



Stellingwerff gets her gold

After finishing second the past two years, the Speed River club's Hilary Stellingwerff wins gold at the national championships

By GREG LAYSON
MERCURY STAFF

WINDSOR

For someone needing to win a race, Hilary Stellingwerff was never in a hurry.

Instead, patience finally paid off for the 25-year-old middle distance runner from the Speed River Track and Field Club.

Stellingwerff won the women's 1,500-metre race Saturday at the Canadian Track and Field Championships at University of Windsor Stadium. She paced herself all race and surged past Calgary's Malindi Elmore on the front stretch.

Stellingwerff clocked in at 14:12.66, just half a second faster than Elmore.

Nicole Edwards was third in a time of 4:15.42 and Puslinch native Megan Brown finished fourth at 4:16.18.

"I was just being patient because my strength is my kick," Stellingwerff said. "I just held on and had the patience until the last 100 metres, and then I just hoped I was the first across the line."

It's the first time in three years Stellingwerff won the race. She was the event's silver medallist in 2005 and 2006.

The Guelph Track and Field Club's Carmen Douma-Hussar was the two-time defending champ, but wasn't at the event in Windsor.

Not that winning was made any easier without Douma-Hussar in the field. Stellingwerff had been "going back and forth" with Elmore all season.

"My coach Dave Scott-Thomas and I have been working on the strategy and

mental focus for this," Stellingwerff said. "It's just been a steady progression and confidence in my program. I'm glad I got this done."

And she did it in front of a throng of friends and family. Stellingwerff hails from Sarnia, lives in Switzerland and races in various cities around the globe each summer.

"It meant a lot because my entire family was there," said Stellingwerff, who triumphantly raised both hands as she crossed the finish line.

She then smiled and waved to her fan club who congregated along the railing of the bleachers.

"I've got a lot of great support," Stellingwerff said.

The win also assured Stellingwerff a spot at the World Championships in Osaka, Japan, in August. Stellingwerff topped the qualifying time of 4:35.00 and ran the event in a personal-best time of 4:05.69.

It also beat the the Olympic A+ standard and stands a good chance of representing Canada at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

"I see myself there in 2012 but I like to set goals each year and focus on them each race and each year," said Stellingwerff, who isn't ruling out an appearance at the 2008 Games in China. "That's my focus. This year is about getting experience towards that."

Stellingwerff wasn't the only gold medallist with a local connection on the weekend. Elora's Matthew Kerr won the men's 3,000m steeplechase yesterday. He ran the event in 8:47.90.

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Hilary Stellingwerff of the Speed River Track and Field Club waves to her friends and family Saturday after winning the 1,500-metre race at the Canadian Track and Field Championships at University of Windsor Stadium.

Milne misses podium

By GREG LAYSON
MERCURY STAFF

WINDSOR

Middle distance runner Taylor Milne knew exactly who — and what — he was up against.

The Speed River Track and Field Club member was part of a star-studded field in the men's 1,500-metre final Saturday at the Canadian Track and Field Championships in Windsor.

"I wanted to get on the podium, but by no means was it going to be easy," said Milne, who finished fourth in the event.

Milne was up against eight-time champion Kevin Sullivan and up-and-comer Ryan McKenzie, both of Windsor.

McKenzie, looking to post the Olympic qualifying time won the event in 3:45.97. Sullivan was right behind him at 3:46.13. Saugeen's Kurt Benninger grabbed bronze with a time of 3:46.93, just four one-hundredths of a second faster than Milne's time of 3:46.97.

Speed River's Scott Arnold finished 11th in the 12-man field. And Guelph's Kyle Boorsma, the fourth-ranked junior in the country, didn't make the final.

"This is one of the best fields ever assembled, depth-wise," Milne said. "From first to last are great runners. In the finals, everyone is an accomplished runner."

Milne himself entered the championships ranked fifth in the country and having won three of the past five Canadian high performance meets.

Milne led early for a lap and a half but couldn't keep setting the pace against the determined McKenzie, who missed the qualifying standard. And every runner fought a blustery wind all race.

"It changed the way we ran the race," said Milne.

Racers paced themselves early, and tried to maneuver and press in the latter stages.

"I came up just short," Milne said. "I got behind the pack and had to get into lane three and waste some energy. I timed it wrong."

