

## Aysia Maurice named Athletics Ontario Distance Athlete of the Year

Aysia Maurice, of 310 Running, set some bold goals for herself in 2017.

In a year with a lot of ups and one hard down, she proved that she is one of the best 13-year-old track athletes in Canada.

One of Maurice's early-season goals was to earn a spot on Team Ontario for the Ontario/Quebec Midget Dual Meet held in Toronto in February. Leaving nothing to chance, she won the 2,000 at the trial meet in a U14 Indoor Provincial record time of 6:48.83, securing her place on the U16 team.

The youngest athlete competing for Team Ontario at the meet, she finished as the top Ontario athlete in the 2,000, placing second behind the winner from Quebec.

At the Indoor Provincial Championships in March, Maurice showed her strength and versatility by taking gold in the U14 girls 1,200 and silver in 60-metre hurdles.

"We use the indoor season to build and to sharpen our competition skills," her coach Scott Skimming said. "The fact that Aysia finished her indoor season ranked first in Ontario in the 1,000, 1,200 and 2,000 was a clear indication that this was going to be a year of big gains."

In the transition between the indoor and outdoor seasons, Maurice competed in the WWF CN Tower Climb for fun in April. She managed to ascend the 1,776 steps in 12 minutes and 53 seconds, more than a minute faster than any other female athlete participating.

The outdoor season started well with early personal bests and National standard times in the 1,200 and 1,500-metre steeplechase.

In late June, however, Maurice went down hard and fractured both of her arms, sustaining what, for most, would have been a season-ending injury. Disappointed that she had to give up her goal of competing for Team Ontario at Legion Nationals, Maurice was undaunted. Within days, she was medically cleared to train and showed up to the track sporting two casts.

By the time Outdoor Provincial Championships rolled around in late July, Maurice was free of her casts and ready to run faster than ever before. She earned three Provincial gold medals, two personal bests and an Ontario U15 steeplechase record in the 1200, 2,000 and 1,500 steeplechase over the two day meet.

In August, she joined her 310 Running teammates at Legion Nationals in Brandon, Manitoba. Having qualified to compete in four events in the U16 National Championships, she settled on the 1,200, 2,000 and 1,500 steeplechase.

In Brandon, Maurice posted three personal bests and three top-10 finishes, including a 5:02.27 fifth place finish in the 1,500 steeplechase to set a new Ontario U15 and U16 record.

By the end of the outdoor season, Maurice was ranked first in Ontario in the U14 girls' 800, 1,200, 2,000 and the U16 girls' 1,500 steeplechase. The 13-year-old finished her season ranked seventh in Canada in the U20 age group for the 1,500 steeplechase.

Not surprisingly, Maurice's hard work and success was rewarded Sept. 30 when she was named the Athletics Ontario bantam girls distance athlete of the year.

"Aysia has had an exceptional year," Skimming declared. "Given what happened in June, I would say 'way past exceptional'. I am really happy for her. And beyond 2017 looks really exciting for her too."

