

Dedicated mentor and coach Naylor-McCall strikes tenpin history

Inspiring the next generation

BEN LITTLE

MARISSA Naylor-McCall made bowling history this year, but her impact on Manitoba's bowling community transcends time and hardware.

Naylor-McCall became the first woman to win the Marinelli City Singles bowling tournament in its 65-year history.

"I think being the first woman is really cool," she said. "Also, showcasing that women can compete against the men, and we can hold our own — and that we can also beat them."

Female representation in sport continues to grow across North America, and Naylor-McCall hopes her win inspires a new generation of women athletes.

"Like any sport, (bowling) is more male dominated. But I would also say that women — just like in hockey right now... are really up and coming in that people are starting to watch women a lot more."

Naylor-McCall has been bowling since she could walk, following in the footsteps of her mom, dad and sister. She's represented Canada three times as an adult and once as a youth.

"When I was a kid, I saw all my friends playing volleyball, basketball, soccer, hockey," she said. "For me, bowling really (shows) that you can travel the world doing what you love."

Naylor-McCall's love of the game has led to 15 appearances at the provincial or national level. In 2015 and 2016, she missed the national championships after several consecutive years representing Manitoba. After seven years of making every national team, she said missing out "was a pretty hard thing to swallow."

That's when Naylor-McCall turned her focus to Manitoba's next generation of bowlers, becoming a mentor-coach with Youth Bowling Manitoba.

"I really believe my life purpose is, I want to leave whatever I'm doing in a better place than I found it," she said. "That's exactly what I want to do with bowling."

Next month, Naylor-McCall and Team Manitoba travel to Quebec City for the 2025 Canadian Tenpin Federation Youth Championships — a tournament she first competed in as an eight-year-old. Mentoring and coaching kids has been a way for her to give back to the sport she loves.

"The biggest thing that I took from that experience was just that, my story can also be shared with kids and can help motivate kids," she said.

"The sport has given me so much... More than just medals and accomplishments but also travelling the world and meeting a bunch of my best friends from literally across Canada and even into Europe."



Marissa Naylor-McCall is the first woman to win the Marinelli City Singles in the tournament's 65-year history.

Naylor-McCall said bowling is not just a sport, but a community of people who want to support you.

"Everyone knows what's going on. Last year I had gotten married, and everyone knew in the bowling community when the wedding was, what I was doing... it's really special," she said.

Michael Schmidt, executive director of Bowling Manitoba, said Naylor-McCall's city championship — while significant — comes as no surprise.

"Marissa has been knocking on the door of winning this event for the last five years or so," said Schmidt. "It's super awesome to see that she is the person who basically knocked down the door."

Schmidt has been a part of Bowling Manitoba since 1987. He remembers first seeing Naylor-McCall when she was an eight-year-old, timidly accepting an award. In 2018, Naylor-McCall beat Schmidt in the semifinal of the same Marinelli City Singles tournament.

Schmidt said Naylor-McCall's role as an athlete and mentor has helped grow Manitoba's bowling community.

"She's done a lot for our game," said Schmidt. "She's represented Manitoba and Canada with tremendous class, and she's only going to keep doing it."

"Our small bowling community will always be supportive and cheering on Marissa... She's just one of those great people that you can't help but cheer for."

Naylor-McCall's trip to the Canadian Youth Championships as a coach is another first this year. She also hopes to make her first appearance on the Professional Women's Bowling Association tour, which runs from May to August.

"A lot of kids look up to her, especially a lot of the young ladies," said Schmidt. "She gives back to her sport by helping our next generation."

Naylor-McCall's historic city championship win is another chapter in her story as a female athlete. At 27, her story is just starting to unfold.

"I think that with how different our sport is — and the male dominance of it — seeing a woman succeed is more than that," she said. "It's showcasing that we can do it as well."



PHOTOS BY MIKAELA MACKENZIE / FREE PRESS

Bowler, mentor and coach Marissa Naylor-McCall says she wants "to leave whatever I'm doing in a better place than I found it."

Two-way Bruins forward first-round material in WHL Bantam Draft

Schimnowski's sensational season

JOSHUA FREY-SAM

CREWE Schimnowski knows which parts of his game will impress talent evaluators.

He has a shot that most 14-year-olds can only dream about and the smooth puck-handling skills to go with it. Intangibles like elite vision and a high hockey IQ are evident, and at 5-9, 170 pounds, he isn't afraid to throw his body around.

What's more rare about the Winnipeg teen is a self-understanding of his weaknesses, and his determination to improve in those areas.

He doesn't shy away from talking about what he needs to work on.

"Skating, for sure," said Schimnowski, a forward for the Winnipeg Bruins who led U15 AAA with 57 goals and 111 points in 29 regular-season contests this past winter.

"I'm aware of it, and I go to the gym to work on legs for explosiveness and

working on my stride, so it's already coming along much better."

It would've been easy for Schimnowski to rest on his laurels after the season. His sensational campaign skyrocketed his draft stock and has him positioned to be a first-round pick in next month's Western Hockey League Bantam Draft on May 7.

Schimnowski isn't interested in settling, though. It's a reason why Bruins head coach Chris McColm was confident when naming him team captain.

"That's the maturity coming out," said McColm. "That was one of the things that we picked out from him was he's got to work on his footwork, he's got to get quicker, got to get faster. But that being said, he is one of the quickest, he is one of the fastest in the league. But we're preparing him for that next step."

Those closest to the team predicted Schimnowski would have a big season, but no one could have guessed he would put up the numbers he did.

Last season, and underage, he made the Bruins U15 AAA team and developed quickly while skating on a line with standout talent Tyden Lafournaise, who was selected 13th overall in the 2024 WHL Bantam Draft.

This season, centring a line with Owen Murray and Trevor Toyne, he more than doubled his production from his 13-year-old season — adding 14 goals and 13 assists in 12 playoff games — while being called up to play with the Bruins' U17 and U18 teams.

"It was awesome," Schimnowski said of the season that saw the Bruins go undefeated during the regular season and 43-1 overall en route to winning the league championship.

"It was good to do it with the team I had this year, too. So it was an honour to be a captain of that team, and it's a great group of guys and great group of hockey players, and just a great feeling."

While the right-shooting forward



ALLYSON MISHELL PHOTO

Bruins U15 AAA forward Crewe Schimnowski had an outstanding 2024-25 season, amassing 57 goals and 111 points.

capitalizes on his shoot-first mentality, he doesn't force the issue and makes the right play more times than not.

"Crewe is a two-way player. He's very offensive-minded. He sees the game well from both an offensive and

defensive perspective, but he's a great teammate. He's a very unselfish, humble kid and he's just a hard-working kid," said McColm.

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