

Asquith fencer all over map this season

Shannon Comerford, 21, graduates to senior circuit

By Kevin Mitchell, The StarPhoenix - June 27, 2009

Shannon Comerford is doing some fancy footwork now that she has made the move from junior to senior fencing.

The 21-year-old University of Saskatchewan student, an alternate on the Canadian senior team, notes the leap from one level to the next was a big one this year.

"The senior World Cups in Europe are massive and those girls know how to fight. It is intimidating," says Comerford, who is competing at this weekend's Canadian selection circuit meet in Saskatoon for senior-aged fencers. "I was the big cat in junior, I knew everything, I knew the scene. Then to go to these senior World Cups, I feel like a kitten again. But I've been doing OK and fighting hard."

Comerford, who is eyeing a berth at the 2012 Olympics, has competed at various points in Europe this season and will compete with Team Canada at the Pan American Games in San Salvador, El Salvador July 1 to 9.

She says she is learning from the other fencers on the four-woman national squad and is honing her game on the fly.

"Last year, I was a junior and living high," Comerford says. "To come into senior and be at the bottom takes some adjustment. I have to get used to getting my butt kicked a few times. But for my first year, I'm really happy with how I've done -- especially being named an alternate. It's a good place to start my senior career.

"I get my butt kicked, but I'm always taking notes and learning from it."

Comerford's schedule requires nearly as much juggling as fencing. She is a full-time kinesiology student at the U of S and holds down a part-time job, in addition to the strenuous demands and travel requirements she follows as a high-end fencer.

"You get a calendar and plan every hour of your day," says Comerford, who grew up in Asquith. "People say you must be so busy and it's true -- I really am. But it's all things I enjoy doing. I need to work if I want to go to school and fence. I love fencing, but I know I need to go to school and get a job when I'm done. I don't want to just be a fencer and have that as my only thing in life. There's something after fencing."

Hundreds of fencers are in Saskatoon for this weekend's event, which consists of national championships for under-15, cadet, junior and veteran along with the Canadian selection circuit for seniors.

Action started Thursday and continues today and Sunday at the Field House starting at 8 a.m.

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