HOW LOCALS FARED SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

- Hilary Stellingwerff:** 1st in women's 1,500m
- Matt Kerr:** 1st in men's steeplechase
- Michelle Moody:** 3rd in women's long jump; 5th in high jump
- Taylor Milne:** 4th in men's 1,500m
- Megan Brown:** 4th in women's 1,500m
- Heather Patterson:** 4th in women's shot put; 7th in hammer throw
- Neb Zachariah:** 4th in women's triple jump
- Kim Settle:** 4th in women's steeplechase
- Jonathan Odumeru:** 9th in men's high jump
- Max Pauquette:** 11th in men's steeplechase
- Scott Arnold:** 11th in men's 1,500m
- Kyle Boorsma:** Failed to make 1,500m final

Grant a model of consistency at shortstop

Provides solid defence as Royals have last laugh in comedy of errors with London Majors



Guelph Royals shortstop Nathan Grant braces for impact as the ball hits Rudy Vallejos of the London Majors yesterday during a stolen base attempt in London.

By GREG LAYSON
MERCURY STAFF

LONDON

Guelph Royals manager Kevin Hinton boldly calls Nathan Grant the best shortstop in the Intercounty Baseball League. And the numbers suggest he's right.

Through July 8, Grant had a fielding percentage of .984, best among IBL shortstops. He's committed two errors in 83 attempts and his 10 double-plays is second-most in the league.

"I think he's the best shortstop in the league, defensively," Hinton said. "He's done a fabulous job for us."

Yesterday, it seemed Grant was the only player to not commit an error in Guelph's 10-7 win over the London Majors at Labatt Memorial Park in London.

The two teams combined for eight errors — four each — and scorekeepers gave hits on two other balls that were badly bobbled. Guelph had 17 hits and London 10.

"Nathan has a history of

awesome defence at short," said Frank Hare, who has played along side of Grant at third base for much of the season. "He has quick feet and an awesome arm."

Grant credits some of that quickness to his brief boxing career. Grant missed the entire 2005 season and part of the 2006 campaign, instead going 2-2 as an amateur boxer. Grant lost 20 pounds as a boxer and says the training made him quicker and more agile on his feet. But the break also made him miss the game.

"A lot of guys I grew up playing with were on the team and I just wanted to come back and play with them," Grant said.

Grant hit .200 through 12 games last season. After going 2-for-3 with an RBI yesterday, he's now hitting .289 with 10 RBIs and a homer. And he's done that hitting ninth every game.

"The more pitches you see, the more relaxed you are and your confidence builds," said Grant, who admitted to pressing at the plate earlier in the year.

"He's a perfect nine-hole hitter. He has speed, he can hit for power once in a while and drive in runs," Hare said.

Grant, meanwhile, doesn't see himself as the last man in the order.

"It's like being a second lead-off man," Grant said. "I like to get things started for the big guys behind me."

Yesterday, Guelph's heart of the order, consisting of Joel Lynch, Jeremy Ware, Matt Mann and Kevin Hinton, went 8-for-15 with five RBIs, including a two-run homer by Lynch.

Jason Pilkington got the win and moved to 5-1.

Hare scored the winning run when he stole home off losing relief pitcher Andrew Lafleur, who has a broken wrist on his non-pitching arm. London catcher Rudy Vallejos had to softly toss the ball back to the pitcher and Hare capitalized.

"The delay in between was enough time to take home," Hare said.

Guelph is now 16-15 and hosts Barrie tomorrow at 7:30 p.m. at Hastings Stadium.

Soccer Royals win two

GUELPH

The Guelph Royals won a pair of games this weekend to take over first place in the Kitchener and District Soccer League Premier Division.

The weekend started for the Royals with a 2-1 victory over Srbija A with Jose Martinez scoring both goals, including a spectacular late winner to clinch the three points.

Despite losing two players to red cards, the Royals also beat Leos 4-0.

Kevin Richards scored twice and Karim Nashef and Martinez had the others. Ramzi Nashef recorded the shutout.

The Royals have a 10-2 record and are two points ahead of Leos.

The Royals return to action Saturday when they travel to Kitchener to play Polish Eagles.

•Mercury staff

HOW TO Tackle the little things in life.

Public health says remove standing water to reduce the spread of West Nile virus. Environmentalists say collect rain water to reduce stress on municipal water sources. Are the messages incompatible? We'll dive into safe water-saving practices, including rain barrels in Tuesday's Mercury.

LOOK FOR IT TUESDAY GUELPH MERCURY