

Backgrounder
Biographies of 2022 Sport NL Provincial Annual Award Finalists

Junior Female Athlete of the Year (Margaret Davis Memorial Award)

Jaida Lee - Baseball

Jaida Lee had a historic season on the baseball field in 2022. An inspiration for young, aspiring female athletes, Jaida played with Team Newfoundland and Labrador as the first female to play baseball at the Canada Games in Niagara. She also dominated on the mound and at the plate at the 16U Nationals where she finished with a .294 batting average, 2 home runs and 6 Runs Batted In (RBI) along with a 1-0 pitching record and 19 strikeouts. She was named the Top Pitcher of the Tournament. Her successes, poise, and professionalism on the field earned her an invitation to the Baseball Canada Senior Women's Identification Camp where she was the focus of the teams coaching staff for future selection on the national team. For her excellence in athletics and academics Jaida was presented with a Team Gushue Award.

Emily Regular - Karate

Emily Regular as a well-rounded karate athlete is one of Newfoundland and Labrador's top athletes in her sport. She is a role model for all women and girls being the first female National Champion from Newfoundland & Labrador in the sport of Karate. She has also won two national titles within the last five years. Her efforts earned her a Gold Medal along with taking home a National Title when Newfoundland and Labrador hosted the National Championships in the Summer of 2022. Emily has continued to excel in her sport having represented Team Canada at two Junior Pan-American Karate Championships, placing 9th in 2022. She will represent Canada and the province of Newfoundland and Labrador at the 2023 US Open in April of 2023.

Abby Williams – Swimming

Abby Williams finished her final year as an age-group swimmer on a high note. Through exemplary attendance and her commitment to high-performance training with the St. John's Legends Swim Club and Swimming Newfoundland and Labrador, she was able to set six Provincial Records and attend the Canadian National Swimming Trials. This led her to receive an invitation to a Swimming Canada Junior National Relay Camp and secure an Athletic Scholarship to Canada's only National Collegiate Athletic Association school allowing her to swim as a varsity athlete with the Simon Fraser University Swim Team. She was recognized for her athletic excellence by being chosen as a 2022 Premier's Athletic Awards recipient.

Junior Male Athlete of the Year (Joseph P. Mullins Memorial Award)

Chris Weeks – Swimming

Chris Weeks enjoyed incredible success in the pool with his Mount Pearl Marlins club in 2022. Provincially, Chris dominated in his age group by breaking five Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Records in swimming and being named the Top Achiever for 15–17-year-old males at the Swimming NL Provincial Championships. Chris made his name known across the country in 2022 reaching the podium at multiple national events and being scouted by Swimming Canada for national development opportunities. Consistently ranked as one of the top age group swimmers in Canada he achieved Swimming Canada "On

Track Times” in 2022 in the 50m freestyle which secured him a spot in all Swimming Canada Junior Development Team initiatives. The highlight of 2022 for Chris was his history making achievements at the 2022 Canada Summer Games. Chris garnered 1 gold and 2 silver medals for Team Newfoundland and Labrador, the first gold medal won by a Newfoundland and Labrador swimmer at the Canada Games since 1993.

Gleb Evstigneev – Gymnastics (Trampoline)

Gleb Evstigneev has a long list of accomplishment in a short time frame with his club, Campia Gymnastics. The sport of Trampoline Gymnastics (TG) is not an easy sport to gain recognition in a few short years. Gleb's sheer determination and hard work have stamped his mark in the sport as well as the history books for the sport in this province. Gleb is the first ever Newfoundland and Labrador athlete to compete at Virtual Elite Canada 2022 Trampoline Gymnastics capturing a gold medal in Men's Level 7. His achievements also resulted in him being named to represent Canada in men's synchronized trampoline at the 2022 Trampoline Gymnastics World Age Group Competition in Sofia, Bulgaria in November of 2022, his first international competition.

Liam Drover-Mattinen – Tennis

Liam Drover-Mattinen had a great year on the tennis court and his level of play improved significantly in 2022, allowing him to compete at the largest and most competitive tournaments in the world. He became the U18 Canada national champion in doubles and the runner-up in singles. Liam is ranked in the Top 75 Junior players in the world. His sports career has allowed him to continue to raise the bar on the international tennis scene representing Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada. He participated in the qualifying draw of the Australian Junior Open in January 2023, one of 4 Grand Slams of the year. His tennis accomplishments continue to be noteworthy for an athlete from the province. As a highly accomplished player from Portugal Cove, Liam will join the Indiana University Men's tennis team in 2023.

