Catharines.

The official roster for the team will be announced Dec. 1.

Howran, who was selected and played with the under-18 national team in a three-day tournament against the Americans in Lake

Placid, N.Y., is confident about how she played and her effort this past weekend.

"I know I played my heart out this weekend and if they pick me that's great. If they don't I'll be a little disappointed, but life goes on and I'll just have to work that much harder to be part of the program," she said.

Although her participation in Lake Placid does not guarantee her spot in St. Catharines, it does give her a strong chance, as last year 17 of the 20 players made the roster for the world championship tournament.

Prior to joining her provincial team, Howran had helped her high school field hockey team, the North Hastings High School Huskies, earn a berth to the Ontario Federation Sports Athletics Association field hockey championship.

Of course, these teams are constantly looking for new players and searching for the next big hockey star so if you've got a passion for ice hockey, go on sites like <https://www.hockeyalways.com/holding-stick/> to learn all the best tips, train extra hard, and make sure you make a good impression to whatever team you want to join. You too can kickstart your ice hockey career and be as successful as Howran.

She left to join her provincial ice hockey squad before the field hockey tournament began and was disappointed about not being able to play in the high school all-provincials, but was proud of her efforts to help the team make it to Ontario Federation of Sports Athletic Association championship in Peterborough.

The Huskies finished with one win and two losses. They did not advance to past pool play.

All of these achievements are not possible without support, she said.

"I've just loved the support I've gotten from family and friends. I couldn't be more thankful for everybody in them believing in me," she said.