



Sport Newfoundland and Labrador Awards 15 Athletic Scholarships at Annual Reception.

St. John's, NL, May 29, 2024 – Sport Newfoundland and Labrador (SportNL) presented the recipients of its Scholarship Awards during their 33rd Annual Scholarship Reception held at Emera Innovation Exchange, Signal Hill Campus Conference Hall in St. John's.

Swimmer Chris Weeks of St. John's was the recipient of this year's Frank T. Butler Memorial Scholarship. Chris was presented a \$1,500 scholarship for his athletic achievements during 2023. Chris had had an incredible journey in 2023 with the Canadian Junior Swim team where he competed at the World Junior Aquatic Championships in Israel against the world's best swimmers. In addition to his international success, Chris set a new Canadian Swimming Record in the 50- meter Butterfly and took home 16 Gold medals during the 2023 season.

The Frank T. Butler Memorial Scholarship was established and named after Frank T. Butler, a St. John's native, and SportNL Hall of Fame member, who was an enthusiastic volunteer on several Sport Newfoundland and Labrador Committees.

SportNL is also pleased to announce the names of 14 student athletes and officials that received scholarships in the amount of \$750 for their athletic and academic achievements during 2023.

The 14 scholarship recipients are:

- Michael MJ Budden, Special Olympics
- Ethan Efford, Golf
- Gleb Evstigneev, Gymnastics
- Molly Gill, Ball Hockey
- Adrian Green, Softball
- Brooke Hipditch, Ball Hockey
- Maggie Jones, Ball Hockey
- Jaida Lee, Baseball
- Ryan Maher, Softball
- Claire McCarthy, Para Shooting
- Ciara Molloy, Soccer
- Abby Newhook, Hockey
- Alyson Thomas, Ball Hockey
- Jenni Simpson, Ball Hockey

“On behalf of the board of directors of Sport Newfoundland and Labrador, I want to extend my congratulations not only to the fifteen recipients who received scholarships today but to all of the 2024 applicants,” said Chris Schwartz, Board President, Sport NL. “The level of commitment shown by these athletes, coaches, and officials to achieve their sport and academic goals is amazing to see.”

The Sport Newfoundland and Labrador Scholarship Program provides financial assistance to qualifying amateur athletes, coaches, and officials enrolled in a post-secondary institution. The scholarships help offset the often-high costs associated with training and competition while completing a post-secondary degree.

“The scholarship program received a significant number of applications again this year that had many accomplishments both on and off the field,” said Troy Croft, Executive Director, SportNL. “We are happy to provide these annual athletic scholarships to assist them in their pursuit of their athletic and academic goals.”

Post-secondary students from the province who train and compete at all levels of sport are encouraged to apply for a Sport Newfoundland and Labrador Athletic Scholarship when applications open again for 2025.

The Scholarship recipients and their bios are attached as a backgrounder.

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For more information:

Troy Croft
Executive Director, Sport NL
Phone: (709) 576-4932
Email: troy@sportnl.ca

About Sport Newfoundland and Labrador:

Sport Newfoundland and Labrador is the professional organization that is central to supporting the development and delivery of organized sport in Newfoundland and Labrador. Representing 55 member organizations, as well as 70, 0000 individual members, Sport NL is a volunteer-run organization that promotes amateur sport throughout our province – for everyone.

About Sport Newfoundland and Labrador Scholarship Program:

Sport Newfoundland and Labrador has awarded scholarships every year since 1991, with scholarship funds being distributed to deserving students in the province. Additional information about the scholarship program can be found at www.sportnl.ca/programs-services/scholarship-program/

Backgrounder Biographies of Scholarship Winners

Michael MJ Budden

Special Olympics athlete, Michael Budden, from Stephenville, attends the College of North Atlantic as a first-year student in the Community Leadership Development program. Michael had an amazing 2023 season that saw him succeed provincially, nationally and internationally. His season was highlighted by capturing a gold medal at the Special Olympics World Championships in Berlin, Germany. In recognition of his impressive accomplishments, Michael was named the Canadian Special Olympics Athlete of the Year and the Newfoundland and Labrador Special Olympics Athlete of the Year

Ethan Efford

Golfer Ethan Efford is a Utah Valley University golf team member competing in NCAA Division One while completing his third year of a Bachelor of Science degree. Ethan excels on and off the course contributing to his team's success with a number of top 15 placings in a very competitive division, while maintaining high academic standards. Ethan has been named to the Dean's List in three consecutive semesters and is an NCAA Academic All American.

Gleb Evstigneev

Gleb Evstigneev, of Paradise, continued to make his mark on the gymnastics national and international stages in 2023. Gleb started his season by capturing gold at the 2023 Canada Winter Games in PEI. His success continued from there, capturing gold in both the individual and synchronized trampoline events at the Pan American Games in Mexico as a member of Team Canada. Gleb is in the third year of his Bachelor of Science degree at Memorial University where his focus is Biochemistry.

Molly Gill

Molly Gill, of Conception Bay South, had an amazing 2023 ball hockey season. Molly was awarded her school's MVP at the school Sports Newfoundland and Labrador (SSNL) Regionals, the SSNL Provincials and was named the SSNL 4A Student Athlete of the Year (Brother G.I. Moore Award). Continuing her success, Molly won gold at the senior women's provincials and the Girls' U19 Ball Hockey Nationals. She earned two Player of the Game awards at Nationals and was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player. Molly is in her first year at Memorial University and plans to study Biochemistry.

