

Robert's Rant: Canada winning gold for the first time is the reminder why women should not give up sport

By Robert Belardi

OPINION

When 20-year-old Julia Grosso stepped up to the spot to seal Olympic gold for Team Canada, I couldn't help but think about the 2006 World Cup.

Italy needed to score one more penalty against France to earn their fourth World Cup victory. A man and quite the Cinderella story throughout the tournament, Fabio Grosso, stepped up and scored the final penalty kick to bring Gli Azzurri victory.

So, when the Vancouver native rifled her penalty kick past Chelsea FC Women's goalkeeper and Swedish international Hedvig Lindahl, it completely justified that anyone named Grosso is undoubtedly prepared to score a penalty.

Canada defeated Sweden on penalties 1-1 (3-2) to lift their first ever Olympic gold. It was a historical moment for all 4.4 million national television viewers in the country. Finally, the ultimate prize after coming up short in the past two Olympic Games. Finally, defeating the United States in the semi-finals to have the chance to win it all. It was also historical for Canadian defender Quinn, who became the first transgender athlete to win a gold medal at the Olympics.

And better yet, it was a moment for two local players from neighbouring areas to have the chance to bring this memory back to where they grew up.

King City native and Country Day School graduate Adrianna Leon, and Caledon East native Ashley Lawrence were those two local talents to have lifted the trophy along with legends Christine Sinclair, Kadeisha Buchanan, Janine Beckie and Jessie Fleming.

General Manager of Brams United Melanie Bradley said Lawrence, Leon and Buchanan were in their youth and she said the word spread fast on how talented they were.

"When I speak to these team officials and coaches and club members, they tell me they saw this talent at a young age and their communities began to rally behind them," Bradley said.

"Representing your country on the world stage is not easy. Not as glorified as it may seem with all these social media posts. There's a lot of sacrifice and hard work that lead to these moments. When you look at players like Ashley Lawrence, Kadeisha Buchanan and Adrianna Leon, when you watch them all the field you can see that passion, the hunger and drive for what it takes to represent your country on the world stage."

All girls come back to Brams United to give back to their communities. She said they are leaders and nobody had any doubt they would be part of the national team one day.

With Canada's victory, Bradley said she hopes this will shed some light on women in sport in Canada.

According to Canadian Women & Sport's Twitter page, one in four girls (aged 16-18) are not committed to returning to sport in Canada since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bradley also hopes that this victory is the gateway to opening a women's professional soccer league in Canada.

"A lot of us women, we're hopeful this game will open the door for a domestic women's professional league here in Canada. It's

something that's been talked about for many years. We know it's needed. But I think, this win is going to amplify it,? Bradley said.

?We see people here waking up at 4 a.m. to cheer on a women's team. There's no doubt in my mind that a women's professional league will be successful here in Canada. This will hopefully impact that as well and that we can further those discussions.?

Canadian women would have the opportunity just like the men's Canadian Premier League as a stepping stone for further opportunities. Keep an eye out for articles in the coming weeks on further information about the league. But for now, enjoy the Olympic gold. It's once in a lifetime.