Senior Female Athlete of the Year (Elizabeth Swan Memorial Award)

Kate Bazeley – Athletics

Kate Bazeley started 2022 off strong by training for the Boston Marathon, the most prestigious elite World Major Marathon. She was one of 40 women internationally selected to run and finished 24th overall with a time of 2:38:25. In October 2022 she won her 6th Tely 10 title in a time of 56:05, battling with a group of three men for the 3rd overall spot. She also won the 2022 Provincial Cross-country Championships held in Bowring Park in November 2022. At the Athletics Canada cross-country championships in Ottawa, she would finish 4th in the women's race which would qualify her to compete at the NACAC cross-country championships in January, a running competition for athletes representing member nations of the North America, Central America and Caribbean Athletic Association. Her fourth-place finish would also earn her a place on Team Canada at the World XC Championships in Australia.

Maggie Connors – Hockey

Maggie Connors had a great NCAA hockey season in 2022 playing with the Princeton Tigers. As a strong skating forward, she had 15 goals and 15 assists in the 28 games she played. Maggie made a big mark on the national stage by being named to the Canadian National Women's Development Team after a selection camp

with more than 140 of the country's top female players, including many past Olympians. The standout forward joined the national squad in a three-game summer showcase series against the United States. She had one goal and one assist in the three games, in addition to putting up two goals and one assist in three intersquad games. Her performance earned her the Ivy League's second team all-star nod. This, along with her academic accomplishments, earned her a place on the Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC) all-academic team.

Jane Pope - Soccer

Jane Pope, as a perennial all-star, had a great soccer season playing with the Holy Cross Kirby Group women's team. The Holy Cross team would capture the Breen's Jubilee Trophy title, going undefeated for the season with a record of 14-0-1, and later would go on to win the national Jubilee Trophy. In addition to being named to the provincial Jubilee Trophy all-star team, she was named both regular season and play-off MVP for 2022. Jane's ability to use either foot to make accurate crosses from wide positions into the penalty area, take on defenders, and her ability to score goals, made her a triple threat throughout the year. This ability was evident in the Provincial Jubilee Trophy league and at this year's Nationals as she led the tournament in scoring (tie) and set up many of her team's other goals. She was recognized for her talent by being named Newfoundland and Labrador Soccer Association's Senior Female Player of the Year for 2022.

Senior Male Athlete of the Year (Ferd Hayward Memorial Award)

Zack Dean – Hockey

Zach Dean enjoyed an exceptional season as a junior ice hockey centreman for the Gatineau Olympiques of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League (QMJHL). He dominated the 2021-2022 season with 21 goals and 31 Assists for a total of 52 points in the 47 games he played. As a great two-way hockey player he became the ninth player from Newfoundland and Labrador to wear the red and white to play on Team Canada at the World Junior Championships played in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Moncton, New Brunswick.

Colin Walsh – Softball

Colin Walsh enjoyed a successful fastpitch softball season on the Local, National and International diamonds in 2022. At the local level, Colin turned in two MVP performances leading 3 Cheers Pub Miller Lite to two Championships during the regular season with a 15-4 record and the playoffs with a 7-3 Record. He also captured several awards for his performance during the regular season including Top Batter, eight pitching wins, All-League Team (Utility) and Player of the Month honours for September/October. On the National level, Colin captured Gold with Galway Hitmen at the Men's Nationals and was named to the All-Star Team as an Outfielder. On the International level, Colin captured two Silver Medals with the Men's National Team at the Pan American Championship and the World Cup. For his performance this past season, Colin was named the 2022 Softball NL Senior Male Player of the Year.

Nathan Young – Curling

Nathan had a very successful 2022 curling season. He was privileged to compete nationally at both the Junior and Men's level, as well as the international level. His season began with competing in the 2022 Newfoundland and Labrador Tankard where his team won all of their round robin games to send them straight to the finals where they defeated defending tankard champion Greg Smith. This qualified him to

make his first ever appearance at the Tim Horton's Bier at the ENMAX Centre in Lethbridge, Alberta. Nathan's skill, commitment and dedication also earned him a place to make his second appearance at a Canadian Junior Championships with his team where he won every game at the 2022 U21 Newfoundland and Labrador Provincials. Nathan was also privileged to represent Canada as a fifth player with Team Gushue at the Pan Continental Curling Championships in Calgary, Alberta, where they brought home a gold medal.