Adrian Green

Softball player Adrian Green is in the second year of his Kinesiology Degree at Memorial University. Adrian was selected as a member of the U18 Canadian Softball team competing in the World Cup of Softball in Mexico and the Pan American Championships in Columbia, capturing bronze medals at both events. Competing for Team NL as a Member of the U20 provincial team Adrian was named top catcher for his outstanding performance at the Canadian Nationals. In addition to his performance on the field, Adrian was presented the Ethel Boyce Award by Softball Canada for his academic achievements.

Brooke Hipditch

Brooke Hipditch, of Paradise, spent 2023 making her mark as both an official and an athlete. She was awarded the top official at the Beaumont Hamel High School Hockey Tournament in the female division and was also assigned the tournament's championship game. Brooke earned a spot as one of four female officials from Newfoundland and Labrador to attend and officiate at the Atlantic Challenge Cup in Moncton, NB. As an athlete she was a member of the 19U Female Selects Ball Hockey Team where her team won the National Championship for the second year in a row. Brooke is completing her joint Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts Degrees in Psychology and English at Memorial University.

Maggie Jones

Maggie Jones is completing her second year of a Bachelor's of Science in Allied Health at Suny Morrisville University in New York. In 2023, Maggie had a very successful season at the rink, competing nationally, internationally and with her university. She was a key member of her NCAA Division 3 team, the Provincial U19 Ball Hockey Team, and the Canadian Ball Hockey Team, earning two gold medals for her efforts. Maggie was a standout at each event winning top goalie honors at all levels of play.

Jaida Lee

Jaida Lee, of St. John's, was named a member of Team Canada in 2023 where she played in the World Qualifiers in Thunder Bay, ON. She also played a major role with Team NL at the national championships where they finished 4th, just shy of winning a bronze medal and she was named the Top Pitcher. She also contributed at the plate with several home runs and a grand slam throughout the tournament. Jaida was chosen again to play in the annual AGM tournament, a 4-team event made up of the best female baseball players in the world, where her team won Gold. Jaida is completing her third semester in a Bachelor of Science at Memorial University.

Ryan Maher

In 2023, Ryan Maher, of Petty Harbour, had an incredible year on the softball diamond. At the local, national and international level, he played an important role for Team NL, The Galway Hitmen, and the Ohio Bombers. Ryan was the top batter at the U23 Men's Canadian Championships in Saskatoon batting an impressive .684. At the senior level, Ryan helped his Hitmen team bring home a national silver medal. Ryan is in the final year of his Bachelor of Business Administration at Memorial University.

Claire McCarthy

Claire McCarthy, of St. John's, entered her first year at Memorial University focusing her studies on science. Claire had a great year as one of the province's top shooters and competed internationally at the Competition of Hannover held in Hannover, Germany. There, she competed against athletes from across the globe in both WSPA-prone and standing events. Academically Claire excelled and was recognized for her accomplishments receiving an entrance scholarship from Memorial University to pursue her studies.

Ciara Molloy

Ciara Molloy, of Torbay, is a Geography major at Memorial University. As a member of the Holy Cross Crusaders, Ciara won gold at the Jubilee Trophy Provincial Championships and was named an All-Star defender. Ciara helped her Holy Cross team go undefeated at the National Championship, winning the title for the second consecutive year. In addition to provincial and national play, Ciara played with the Memorial Sea-Hawks who made it to the AUS semi-finals. She won her club team's Defensive Player of the Year Award and was named an Academic All-Canadian.

Abby Newhook

Abby Newhook, of St. John's, continued to make her mark as one of the top female hockey players at Boston College. In 2023, she finished second in team scoring and ninth in Hockey East scoring with a career-high 33 points with 19 goals and 14 assists. Her 19 goals led the team and ranked seventh in the NCAA Hockey East division. Abby led Boston College with six game-winning goals and added four game-winning assists totaling 10 game-winning points. Abby's year was highlighted by playing for Team Canada as a member of the U22 Development team. Abby is in the 3rd year of her studies where she is pursuing her degree in Marketing and Communications.

Alyson Thomas

Alyson Thomas, of L'Anse au Clair, is in the final year of a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. She was named to the U21 Junior Women's Canadian Ball Hockey Team where she competed at the World Championships hosted in Liberec, Czechia. Her team went undefeated and claimed the World Championship. Alyson was named assistant captain of this team, a title she is very proud to hold. Alyson was a member of the NL United Women's Ball Hockey Team, who won silver at the Canadian National Championships.

Jenni Simpson

Jenni Simpson, from Glovertown, was a member of the 2023 U21 Canadian Ball Hockey team and competed at the IBHF World Championships in Liberec, Czechia. As well as taking home a gold medal, Jenni was named to the All-Star team and placed second in scoring at the tournament with 14 points. On home soil, Jenni competed at the U19 Girls' Ball Hockey Nationals as a member of the NL Selects team that repeated as National Champions. Jenni is completing a double major in Biology and Chemistry at Acadia University.

Chris Weeks

Chris Weeks, of Kilbride, is in his first year of studies at Memorial University. Chris has had an incredible journey in 2023 with the Canadian Junior Swim team where he competed at the World Junior Aquatic Championships in Israel against the world's best swimmers. In addition to his international success, Chris set a new Canadian Swimming Record in the 50- meter Butterfly and took home 16 Gold medals during the 2023 season.