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## Cyclones ecstatic to get back to top of the food chain

By Robert Belardi

Maintaining the number one status as the best ranked club in the country at the U-15 level isn't quite as simple as you might think.

It becomes quite gruelling to try and withhold a reputation by kicking the ball around cones in your basement without touching grass at all.

For the past few months that's what it was like for the U-15 Caledon Cyclones girls' team. Much to the appreciation of Manager Cosimo Mazzaferro, the girls were training extensively five times a week on Zoom calls, working on technical ability on the ball.

The girls also participated in running and biking sessions which were tracked by the club. Mazzaferro says this method motivated the girls to be better.

"They all can see what everyone else

is doing. They kind of thought, 'this girl has run five kilometres I have to run six,' or 'this girl ran five kilometres in 30 minutes I have to run it in 28.' They motivated each other during the break as opposed to waiting for soccer to come back. We kept them as fit as possible. Now, there were different levels. Some girls were more engaged than other as is normal with any team. But for the most part, we had our Zoom calls we had 15 girls on the call consistently out of 20," Mazzaferro said.

Before the province shutdown, the goal was to win a national title.

Not knowing the national tournament was going to be cancelled, the coaching staff continued to motivate the Cyclones to remain in tip top shape.

Now, it's all about revisiting the fundamental aspects of the game twice a week and rekindling chemistry on the pitch. It's about enjoying cadenc-



## Paralympic and Olympic athletes share thoughts on mental health

By Robert Belardi

Mental health is extremely important; especially now.

Pre-pandemic, many youth and others were seeking assistance on daily struggles that you can say are seemingly perpetual. But, since coronavirus began, it is apparent a large number of people are struggling.

According to the Children's Mental Health Ontario (CMHO), 28,000 youth are on the waiting list to speak to someone. According to a survey conducted by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health between April 10 and 27, there has been a substantial deterioration in mental health from those aged 14 to 27.

On May 29, five-time Olympic medallist in Ice Dancing Tessa Virtue hosted a Team Canada Champions Chat live on YouTube with Paralympians Michelle Salt and Andrew Haley, as well as Olympians Lanni Marchant and Angela Whyte. These athletes came in to speak on how to persevere through mental health obstacles and how important it is to be physically and mentally healthy.

Before the session began, Haley led the team through a wobble exercise, helping all of the athletes "loosen up."

Haley, a Paralympic swimmer and five-time medallist lost his leg at the age of six. Salt lost her leg in a motorcycle accident at 26 years old, and has had to adjust from what was normal snowboarding to its Paralympic counterpart.

Whyte (Athletics) and Marchant (Athletics) both have endured mental health struggles from anxiety to feeling trapped with overwhelming demands in their sport. Every athlete shared their unique tricks to combat mental health struggles.

Virtue says that remaining in the present is key. Think about your breathing and being aware of your surroundings. She loves to read and that imaginative space fuels her positivity.

Marchant explained that moving your body and being active is essential. Her dog, El, also comes along with her on hikes at her home in Colorado and being in the mountains with her pet clears her mind.

Whyte, shared a different perspective. She uses gratitude on a daily basis, even on the smallest things around her. She is grateful for the food she eats all the way to strangers cracking a smile at her.

Salt taps into her resilience that she conjured when she lost her leg and Haley, describes the use of mascots that he bought at the Rio Olympics and Paralympic games, that bring a lot of joy to his day.

In this 45-minute live chat, many teachers and other members of the public chimed in their thoughts and questions on what some of the most challenges aspects of their careers were and when they began to love the game.

Headlining their backgrounds seemed to have brought joy to the public who tuned into the Spring edition of this Team Canada Champion Chat.

In what was an interesting and compelling 45 minutes of stories and techniques to bring peace to your mind, it is interesting to learn what transpires in the mind of an athlete.

es from the coaching staff, the sweet sound of the ball off the first touch and the jovial conversations amongst one another.

