

Dedicated alpine skier rejoins coach to resume unfinished business

Martin Cleary

The Ottawa Citizen

Saturday, January 19, 2008

As an alpine skier, Stephanie Marcil is accustomed to living on the edge, taking risks and going for it on every run.

The same is true about her off-hill approach this winter.

At 15, the Montreal resident took the bold move of following Laurentian Ski Zone's Patrick Demers to Ottawa, when he became the head coach of the National Capital Outaouais Ski Team.

So far, the decision has been the right one.

"He is one of the best coaches I have ever had," she said about her move in an interview this week. "He was good for me on the mental and technical sides and I definitely need him. It's a continuation of unfinished business."

Marcil has returned home this weekend to study for Grade 10 exams, but when she's here, she's billeted with the families of ski team members on a rotating basis.

"I joined the team this winter and I've been really well supported," Marcil said. "They're really pushing me and it's helping with all of my success."

And Marcil has had phenomenal success in her first year on the Pontiac GMC Cup developmental alpine ski circuit.

After the first six races at three sites, Marcil is in third place overall with 250 points, despite missing the first two races in Western Canada. Stephanie Irwin of Calgary and Catherine Blanchard of Sherbrooke are one-two respectively at 306 and 300 points.

In women's slaloms last Sunday and Monday at Bromont, Marcil had two second-place results. At Mont Orford for giant slalom races on Tuesday and Wednesday, the Mont Ste. Marie skier was sixth and fourth respectively.

The circuit resumes with two slaloms Feb., 23-24 at Camp Fortune. The finals are March 20-23 in Quebec.

Marcil was "really nervous" before the start of the Pontiac Cup circuit because it attracted top quality skiers from across Canada.

"I didn't know what would happen. But I came in with confidence and on the first day was second," she said. "That boosted my confidence and I held it all the way through."

Marcil started the circuit well prepared with lots of training to chase the overall circuit first-place prize of \$5,000.

"It's all clicking," she said. "I knew I could do it. I had to prove it to myself."

Last season, Marcil was one of the best girls' 13-14 skiers in the country. At the Canadian K2 championships, she was second overall among the girls, winning the super-G, super combined and ability races. As a result, she was named to the Canadian team for the Whistler Cup international races.

Demers, who coaches 31 National Capital Outaouais skiers, including Graham Scott, Mathieu Fournier and Michael Skirzynski, who all had top-five age-group results in Pontiac Cup races this week, know Marcil could perform well.

"She's aggressive and has always been one of the strongest. She works hard to get her technique and form," he said. "I wasn't surprised. I expected that. It all came together."

Winners' circle: The 55th Ottawa Sports Awards dinner goes Wednesday at Algonquin College and 10 major awards and athletes in 64 sports will be honoured. Long-track speed skater Kristina Groves should repeat as the women's trophy winner, while Claude Giroux (hockey), Aaron Doornekamp (basketball), Jason Dunkerley (Paralympic track and field), Phillippe Aumont (baseball), Mike Beres (badminton), Jeff Zywicki (lacrosse), Josh Sacobie (football) and Craig Savill (curling) could split the media vote and produce an interesting winner. Tickets are available by calling Bob Wilson at 613-225-1235 or wilsonrj@rogers.com . . . The Gloucester Synchronized Swimming Club has qualified its tier 4 and tier 5 teams for the Ontario Winter Games March 6-9 in Collingwood. . . . Jonathon Millar of Perth and Fancy Hill won the \$25,000 Grand Prix at the Palm Beach International Equestrian Centre in Wellington, Florida. . . . Olivier Rochon of Gatineau had a first and a third in recent NorAm freestyle skiing aerial meets. . . . Chantal Benoit of Gloucester is in China for the Good Luck Beijing 2008 international women's wheelchair basketball tournament, running Sunday through Friday. . . . Nepean Kanata Barracudas' Brent Dillon is representing Swimming Canada on a European tour with meets in Switzerland, and Luxembourg. He earned a silver medal in the 200-metre individual medley yesterday in Geneva in 2:14.41. . . . Brockville Buccaneers have been accepted as an expansion franchise into the National Capital Amateur Football Association and will field teams in tyke, mosquito and peewee for 2008. . . . Beaver Boxing Club's Henry Lopez will compete in the 64-kilogram class at the Canadian junior boxing championships Jan. 24-27 in Windsor, and Linda Scourtoudis will battle in the 54-kilogram division at the Canadian senior women's championships. . . . Assistant coach Mike Caruso has moved up one notch to replace Stephen O'Kane as head coach of the Algonquin College men's soccer team. . . . Sir Robert Borden grad Ray Fontaine, a special teams and defensive player, has signed with the CFL's Toronto Argos through 2010. . . . Ottawa Ice have maintained sixth place in the latest National Ringette League Elite Eight rankings.

Martin Cleary can be reached at mcleary@thecitizen.canwest.com or 613-596-3748.

© The Ottawa Citizen 2008

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2008 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.