

Valgardson hitting her targets

SWIMMER TURNED TRACK ATHLETE MAKING WAVES

By: Danielle Da Silva

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Erin Valgardson is warming up to life on the track.

The Kelvin High School student and former competitive swimmer joined the Optimist Athletic Club over a year ago and has since climbed to the top of national rankings.



Valgardson, 16, placed fourth at the Legion Youth Outdoor National meet in the 1,200-metre event (midget) last August. She also anchored the silver medal-winning medley relay team at the same event.

She has twice won the provincial junior varsity cross-country high school championships and finished 15th overall at the national cross-country four kilometre youth race in November.

She is currently ranked eighth by Athletics Canada in the 1,500 and 10th in the 800-metre indoor race.

Valgardson is once again focusing on the 800 and 1,500 metre events for the indoor season. At the recent Boeing Indoor Classic held at the University of Manitoba on March 4 and 5, Valgardson placed second in the 1,500-metre run (youth) with a time of 4:51.48. In the

800-metre run Valgardson placed second behind Vincent Massey Collegiate's Victoria Tachinski with a time of 2:18.11.

Making the transition from recreational running to elite competition has come naturally to Valgardson, though she is surprised with her success so far.

"It's been good and lots of challenges with more competition, which helps with improving," she said.

"I never really thought about being able to get the chance to go to nationals."

Coach Scott Radley said Valgardson is a "quick study of the sport" and her experience swimming competitively with the Marlins has benefited her performance come race day.

"When we put together a race plan she's able to deliver on the race plan," Radley said.

"That makes her racing experience much more successful too."

Radley adds that Valgardson has a "kick" that makes her hard to catch during her races.

"She's tough," he said. "Many kids have the physical skills, she has the mental skills to go along with the physical skills. When she sets her mind to it and there's a target in front of her she'll go get it."

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Danielle Da Silva is a general assignment reporter.

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