One of the newest girls on the team, Eliana Rocha, said this is one of the most welcoming teams she has ever been on and appreciates how well the girls connect on the field.

"A lot of other teams kick and chase and I feel like that's not how you are supposed to play soccer. I feel like we connect very well."

The striker/midfielder, transferred to the Caledon Cyclones this past season from the Woodbridge Strikers. She says she wants to be a part of the "best of the best" in order to fulfill her future aspirations of one day, playing in the United States on scholarship.

In practice, the girls are permitted to continue working on technical abilities while remaining as far apart from one another as possible. For the past four weeks, the club has been working on passing and moving drills. This past workout, the club finally saw some shots on target.

The hope is with stage three, the girls are allowed to begin scrimmaging

under the OSA rules. The next step is exhibition games which have yet to be considered.

As the season moves forward with training, Mazzaferro says he is awaiting a decision to be made for a tournament to be played in the Fall. Hopefully the decision will be made in the coming weeks.

Cyclones player Hailey Greco said she is thrilled to be back with the club and looks forward to finally getting back into game action.

"I hope we get back to games. Besides that, I hope we can get back to training and back to where we were. Be that number one team that we were and I hope that we can get back on the field again and love what we do."

Currently, Mazzaferro and another coach Dimitrios Kalogerakos are looking for an experienced coach as a player or with NCAA experience.

Kalogerakos says they are simply looking for someone that is the "right fit" more than anything else.

Tryouts will be held in September for a spot on the team. For further information, please contact Mazzaferro at 647-530-2937.

## Tigers hitting the ice

By Robert Belardi

Here's a thought. Or for that matter, a question. When you're taken away from something you love how much does it affect you?

Probably a lot. It most likely changes you entirely in the short-term.

It's even worse when you're anxiously waiting for the go-ahead to get back at it. The body might jitter. Heart might pump faster. The adrenaline, just might keep you up at night as the days go by.

After four months of being in the cage, the Aurora Tigers Jr. A hockey club shattered its lock and got back out on the ice. The club, has been on the ice for the past month in their JT Prospects camp ahead of this season.

Team governor Jim Thomson says there is nowhere he would rather be.

"At 54, there's nowhere I would rather be than on the ice and when we got the green light to get back on the ice I was a rejuvenated NHL player. It was funny. Man did I miss it," expressed Thomson.

"For the kids, you can't imagine the excitement, the emotion and the energy and what's needed; we've been on for four weeks now, the energy levels have not dropped. These kids are excited to play hockey and I think what happens is, when you lose something that you love, you really appreciate it differently."

Returning players, coaching staff, front office and prospects have been suiting up for practice every morning at 7:15 a.m. The club is showing their sincerity towards change, having one just seven games last year.

"Take advantage of your opportuni-

ty. Don't leave any stone on term. For the Aurora Tigers, my team, everyone is competing for a job. The more you get out of training in the summer and more you develop the better chance you're going to have to be on the roster," Thomson expressed.

Thomson has been teaching two groups every morning. Now, he will have the chance to teach a full practice because of stage three. After class, Thomson has repeated the same speech to both groups of young men.

"I tell them they make my life better. They make me live through them. I look at them as where, I was that student there was a coach in front of me and that was the best time of life. What I tell them every day is, the fact that I get to be their coach and teach them. It gives me youth and energy. They're doing as much for me as I do for them."

What Thomson is promising to the town, is this upcoming Aurora Tigers roster will be a very different team this upcoming year. From the club's offence to goaltending, each area has seen vast improvements.

One player in particular, that has improved during this break is last year's assistant captain Trevor Grasby.

"He's worked extremely hard, built his body up and worked on his shot. He's come back to us in a different leadership role. He wants to win and it shows in his physique and his hard work this summer."

As the NHL begins this Saturday, Thomson, also promises that his beloved Edmonton Oilers will make the Stanley Cup Finals this year and Oilers forward Leon Draisaitl will be the league's MVP.

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