

Caledon Citizen's Student-Athlete of the Week - Elyssa Camilleri's love of lacrosse permeates her present and future plans as a student-athlete at St. Michael S.S.]

By Jim Stewart

Elyssa Camilleri is only in her second semester of high school at St. Michael Secondary School in Caledon, but it's evident that she has already garnered great travel experiences playing the sport she loves: Lacrosse.

The gold medal-winning member of the Toronto Rock Stars and Team Ontario has travelled far and wide—specifically, to Arizona and British Columbia in the last 12 months—to play Canada's official summer sport at its highest levels.

Travelling to these international and national lacrosse tournaments has evidently widened Camilleri's frame of reference. While Elyssa is focused on the present regarding her studies and sports, she also has very laudable post-secondary goals.

My future aspirations include getting a university education. I aspire to become a Physiotherapist specializing in Sports Medicine. While playing lacrosse in post-secondary is also my aspiration, academics always come first. I would love to represent my country in some way on the lacrosse floor, whether in the Olympics or on an international level.

Although she has an eye on the future, Camilleri has certainly seized the present and competes as a multi-sport athlete on four SMSS varsity girls' teams: Flag Football, Basketball, Volleyball and Hockey.

Her Grade Nine Drama teacher, Sean Raposo, sees a bright future for Elyssa on these squads due to her impressive work ethic, and her hard-working mindset that will create a hard-working culture for any team or group that she joins

Raposo added that, Elyssa is ready to take on any challenges that are asked of her in the classroom—a born leader and very mature for her age. You can often find Elyssa working with her peers and engaging the class with a positive attitude, working toward our classroom goals.

In addition to Elyssa's capacity to lead, Raposo was also impressed with her confidence in the classroom. As a Grade 9 student, many will struggle to communicate their needs or express what they need with their teacher or classmates. This is not the case with Elyssa who takes on any challenge with a confidence that some Grade 12 students do not possess.

Raposo encapsulated Camilleri's maturity by noting a performance moment in his Grade 9 classroom. Elyssa was asked to lead her own exercise with the class. While many students struggle with the ability to get the whole class under control, Elyssa had the experience to understand that her peers were not ready. She really engaged the group to make sure they were all focused, attentive, and ready to receive her instruction—once again, a skill that most 14-year-olds do not possess.

In addition to impressing her teachers at SMSS, Elyssa's talents as an Elite lacrosse player have caught the eye of many high-level coaches including Patrick McCready who was effusive in his praise of the high-scoring Toronto Rock Stars forward.

McCready, son of the legendary lacrosse goaltender Bob Buff McCready who led the Brantford Warriors to a Mann Cup National Lacrosse Championship in the early 70s, assessed Elyssa's talents on the turf.

Elyssa has exceptional skill as a lacrosse player. She is a very gifted offensive player. She has an underhand shot that is deadly accurate. A lot of the goalies didn't even move when she is shooting the ball. She is very smart and is very good on the power play. What impressed Coach McCready the most about Camilleri is her ability to adapt to what the other team was doing and to remain calm while doing it. That is an elite skill that only high-end athletes possess. McCready also cited her impressive statistical performances versus teams from California, Minnesota, and British Columbia. Elyssa led the tournament in scoring with 11 goals. This propelled us to the finals where we lost in overtime to a group a year older. Elyssa and the team won silver medals which was a

huge accomplishment for us.?

Amid these athletic and academic accolades, Elyssa Camilleri took time from her rigorous training schedule and her homework to reply to our interview questions:

Caledon Citizen: What qualities did you demonstrate in your sports season to earn Student-Athlete of the Week honors?

Elyssa Camilleri: ?In order to earn this title, the qualities include being 'coachable', taking critiques, and accepting feedback from coaches, trainers, and teammates; as well, my determination and perseverance to improve myself and be the best addition to my teammates. Along with helping friends and teammates of my own age, I also take the time to volunteer with Brampton Minor Lacrosse to help the younger kids learn to love the game of lacrosse just as much as I do. Setting small goals will lead me to big achievements.?

Caledon Citizen: What were your key statistics and performance moments from the 2022-23 season that you are most proud of?

Elyssa Camilleri: ?In early 2022, I was named Assistant Captain of the Toronto Rock Stars Elite Lacrosse team and this February, for the second consecutive year, traveled with them to Arizona to play in the USBOXLA winter nationals formerly known as the USBOXLA western invitational. In 2022, our team battled through an amazing tournament and came back to Canada with a Gold medal. After the tournament this year, I was named to the USBOXLA winter national All Tournament Team, where the tournament scouts selected just a few players from each age group to form this team. Along with making this team, I played some of my best lacrosse, scoring 11 goals in just five games, and was named player of the game twice. I had three hat tricks and two shootout goals. Another memorable experience and opportunity of a lifetime this year was being named to Team Ontario 14u box lacrosse team, where I got to represent Ontario with the top female box lacrosse players in my age bracket. Not only did I get to experience traveling to British Columbia, but it was my first opportunity to compete on a National Stage! I am proud to say that I came home with a national championship under my belt!?

Caledon Citizen: In addition to your community lacrosse team(s), what sports do you play and at what level?

Elyssa Camilleri: ?While lacrosse consumes the majority of my time, I make it my goal to be involved with my school in playing other sports such as varsity girls Flag football, basketball, volleyball, and hockey. Along with playing sports for school and with my local lacrosse club, I also enjoy working out with some of my favorite people at APC (Athletic Performance Centre) in Bolton. Not only does this keep me in shape, but is an overall great environment to be in. I also love to keep up with spreading the game of lacrosse to younger generations so I've recently acquired my refereeing certification.?

Caledon Citizen: How would you describe yourself as a student at St. Michael SS? To which sports teams and clubs do you belong?

Elyssa Camilleri: ?I am almost fluent in French ? determined and diligent. While I do take my academics fairly seriously, my love for people and outgoing personality allows me to create a more fun environment with my classmates and teachers. This especially shines in drama class where I am able to express myself and take dramatic risks. My goal is to continue to maintain an average of above 80% throughout high school while taking part in the Sports SHSM program.?

Caledon Citizen: Who is your role model in terms of the person you admire the most?

Elyssa Camilleri: ?My role model is my mom. My mom is such a hardworking and admirable person. She was a nurse and enjoys helping people just as I aspire to do one day. Not only is she the person that I want to become, but she helps me become the person I am. She drives me to all of my practices and games and she is just as dedicated to making me the best student- athlete that I can be by pushing me to exceed my limits and maintain my nutritional goals.?

Caledon Citizen: How do you feel about being nominated as The Caledon Citizen's Student-Athlete of the Week?

Elyssa Camilleri: ?I feel honoured to have this awesome opportunity. I hope that this publicity will bring joy to lacrosse and help more people recognize the amazing game that I love.?

If you are a community or high school coach who would like to nominate a Caledon-based student-athlete for The Caledon Citizen's Student Athlete of the Week, please email me at jim@lpcmedia.ca.