Executive of the Year (Graham Snow Memorial Award)

Sean Cadigan – Softball

Sean Cadigan has been on the Softball NL board of directors as the Minor Director since 2017. He oversees U9 all the way up to U19 male and female fastpitch and slowpitch competition which includes school athletes, all the way up to national level athletes. He established the Softball NL minor symposium which focuses on all issues that impact minor softball and is a member of multiple Softball NL committees including coaching, finance, high performance, national and eastern Canadian championship host committees, and the performance plan project sport excellence committee. He also is a committee member for Timbits Softball with Softball Canada which demonstrates his commitment and dedication to grassroots softball in not just Newfoundland and Labrador, but all of Canada. Sean was a key factor in the formation of the minor male and female fastpitch leagues, and continues to share his sport knowledge amongst his fellow committee members and Softball NL members.

Melissa Gale – Artistic Swimming

Melissa Gale was not only successful in coaching and judging, but also serving as a board member in 2022. The sport had sweeping rule changes on the international scale that were implemented for the 2022-2023 season and Melissa was involved early with Canada Artistic Swimming to help facilitate those changes. She attended many calls and meetings and then disseminated the information to the executive and clubs as updates became available. Melissa also helped draft and update both the Provincial rulebook and the Atlantic Regional rule book to reflect these changes and make sure they aligned with the extensive new rules. Some of her stand out accomplishments during her time on the board include rebranding of the sport to Artistic Swimming as well as maintaining and updating several rulebooks and running sessions to teach the registration system and scoring system to coaches, clubs and volunteers. Melissa stepped into an interim President role when it was needed most, while maintaining all of her own VP responsibilities. She ensured that athletes did not feel the impact of what was happening on the Executive side of the sport.

Greg Williams - Baseball

Greg is a member of the Mount Pearl Minor Baseball executive and serves as their Vice President. Greg Williams is a vital part of the success of Mount Pearl Minor Baseball. Greg can be seen helping with the day-to-day operations of the program during the season and taking a lead role with team selections, evaluations, tryouts, staff development and umpiring when needed. In addition to these roles and responsibilities, Greg is also very heavily involved at the Provincial level including being named as the head coach of the Provincial 15U team for 2020 - 2022. He also serves in several capacities and roles with Baseball NL as the Coaching Committee Chair and serves as the provincial representative on the National Baseball Coaching Committee. Greg is also the Co-Chair of the High-Performance Committee.

Volunteer of the Year (Frank W. Graham Memorial Award)

Kim Blagdon - Volleyball

Kim Blagdon is a devoted volunteer with her Paradise recreation volleyball league which runs co-ed youth and co-ed adult leagues with almost 400 members and runs various youth and adult train to play programs. She has continued to develop both competitive and recreational divisions by working to secure gym time for various community and school uses, lobbying for new equipment and even funding it herself through her programs and organizing learning programs. Recently, Kim established the program as an official community group with the Town of Paradise to ensure that gym time and resources are available to support the ongoing development of volleyball in Paradise. In addition, she started an afterschool grade 6 volleyball program for boys at Paradise Intermediate School which has over 60 members. Kim also dedicates her time to hire and train local youth to referee and coach. She recently became a certified Provincial Referee and was the recipient of the Newfoundland and Labrador Volleyball Association's Volunteer of the Year Daryl Pye Award

Karen Gosse – Gymnastics

Karen Gosse is an exceptional volunteer who has served the gymnastics community in several capacities in 2022. At the provincial level, she sits as Gymnastics Newfoundland and Labrador's Treasurer and is dedicated to the development of the sport provincially. Experienced in policy development and strategy, Karen always keeps a global view of the club when she served as President of Cygnus Gymnastics until October 2022. She is also part of the Cygnus Gymnastics Facility Committee that works actively to improve Cygnus Gymnastics capacity and their search for a new building to run programming. Karen was a very active judge this past season and went above and beyond to contribute to the sport by being a judge at the Blizzard, Dream Big, and Snowbowl competitions. She has completed numerous judging courses, including a 2022 National 10 Judge Course.

Thomas Walsh – Ball Hockey

Tom Walsh is a driving force behind the sport of Ball Hockey in the Province which has seen continuous growth island-wide. Presently he holds the position of President with the Newfoundland and Labrador Ball Hockey Association. He can be found volunteering his time many ways including working countless hours organizing and facilitating zoom meetings, training and coaching athletes at the grass roots U7 and U9 jamborees, and at Minor Provincial Tournaments and National and International competitions. His contributions led him to be chosen as Head Coach of the U15 NL Selects Ball Hockey Male Team that competed in the Canadian Nationals in Winnipeg, Manitoba. With a strong fourth place performance, his team saw several members get selected to Team Canada East U16. Named as an Assistant Coach with Team Canada East U16, he will represent the country at the World Championships in the Czech Republic for his third time.

