



Sabrina Bymes/Metroland

Durham West Lightning players Daniella Calabrese and Maggie MacEachern, both from Brooklin, were selected to play for Canada's U18 hockey team at the world championships Jan. 6-13 in Japan.

BEST FRIENDS FROM BROOKLIN OFF TO JAPAN

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BROOKLIN - Maggie MacEachern and Daniella Calabrese have worn many common sports jerseys together since becoming close friends at age six, but none will compare to the red and white colours they will share in Japan early in the new year.

The two 17-year-old Brooklin residents and teammates with the Durham West Lightning will both suit up for Canada at the 2019 IIHF U18 Women's World Championship Jan. 6-13 in Obihiro, Japan.

They donned the same jersey together back in August, when Canada prevailed in a three-game exhibition series against the United States, but it will mean so much more in Japan, where the top eight countries in the world will vie for gold.

MacEachern brings plenty of experience, having been part of last year's

bronze-medal winning team in Russia and serving as captain for the summer series squad.

Calabrese kept close tabs on her friend from home last year, and is thrilled with the opportunity to join her at the world championship this time around.

"I've always admired her work ethic and her commitment and saw that's what it takes to make it to the next level, so that kind of pushed me to essentially fulfil this dream this year," Calabrese explained. "This opportunity itself is amazing, but then the opportunity to represent your country with one of my best friends just makes it that much more special."

MacEachern is one of four players returning from last year's team, which was upset by host Russia in a pool match and faced the U.S. in the semifinal rather than the final as anticipated.

Although Canada gained revenge on Russia

in the bronze-medal match, winning 6-0, falling in the semis to the U.S. in a shootout has left MacEachern with a burning desire for more.

"Winning the gold would just be such a dream come true," she said. "I know what it felt to be so close to it, but then missing out on that, so I think now I'll know more what to expect and what I have to do to try to get the team to that point to get that gold medal."

Although other countries have improved their level of play in women's hockey, anything other than a Canada, U.S. final would be a major surprise in Japan.

The two longtime rivals appear to be quite evenly matched again, with all three games in the summer series decided by a goal - a 2-1 Canada loss followed by wins of 4-3 and 5-4 in Calgary.

"If that shows any sign for the world championship, I think we're in a really good position to take

home gold this year," said MacEachern, a defenceman who had two assists in the final game. "I'm really looking forward to playing a little bit more of a leadership role, and helping the younger players prepare for it and enjoy it the same way that I have always done and will continue to do in Japan."

MacEachern's first foray into hockey was delayed by a year after she fell on snow-covered ice at age six and broke her femur. She was admittedly a little hesitant to get back on ice, but it didn't take her long to excel once she did.

MacEachern and Calabrese have played plenty of other sports together, including soccer and lacrosse, but hockey is their first passion. Grade 12 students at Brooklin High School, they plan on joining the school's hockey team upon returning from Japan with the hope of improving on the bronze medal they won last March at the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations championship.

Beyond that, MacEachern is bound for a full-ride Division 1 scholarship to Colgate University in New York and Calabrese has been accepted to the admission process at Princeton University in New Jersey.

OPINION

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IS CRUCIAL TO FUTURE OF ALL SPORTS

COLUMNIST DOUG SMITH SAYS MANY ELITE ATHLETES ARE UNABLE TO RELATE



DR DOUGLAS SMITH
Column

We spend so much time on high performance training but sadly research and public opinion show that little training has focused on good manners, etiquette, morals and values like honesty, humility, politeness and respect for others.

For the last 40 years I have witnessed in my own practice and in my personal experience the gradual erosion of good character in sports. Self-respect and respect for others appear to be lost in the chase for being top dog.

Public opinion shows that many professional and elite athletes don't know how to relate to people and they carry with them an attitude that they are superior and above the rules and law.

Athletes who still compete and those who retire from their sport are reporting more mental and physical damage than in past years. Look at all the books written by these athletes telling their sad tales of ongoing trauma and lives of desperation.

In my opinion and professional experience, many elite and professional athletes are totally lost when it comes to living a normal life after leaving their sporting careers because they don't have the character and people skills to survive in their new environment.

A huge number of retired athletes develop many bad habits, such as drinking, smoking and using harmful and addic-

tive drugs to cope with their residual physical and mental pain.

I believe all of us should be responsible for coaching, training and educating all athletes to be good people first and foremost.

In my opinion and that of many others, our present system of training athletes is ignoring the importance of character training.

There have been too many suicides and brain injuries in hockey, football, basketball and other sports.

Why? Your guess is as good as mine.

Can we save more lives and prevent brain damage in sports? Yes we can and I am a firm believer that "a win-at-all-costs philosophy" is at the heart of this problem in most sports.

Let's take the opportunity to create a more balanced approach to developing world class athletes, where we focus on character development as a critical element of being an athlete and ambassador for how we conduct ourselves on and off the ice, field and track.

Let's have firm, fair and consistent consequences in place for deviant behaviour and reinforce mature responsible actions.

In an ideal world we would make sure that most athletes have good experiences in sport and learn how to be good people with a sense of belief and trust in themselves and others.

We want our athletes to do good things in the world and live happy, productive lives when they leave sport.

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