

MEDIA RELEASE

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2017 Athlete of the Year Award Finalists Announced

Sask Sport Inc. is pleased to announce the 2017 Athlete of the Year award finalists for the Saskatchewan Sport Awards. Every year, three finalists are selected in each of the six Athlete of the Year award categories: Youth-Female, Youth-Male, Female, Male, Team and Master. The award recipients are then chosen by Sask Sport Inc.'s active and affiliate members and announced at a later date.

The finalists for the 2017 Athlete of the Year Awards are:

2017 YOUTH-FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR FINALISTS:

- **Rebecca Dean, 15, Regina, Swimming**
Nominated by Swim Saskatchewan Inc.
- **Jordan Kos, 17, Regina, Bowls (Lawn)**
Nominated by Bowls Saskatchewan Inc.
- **Jasmine Runge, 18, Regina, Baton Twirling**
Nominated by Saskatchewan Baton Twirling Association

2017 YOUTH-MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR FINALISTS:

- **Marco Schumann, 18, Saskatoon, Speed Skating**
Nominated by Saskatchewan Amateur Speed Skating Association
- **Connor Sparks, 17, Saskatoon, Baseball**
Nominated by Baseball Sask
- **Rylan Wiens, 15, Pike Lake, Diving**
Nominated by Dive Sask

2017 FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR FINALISTS:

- **Marsha Hudey, 27, White City, Speed Skating**
Nominated by Saskatchewan Amateur Speed Skating Association
- **Shelby Newkirk, 21, Saskatoon, Swimming**
Nominated by Swim Saskatchewan Inc.
- **Larissa Werbicki, 21, Saskatoon, Rowing**
Nominated by Saskatchewan Rowing Association

2017 MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR FINALISTS:

- **Ron Brandt, 59, Saskatoon, Special Olympics - Snowshoeing**
Nominated by Special Olympics Saskatchewan
- **Alexander Eiswerth, 22, Regina, Athletics**
Nominated by Saskatchewan Athletics
- **Jarret Kenke, 23, Saskatoon, Canoe Kayak**
Nominated by Canoe Kayak Saskatchewan

2017 TEAM OF THE YEAR FINALISTS:

- **Team Canada West, Regina, Floor Hockey**
Nominated by Special Olympics Saskatchewan
- **Team Saskatchewan Baseball, Saskatoon**
Nominated by Baseball Sask
- **Team Saskatchewan Senior Women, Regina, Water Polo**
Nominated by Water Polo Saskatchewan

2017 MASTER ATHLETE OF THE YEAR FINALISTS:

- **Ashley Baerg, 28, Dalmeny, Para Waterski**
Nominated by Waterski Wakeboard Saskatchewan
- **Jennifer Gardiner, 38, Regina, Swimming**
Nominated by Swim Saskatchewan Inc.
- **Terry Livingstone, 58, Regina, Special Olympics – Speed Skating**
Nominated by Special Olympics Saskatchewan

“Congratulations to the Athlete of the Year award finalists for their outstanding achievements and dedication to sport. And ‘thank you’ to the vast support system—the provincial and community sport organizations, administrators, coaches, officials, volunteers, parents and families—that have helped each athlete to achieve their goals and reach exciting heights of success,” exclaimed Darren Wilcox, Chair of Sask Sport Inc. “The 2017 Athlete of the Year finalists exemplify many years of hard work, determination and commitment. Their accomplishments at the regional, national and international levels are remarkable and motivating. These athletes show that sport is more than a game; sport develops leaders and life skills, it is a healthy lifestyle, a competitive journey, a podium of role models, and much more. We are [#SaskProud](#) of these outstanding athletes!”

“Saskatchewan athletes, amateur and professional alike, are role models in communities across the province,” Parks, Culture and Sport Minister Gene Makowsky said. “Our athletes exemplify the values and benefits that participating in sports instills. In addition to keeping us healthy and active, sports teach us lifelong skills like teamwork, commitment and discipline. They teach us the value of hard work. That hard work has certainly paid off for all of the athletes nominated and those who are Athlete of the Year award finalists. Congratulations on this fantastic accomplishment. Thank you to Sask Sport Inc. for continuing to champion sport and the impact it has on the enviable quality of life here in Saskatchewan.”

Along with the 2017 Athlete of the Year recipients (chosen from the above finalists), additional 2017 award recipients will be named in the following categories: Volunteer, Coach of the Year, Female Dedication Coach, Male Dedication Coach, Female Official, and Male Official. All of the award recipients will be announced and presented at the Saskatchewan Sport Awards ceremony being held March 22 in Saskatoon.

The Saskatchewan Sport Awards is an annual awards program of Sask Sport Inc. designed to recognize and celebrate the outstanding achievements of Saskatchewan amateur athletes, coaches, officials and volunteers.

