

Wilmot cross-country runner balancing sports and school at U.S. college

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Independent staff

Wilmot native Victoria Dobson went south to Georgia College to run cross-country for a competitive program, but she hasn't let her grades slip.

Dobson was one of 14 student-athletes at her school to receive an Academic Achievement Award last month.

She achieved a 3.68 grade point average (out of 4.0) while also training five or six days a week during the collegiate cross-country team's season.

"It's really time consuming," said the fourth-year senior. "But I've always found that you end up managing your time better when you're in season, so you're actually a little more prepared for class.

"You know you can't slack off, you know you can't go on Facebook."

Both classes and competition are important, Dobson said. Sometimes it's hard to choose between a good night's rest before an early-morning practice or studying for a test.

But she has achieved balance: "I feel like I split my focus well enough that I can focus on both."

The academic success is also due to a new-found passion for studying literature, Dobson said. In first year, she discovered an enthusiasm for English classes and now wants to pursue a PhD and eventually become a university professor.

Dobson was lured to Georgia College with an athletic scholarship. She soon learned that her

cross-country experience running with Waterloo-Oxford's club was far different from what her American teammates had experienced.

Even in high school, the Americans' intensity and training levels are much higher than in Canada, she said.

"It's totally different. The pressure is so much more," she said. "I think they take sports a whole lot more serious down here in general."

Dobson is already back in Georgia, training for her first race of the season while balancing her schoolwork as an English major. She typically runs five or six kilometer races.

Living in the deep south wasn't always easy. "I knew it was what I wanted to do, but the transition was definitely

hard," she said. "It's a little far away."

“The pressure is so much more... They take sports a whole lot more serious down here.”

Victoria Dobson,
cross-country runner

Not seeing her family was tough at first, but now she's comfortable and not sure if she'll end up living in Canada or the U.S.

"I'm really happy with the decision I made," she said with a bit of southern drawl. "I love competing, I love running."

Swimmer wins gold in pre-paralympic race

Swimmer Michael Heath and Coach Joni Maerten-Sanders of the Wilmot Aquatic

Aces were in Alberta from Aug. 10 to 14 to compete against top international competition.



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Michael Heath and his coach, Joni Maerten-Sanders, competed in Edmonton against swimmers from 14 other countries. He won a gold and silver medal with Canada's relay team, and an individual bronze.

With just over a year before the London 2012 Paralympics, 190 top swimmers from 14 countries, came to Edmonton to compete in the inaugural Para Pan Pacific Games for athletes with physical disabilities.

The competition was created to give the elite paralympic swimmers, like Heath, a large competition before the games in London.

Maerten-Sanders was selected to be a part of the coaching staff based on performances at the qualifying Can-Am Meet in Minnesota.

Michael competed in five individual events and two relays at the games. On Day 1, he raced in the 4x100 freestyle relay with teammates Adam Rahier (BC), Michael Quig (Manitoba) and Maxime Rouselle (Quebec) to a gold

medal.

The same four swimmers raced on Day 5 in the 4x100 medley relay where they won silver behind the Japanese team.

In individual events, Heath had an exceptional 100 metre breaststroke race that earned him a bronze medal. His time puts him at seventh in the world in his classification.

He also finished fifth in the 100 meter freestyle, seventh in 200 m individual medley and 100 m backstroke, and eighth in 200 m freestyle.

Michael swam to three best times and is aiming for the 2012 Paralympic Team.

In late September, Heath and Maerten-Sanders will be heading to Liguria Italy to compete at the Global Games at part of Team Canada.

Lawn bowling sausage tournament this week

Twenty teams from South-Western Ontario are entered into this year's men's triples sausage tournament that is being held in New Hamburg on Wednesday Sept. 7 starting at 10 a.m.

Entries from Hanover, Seaforth, Elora, Milton, Kitchener, Stratford, Thamesford, Ancaster, and New Hamburg will be competing for the championship that is again sponsored by Expressway Ford and John Bear GMC.

Local teams include Sam

Sferraza, Terry Thompson with Roy Blake, and Abner Martin, Ron Cottingham, with Bryon Long.

Jeanette Laing and her volunteer members will provide a home-cooked sausage and scalloped potatoes dinner with pie to the bowlers and fans.

At the Heritage Greens in Kitchener on Aug. 30, Sheila Minsk and Ruth Cottingham won the second-place prize in a ladies' tournament that was played in perfect weather conditions. Their 3-0 record in-

cluded wins over Heritage, Brampton, and Willowdale.

Abner Martin, Jeanette Laing, and Tina Toman lost all three of their games in an open triples tournament that was played in Preston.

At the district jitney that was also played in Preston, Toman, Grace Sferrazza, Roy Blake, and Brian Whitfield won prizes while Jean Wright, Loretta Whitfield, Ron and Ruth Cottingham, and Helen Murray also competed.

Minsk and Blake (1-2) along

with Laing and Toman (1-2) were non-prize winners at an open pairs tournament that was held at the greens in Kitchener.

On Sept. 18 at 1:30 p.m. a jitney will be hosted by New Hamburg that is sponsored by Sobey's.

Local bowling will continue until the snow flies on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays starting at 1:30 p.m.

Anyone interested in bowling is invited to come out and give it a try.

Amateur racer is an underdog on the track

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The drivers lean hard into curves, trying to squeeze through small openings and take the curves faster than anyone else dares.

The top finishers are often only milliseconds apart, so any tiny mistake can lose a race, Lingelbach said.

"You've got to maximize those opportunities when you see a little opening," he said. "Who's got the most guts at the end of the day is who gets it done."

"Just the slightest thing, if you come out of the corner in the wrong gear or brake too early, there's a trainload that goes by you," he said.

"If you make any mistakes or crash whatsoever, you're done."

Racing takes quick reflexes and decision-making, but it's also physically demanding because riders lean forward and side to side as much as possible.

"You're like a monkey riding on the bike," he described. "That really puts a lot of strain on your muscles."

He finished the race season last week at the Mosport International Raceway in Bowmanville. He came in third, the same as his overall standing for the season.

"It's finished now, thank goodness," Lingelbach said. He loves the races, but it's a major commitment of time and money.

Winners do take home prize money of up to \$400, but that doesn't pay for everything.

Lingelbach has been working a summer job in a Waterloo motorcycle shop to help pay for his sport. "I work so I can go racing," he said.

The teen first inherited his love for motorbikes from his father. The boy would see his father's collection, and hear how he had dreamed of racing them. Now, his father travels with him to act as Lingelbach's crew.

"It's kind of neat to go out and compete on the national circuit with him as my pit crew," the teen said. "Because I know that's what he dreamed of doing."

Lingelbach started riding small dirtbikes when he was 12, then got his first street bike when he was 15 and still too young to ride it. Soon he was practicing in the backyard so much that he wore a track into the grass.

Because he finished top-three this year, Lingelbach will have to graduate to the next race level next summer, either a 250 or 600 cc race series. The faster bikes will mean an adjustment, but it's also a step closer to racing professionally.

The teen wants to see how far racing can take him, he said: "If that's where it kind of leads me and I have that natural ability and a good head on my shoulders to make the right decisions, that's where I'd like to end up."

And he'll still be out riding in the snow this winter, practicing sliding around turns with next year's races on his mind.