

Kaetlyn Osmond secures her spot in Sochi Olympics

Marystow native successfully defends national women's figure skating crown

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Marystow native Kaetlyn Osmond has won her second consecutive Canadian women's figure skating title and clinched her spot on the Sochi Olympic team with a long program that chronicles Cleopatra's rise to power.



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Kaetlyn Osmond

The story choice was strategic, meant to mirror Osmond's rise through the ranks to hopefully the top of the Olympic podium one day.

"Very proud," Osmond said after Saturday's victory. "It's exactly what I wanted to do in this program. It's the first time I did an actual clean (long) program in competition so I'm super excited. I'm still in shock."

The 18-year-old, who has lived and trained in Sherwood Park, Alta. for the last six years, has battled back from two injuries that sidelined her for much of the last four months. Osmond scored 207.28 for her program that included six triple jumps.

It was the second highest score in the history of the national event behind Joannie Rochette's 208.23, a month before the 2010 Vancouver Games.

But Gabrielle Daleman, a 15-year-old from Newmarket, Ont., provided the surprise of the night, passing the much more experienced Amelie Lacoste in the long program to finish second with 182.47, likely earning a spot on the Sochi-bound team.

Canada has two Olympic berths in women's singles. The team will be announced Sunday.

"Very exciting and not just those two, there are several skaters coming up, young skaters, who are doing incredible things," said Osmond's coach Ravi Walia. "They're pushing

Kaetlyn, Kaetlyn is pushing them. I think it's a really exciting time for ladies skating in Canada."

Osmond has climbed the ranks by leaps and bounds since she won bronze at the Canadian championships two years ago with a score that was more than 50 points shy of Saturday's. She announced her arrival on the international scene in the fall of 2012 when she won Skate Canada International and then finished eighth at last year's world championships.

Osmond drew in the Canadian Tire Centre crowd with strength and confidence that seemed years beyond her young age.

"I think it's just confidence in knowing I can do what I can do, and knowing no matter what gets thrown at me, whether it's good or bad, I'll stay with a positive attitude and still stay focused and calm and able to skate," Osmond said. "That's a lot to do with my coach because he's so calm and he reminds me when I have to focus and when I have to breathe, and other times when I have to just enjoy it and let whatever happens happen."

Osmond has battled a couple of injuries this season — first a stress reaction in her ankle in August, then a hamstring tear that forced her to withdraw from the long program at Skate Canada in October.

Walia and Osmond set a plan two years ago to make the Sochi team, and the coach said he was "amazed" that despite all the obstacles, everything has fallen into place.

"It's exciting that it's a reality now," Walia said.

Daleman, meanwhile, clasped her hands over her mouth when the marks were announced.

"I was not expecting that score at all. Just seeing that mark and getting over the 180 just made my day," she said. "I feel just so excited seeing that I'm second and doors could be opened for me."

The five-foot skater opened her program with a huge triple Lutz on her way to landing six triples.

Daleman said she's been inspired by Osmond's swift ascendance on the international scene.

"She pushes my limits, because you know one day you want to beat her so you just keep pushing pushing. . .," Daleman said.

Daleman turns 16 on Monday and said a spot on the Sochi team would be "the best birthday present ever."

"My dream is coming true and I get to go to Sochi. It's the Olympics, it comes once every four years, and knowing that I'll be the youngest there (on the Canadian team) will just make my day even better."