For more information on the 2017 Athlete of the Year Award finalists, visit <http://www.sasksport.sk.ca/SportAwards>. You can also follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/CSCSaskatchewan> or Twitter [@CSCSaskatchewan](https://twitter.com/CSCSaskatchewan) for up to the minute details, athlete profiles and more.

Sask Sport Inc. would like to thank Global TV, our production and promotion partner for the Saskatchewan Sport Awards, and to acknowledge Saskatchewan Lotteries, the main fundraiser for amateur sport in the province.

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For more information contact Della Ruopp in Regina at 306-780-9375 or druopp@sasksport.sk.ca, or visit <http://www.sasksport.sk.ca/SportAwards/media.html>.

SASKATCHEWAN SPORT AWARDS 2017 ATHLETE OF THE YEAR FINALIST BIOGRAPHIES

2017 YOUTH-FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR AWARD FINALISTS

Rebecca Dean | 15 | Regina | Swimming
Nominated by: Swim Saskatchewan Inc.

- Won bronze in the 1500 Free, placed 6th in the 200 Fly and placed 9th in the 400 Free events at the 2017 Jeux du Canada Games, competing against participants from 12 provinces. She was chosen by her teammates as the Female Captain for Team Sask – Canada Games Swim Team.
- Won gold and a Canadian Trials Qualifying time in the 15-over Girls 1500 Free event at the 2017 ManSask Provincial Championships, competing against 31 teams from five provinces. As well in the 15-over Girls category, she placed 4th in the 400 Free and 800 Free, and 9th in the 200 Free.
- Placed 9th in the 15-17 Girls 200 Fly event at the 2017 Canadian Junior Swimming Championships, competing against 38 swimmers from 145 clubs.
- In the 14-15 Girls category, she won gold in the 1500 Free, placed 3rd in the 200 Fly, and finished 4th in the 200 Free at the 2017 Bennett Cup, competing against 15 clubs from two provinces.
- Won gold in the 200 Fly, 400 Free, and 800 Free in the category of Girls 13-14 at the 2017 Long Course Prairie Championships, competing against 15 clubs from three provinces. She also won silver in 200 Free, and earned bronze in the 100 Fly in the 13-14 Girls category.

Jordan Kos | 17 | Regina | Bowls (Lawn)

Nominated by: Bowls Saskatchewan Inc.

- Won a bronze medal in the Women's Fours at the 2017 Multi-Nations Event (Pre-Commonwealth Games), competing against teams from seven nations.
- Won a gold medal in the Junior Women's Singles at the 2017 National Championships Junior Women's Singles, competing against nine provinces.
- Won gold in the Mixed Pairs at the 2017 Forester Lang Pairs Nationals, competing against nine provinces.
- Won silver in the Senior Women's Singles at the 2017 Women's National Singles Tournament, competing as the youngest competitor against participants from nine provinces.
- Finished 6th in the Women's Fours Round Robin at the 2017 Canadian Nationals – Women's Fours, competing against participants from nine provinces.

Jasmine Runge | 18 | Regina | Baton

Nominated by: Saskatchewan Baton Twirling Association

- Finished 7th in the Senior Elite Artistic Pairs, finished 10th in the Senior Elite 2-baton, finished 11th in the Senior Elite Solo, placed 1st in Senior A 3-baton and finished 4th in the Team event at the 2017 International Cup, competing against participants from 18 countries.
- Finished 8th in the Senior Elite Solo, 9th in the Senior Elite 2-baton and 3rd in Team at the 2017 Grand Prix, competing against participants from 13 countries.
- Placed 4th Overall, 4th in Freestyle and in 2-baton, and 5th in Solo at the 2017 Congressional Cup, competing against invited athletes from Canada and the USA.

2017 YOUTH-MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR AWARD FINALISTS

Marco Schumann | 18 | Saskatoon | Speed Skating

Nominated by: Saskatchewan Amateur Speed Skating Association

- Placed 6th in the 1500m and ranked 10th overall at the 2017 ISU World Junior Short Track Championships, competing against 95 male skaters from 25 countries.
- Finished 10th overall at the 2017 Evo Intercontinental Short Track Invitational, competing against 32 skaters from six countries.
- Finished 10th overall at the 2017 Western Elite Short Track Circuit – Octoberfest, competing against 61 male skaters from four countries and seven provinces.
- Won gold in the 1500m Super Final and ranked 3rd overall at the December 2016 Canadian Junior Short Track Championships, competing against participants from eight provinces. The overall placing qualified Marco for the 2017 Junior World Short Track Championships.
- Won bronze in the 1000m, placed 4th in the 1500m, and finished 4th overall at the 2017 Canadian Open National Short Track Qualifier against participants from seven provinces.