Female Coach of the Year

Kristyn Coley – Baseball

Kristyn Coley enjoyed a remarkable 2022 season on the diamond. At the School Sports level, Kristyn coached Holy Spirit High School's female softball and baseball teams fostering the development of athletes that had not had any previous experience, finishing second-place at Softball Regionals. On the Baseball diamond Kristyn guided the St. John's Minor Baseball 16U Female team to the Tier II Metro League Championships (as

the only female team in the league) before taking this same team to the Baseball NL 16U Provincials where she captured the Provincial Championship. At the National level, Kristyn served as Team NL Assistant Coach at two Baseball Canada National Championships - the 16U Girls Nationals in PEI and the 21U Women's Nationals held in St. John's. Kristyn's coaching ability is noted in the positive experiences the girls had during both tournaments, highlighted by a 4-3 overall record at the 16U Nationals. Kristyn capped her banner summer by being selected as the inaugural winner of the Baseball NL Female Coach of the Year.

Duffy Earle – Swimming

In 2022, Head Coach Duffy Earle lead the swimming team into the history books at the Canada Summer Games. Years of planning and swimmer development culminated with the most successful outcome for a Team NL team in Canada Summer Games history. Duffy created a competitive training environment for the Team NL swimmers that enabled them to shine on the national stage. Duffy's team garnered 8 medals at the 2022 Canada Games; a feat not accomplished before. Duffy is a nationally respected, two- time Canada Games Head Coach with a lifelong passion for competitive swimming and swimmer development. Duffy's commitment to provincial programming is unparalleled and the success of swimming at the 2022 Canada Summer Games illustrates her dedication.

Allison Kirby – Gymnastics

Allison Kirby continued her gymnastics coaching success in 2022, coaching her athletes at both the Provincial and National levels. At the Canadian Gymnastics National Championships Allison's athletes had successful placings finishing third and sixth overall. At the Elite Canada event one of Allison's athletes just missed a bronze medal finishing fourth on the Balance Beam. At the provincial level, Allison and her athletes continued to shine winning 5 of the 6 major provincial banners in addition to taking home seven of the fourteen major provincial awards. She was also named Gymnastics Newfoundland and Labrador's Coach of the Year award, continuing to build her legacy of coaching success in the sport of gymnastics.

Male Coach of the Year (John Drinkwater Memorial Award)

Chris Roberts – Swimming

Chris Roberts is an enthusiastic coach whose presence on the pool deck makes swimming fun and inspires his athletes to dream big and swim fast. Chris's club swimmers have achieved great success in 2022 with multiple provincial records and by qualifying for the highest level of competitions in Canada. Chris is extremely proud that five of his swimmers were selected to represent Newfoundland and Labrador as members of Team NL at the 2022 Canada Games. Chris coached swimmer Chris Weeks to multiple medals at the Canada Games winning two silver and one gold medal in the 50m Free and 100m Free. In addition to this, four of Chris's swimmers qualified to compete at the Eastern Canadian Championships and five swimmers being selected to Team NL to compete at the 2022 Canada Games where they turned in top performances for the province.

Jake Stanford – Soccer

Jake Stanford achieved many successes in 2022 as a coach of both male and female teams within the soccer community. Jake Stanford capped off a historic Challenge Cup and Jubilee Trophy season with two provincial championships and two national medals. Jake coached the Holy Cross women's team to an undefeated 14-0-1 record on route to a seventh consecutive Breen's Jubilee Trophy title and went on to a decisive women's

National Championship where they captured the province's first ever gold medal. Adding to this success Jake coached the Holy Cross men's team to a national bronze medal, completing the tournament undefeated which was a first for any coach in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador soccer. This accomplishment is testament to Jake's dedication and commitment to coaching and soccer in the province.

Jeff Thomas – Curling

Jeff Thomas reached the pinnacle of his coaching career in 2022 after almost 40 years of commitment to the growth and development of curling in Newfoundland and Labrador. For the first time he would have the opportunity to be part of the Olympics to represent Canada with Team Gushue at the Beijing Winter Olympic Games as their coach. At the Olympics he earned a bronze medal with the team. In 2022, Jeff also coached Team Young to their first Tim Hortons Brier appearance. Jeff shows an unwavering commitment to the growth of curling provincially and nationally by coaching teams and individuals and is a resource for other coaches. Not only does he coach skills, but he also exemplifies honor and sportsmanship on the field of play, making him a role model for our athletes.