Connor Sparks | 17 | Saskatoon | Baseball

Nominated by: Baseball Sask

- Finished 5th at the 2017 Roberto Alomar Tournament 12 Showcase, competing against 160 other players, and was asked to join U18 Team Canada to play against MLB Fall extended teams.
- Won a gold medal at the 2017 Jeux du Canada Games, with a batting average of .417 and only giving up two earned runs while pitching 10 innings.
- Placed 6th at the 2017 U18 Baseball Canada Nationals with a .368 batting average, competing against teams from 10 provinces.
- As a part of Team Canada in 2017, he pitched three innings versus the Major League Baseball Fall Extended Team - Pittsburgh Pirates, giving up only one run. He also pitched two innings against the Toronto Blue Jays Fall Extended Team, giving up only three runs.
- Played basketball for Marion Graham Collegiate and finished 4th at the 2017 Bedford Road Invitational Tournament; he was the only Saskatoon player named as one of the tournament all-stars.

Rylan Wiens | 15 | Pike Lake | Diving

Nominated by: Dive Sask

- Won bronze in the 3m event, and placed 7th in the 1m at the 2017 Junior Pan Am Games, competing against eight countries.
- Won a silver medal in the 3m Group B at The Sting, competing against 12 participants from six provinces and two U.S. states.
- Won silver in the 3m Group B, and placed 4th in the 1m Group B and Platform events at the 2017 Junior Elite Nationals, competing against seven provinces. His silver placement broke the Saskatchewan record and qualified Rylan for the Jr Pan Am Games.
- Won a bronze medal in Platform and also placed 8th in the 3m event at the 2017 Jeux du Canada Games. Rylan also broke the Saskatchewan Men's Open Platform record which he had previously set.
- Placed 4th in the Men's Platform at the 2017 Winter Senior Nationals, competing against participants from six provinces.

2017 FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR AWARD FINALISTS

Marsha Hudey | 27 | White City | Speed Skating

Nominated by: Saskatchewan Amateur Speed Skating Association

- Finished 6th in the 500m at the 2017 World Single Distance Championships, competing against 24 participants from 11 countries.
- Finished 4th in the 500m at the 2017 World Cup Final, competing against 12 participants from eight countries.
- Received a silver medal in the 500m at the 2017 Fall World Cup 2, competing against 20 participants from 10 countries; this was Marsha's first international medal.
- Won gold in the 500m to qualify as a member of Team Canada at the 2017 Fall World Cup Selections.

Shelby Newkirk | 21 | Saskatoon | Swimming

Nominated by: Swim Saskatchewan Inc.

- Won gold and set a world record in the S7-100 Back at the 2017 Para-Swimming Canadian Open, competing against athletes from three countries. At the same event, Shelby also received a bronze in the S7-50 Fly and S7-200 IM, finished 4th in the S7-50 Free, and finished 6th in the S7-100 Free.
- Shelby was named to Canadian Para-Swimming Team for the 2017 World Para-Swimming Championships after finishing with gold medals in the S7-50 Free, S7-100 Free, S7-50 Back and S7-100 Back, and earning a bronze medal in the S7-50 Fly at 2017 Speedo Can AM Para Swimming Championships.
- Won gold medals in the S7-50 Free, S7-100 Back, SB6-100 Breast and S7-200 IM, and won silver medals in the S7-100 Free and S7-50/100 Fly at the 2017 Jeux du Canada Games, competing against athletes from 12 provinces. As a result of this outstanding performance, Shelby was named Team Saskatchewan flagbearer at the closing ceremonies.
- Won silver in the S7-50 Free at the 2017 Canadian Swimming Championships.

Larissa Werbicki | 21 | Saskatoon | Rowing

Nominated by: Saskatchewan Rowing Association

- Placed 6th in the Lightweight Women's Double Sculls at the 2017 World Rowing U23 Championships, competing against 54 nations.
- Won gold in the U23 Lightweight Single Sculls and silver in the Lightweight Single Sculls at the 2017 National Rowing Championships, competing against athletes from eight different provinces.
- Won gold in three separate events at the 2017 Canadian University Rowing Championships: Lightweight Women's Single Sculls, Lightweight Women's Double Sculls, and Lightweight Women's Coxed Four, becoming the first woman ever to win all three lightweight events (sculling and sweep disciplines).

2017 MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR AWARD FINALISTS

Ron Brandt | 59 | Saskatoon | Special Olympics - Snowshoeing Nominated by: Special Olympics Saskatchewan

- Awarded a gold medal at the 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games in the 4X100m, competing against 50 athletes worldwide.
- He was the oldest athlete for Team Sask and Team Canada.

Alexander Eiswerth | 22 | Regina | Athletics Nominated by Saskatchewan Athletics

- Awarded a gold medal in the 1500m and a silver medal in the 800m at the 2017 Canada Summer Games, as well as ranked number one in Saskatchewan for Senior Men 800m.
- At the 2017 USPORT Track & Field Championship, Alexander competed against athletes from seven different provinces and placed 9th in the 4X400m Relay, setting a record for the University of Regina in the 4X800m relay—placing 8th in that event.
- Set a new record for the University of Regina in Men's 1000m and won bronze at the 2017 Canada West University Track & Field Championship, competing against athletes from four provinces.
- Won gold in the 1500m and silver in the 800m at the 2017 Tri Province Meet. Currently ranked number one in Saskatchewan for Senior Men 1500m.
- Won gold for both the 1500m and 800m events at the 2017 Saskatchewan Athletics Provincial Championships.

Jarret Kenke | 23 | Saskatoon | Canoe/Kayak Nominated by Canoe Kayak Saskatchewan

- Placed 15th against athletes from 35 nations at the 2017 ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships in the K1 Men 500m.
- Placed 8th in the B-Final with an overall ranking of 17th against 32 athletes from 65 countries at the 2017 ICF Canoe Sprint Junior and Under 23 World Championships in the Men's U23 K2 1000m.
- Placed 27th against 41 athletes from 22 countries at the Canoe Sprint World Cup 2 in the Men's K2 1000m.
- Placed 12th and 23rd in the Men's K2 1000 and Men's K1 5000m, respectively, at the 2017 Canoe Sprint World Cup.
- At the 2017 Canoe Kayak Canada Senior National Team Trials, Jarret was the top ranked athlete in the Men's Kayak 1000m out of the competing seven provinces. He won gold in the Senior Men's K1 1000m and Senior Men's K2 1000m, and placed 5th in the Senior Men's K1 500m.

2017 TEAM ATHLETE OF THE YEAR AWARD FINALISTS

Team Canada West | Regina | Floor Hockey

Nominated by: Special Olympics Saskatchewan

- Won a silver medal at the 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games against participants from 105 countries.
- Awarded the Special Olympics Canada 2017 Team of the Year National Award.

Team Saskatchewan Baseball | Saskatoon | Baseball

Nominated by: Baseball Sask

- Won a gold medal at the 2017 Jeux du Canada Games.
- This is the first gold medal won by Team Saskatchewan in baseball at a Canada Games event.
- It was the only gold medal won by a team event at the Canada Games for Saskatchewan.

Team Saskatchewan Senior Women | Regina | Water Polo

Nominated by: Water Polo Saskatchewan

- Won a gold medal at the 2017 Senior Women National Championship League Finals for the first time ever.
- Team was awarded the Most Valuable Player (Rae Leckness), Most Valuable Defensive Player (Blair McDowell—who was only 16 years old at the time of the event) and Most Valuable Coach (Cyril Dorgigne).

2017 MASTER ATHLETE OF THE YEAR AWARD FINALISTS

Ashley Baerg | 28 | Dalmeny | Para Waterski

Nominated by: Waterski Wakeboard Saskatchewan

- Won a gold medal and set a new world record in the Seated Ladies Jump event at the 2017 World Disabled Waterski Championships, competing against six countries.
- At the same competition, she placed 4th in Slalom, 5th in Trick, silver in Overall Results for her category, and silver Overall Placing out of all athletes of the tournament.

Jennifer Gardiner | 38 | Regina | Swimming

Nominated by: Swim Saskatchewan Inc.

- Set long course provincial records in her 35-39 age group in all of her swimming events at the 2017 FINA World Masters Championships. Her meet was also highlighted with two 5th place podium finishes (400 Free and 800 Free), an 8th place finish in the 200 Back and a 10th place finish in the 400 IM.
- Finished with a gold medal in the 200 Back, silver medals in 400 IM and 1500 Free, and bronze medals in the 400 Free and 800 Free in the 35-39 age group at the 2017 Canadian Masters Swimming Championships, swimming against participants from five countries. She also broke short course provincial records in the 800 and 1500 Free.

- Jennifer finished 2017 ranked FIRST in the 35-39 age group in Canada in total combined points in the Top 20 total rankings in all 18 swimming events.
- Won gold medals in the 50 Free, 50 Fly, 100 IM, Women 200 Fly, 200 Breast and 200 IM in the 35-39 age group at the 2017 Pop Sidwell Masters Swim Meet, competing against participants from four provinces.
- Won gold medals in the 400 Free, 800 Free and 50 Breast in the 35-39 age group at the 2017 Regina Masters Invitational Swim Meet, competing against swimmers from five swim clubs.
- Awarded gold in the 100 Free, and silver in the 100 Back and 400 IM events in the 35-39 age group at the 2017 Goldfins Skills Master #2.

Terry Livingstone | 58 | Regina | Special Olympics – Speed Skating
Nominated by: Special Olympics Saskatchewan

- Won a gold medal in the 777m event at the 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games, competing against participants from 105 countries.
- Inducted into the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame in 2017, as the first ever Special Olympics athlete.