Team of the Year (Edward P. Browne Memorial Award)

Galway Hitmen - Softball

The Galway Hitmen embarked in 2022 by defending the Men's Canadian Fastpitch Championship title on home soil, completing the tournament with a 7-1 record outscoring the opposition 68-14. The team finished with an impressive .409 Team Batting Average, a 1.95 Team Earned Run Average and a .975 Team Fielding Percentage. With team success came individual success and the Galway Hitmen displayed plenty of that in 2022 with players earning individual awards such as MVP Qualifying Round, Top Batter Qualifying Round and 4 players being named to the All-Star Team. When the dust settled, the Galway Hitmen captured the provinces 8th Men's Canadian Fastpitch Championship.

Holy Cross – Soccer

Holy Cross women won their first Jubilee Trophy with determination and commitment at the 2022 Toyota National Championship. The women's team won 3-0 over Ontario representatives London Alliance FC Galaxy. Setting their sights high this year, they capped an historic season with a national gold medal - the province's first ever national women's gold. The team was focused and decisive at all games outscoring their opponents 18-1. Striker Jane Pope went on to co-capture the award for top scorer. Holy Cross had gone undefeated during their provincial campaign, on route to a seventh straight provincial title.

Team Gushue – Curling

Team Gushue has continued to establish themselves as one of the premier curling teams both nationally and internationally. In 2022, they solidified their position as one of the best curling teams by earning a bronze medal at the Winter Olympic Games held in Beijing. A few weeks later, despite having only three players on the ice, the team won their 4th Tim Horton's Brier title. This remarkable achievement is now regarded as one of the most epic stories in curling. In addition to these great successes, Team Gushue have consistently finished within the top 3 in the majority of their Grand Slam of Curling events played, capping off an exceptional year for the team.

Official of the Year Award

Joan Butler – Swimming

Joan Butler has been involved with competitive swimming for more than 30 years. She started out as an age group swimmer, then as a swimming parent, club and provincial level volunteer and leader, and now continues her involvement as an internationally recognized Level 5 swimming official. With decades of experience, Joan continues to be one of the most valued Master Officials in Canada. Joan has officiated at the highest level of competition all over the world but always takes time to oversee swim meets here at home in Newfoundland and Labrador. She also regularly conducts officials clinics for Swimming NL and is always available to mentor other officials as they further their official's certification. A highlight for Joan in 2022 was being selected to be the Deputy Meet Referee at the 2022 Canada Games.

Kearney O'Keefe – Softball

Kearney O'Keefe enjoyed a successful year on the softball diamond at the Local, Provincial, Eastern Canadian and National levels. On the field, Kearney worked games in the Senior Men's and Intermediate Men's Leagues, while also taking on the assignment of scheduling umpires for both Leagues. She also worked League Tournaments, as well as other tournaments such as the Pre-Canada Games Tournament, Lloyd Poirier Tournament and Women's Canadian Fastpitch Championship. Kearney was the Umpire-in-Chief for the U15 Female Eastern Canadian Softball Championship and worked 11 of 19 games at the Master Men's Canadian Fastpitch Championship. Off the field, Kearney helped run Umpire Clinics in person and online and helped to form the new Umpire Development Committee with the focus on the recruitment and retention of umpires. It was Kearney's performance at the 2022 Women's Canadian Fastpitch Championship in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and the recommendation from the events Umpire-in-Chief and Deputy Umpire-in-Chiefs that the Softball Canada Board of Directors approved her Nomination for Level V Fastpitch Umpire Certification in the Softball Canada's National Officials Certification Program. Kearney is the 1st Female Umpire and 8th Umpire Overall in the Province to Obtain Level V Designation. Kearney was named the 2022 Softball NL Umpire of the Year.

Tara Jensen – Artistic Swimming

Tara began officiating artistic swimming as a judge and referee in 2013. She has overseen every invitational and provincial meet in Newfoundland and Labrador in that time with grace and fairness. She has also officiated at Atlantic Canada meets. After a two-year delay due to Covid, she was evaluated in May 2022 for her Level 3 Referee and passed with flying colours, meaning she will now officiate national level competitions. She is always willing to mentor younger officials and has actively been helping our provincial recruitment efforts to increase the number of qualified referees we have. Tara always puts the well-being and development of athletes first. As the last person an athlete interacts with before performing their routine, Tara is steadfast in how she addresses each one with respect and presents herself professionally. Her presence puts them at ease. Her contribution to sport in our province cannot be overstated.