

# Oakville Gymnastics Club sending four athletes to NCAA schools

The Oakville Gymnastics Club has had members receive NCAA scholarships before, but never anything like this. Four OGC products — Bianca Jordaan, Mikaela Gerber, Silvia Colussi-Pelaez and Cory Paterson, all age 17 — signed their NCAA letters of intent last week at the club. Jordaan is bound for Eastern Michigan University, Gerber is committed to UCLA, Colussi-Pelaez will attend the University of Florida and Paterson will be headed to the University of Iowa.

“We’ve had one before go to (Louisiana State), two to Eastern Michigan, another to UCLA and one to Penn State, but this is by far the largest class going (in one year),” said OGC general manager Wayne Hussey. “It doesn’t happen very often. Gymnastics is not an (overly popular) sport in the U.S. Not every school offers it.”

Alexandra Barac, co-head coach of the OGC’s women’s competitive program, agreed that this year’s NCAA crop is a rarity.

“It takes time to build up a team that has that potential,” she said. “But if you have a very good leader, good coaching, a good facility and lots of support from family, that can make it happen. You can call it a freak year. Hopefully, it will happen again.”



Oakville Gymnastics Club sending four athletes to NCAA schools. Pictured from left to right, Oakville Gymnastics Club members Mikaela Gerber (UCLA), Cory Paterson (Iowa) and Bianca Jordaan (Eastern Michigan) all signed their NCAA letters of intent last week. Fellow OGC athlete Silvia Colussi-Pelaez committed to the University of Florida last week as well. *Eric Riehl / Oakville Beaver*

Jordaan, an Oakville resident, quickly progressed from a Level 9 competitor to an elite senior high-performance athlete. Last year, she won gold on vault and bronze on beam at the Canadian national championships.

Despite a demanding training schedule of approximately 30 hours a week, Jordaan has maintained a high grade-point average at Abbey Park High School and is also known for her bubbly personality.

"She's a character," Barac said. "Most gymnasts are very shy and quiet and just work, work, work and do their thing and go home. She puts smiles on girls' faces and makes jokes and keeps the atmosphere very light."

Gerber, who resides in Cambridge, overcame a number of injuries in the last few years to make the Canadian senior high-performance team. Last year, she tied a record for most medals earned (five) at the Canada Winter Games and won a pair of silver medals at the senior Pan Am Games. In 2010, she was the Elite Canada senior floor champion.

"She's a very disciplined kid," Barac said. "There were bumps in the road, several injuries, but she was able to overcome them and keep pushing through."

Colussi-Pelaez has both Canadian and Spanish citizenship, taking advantage of the latter to represent Spain at this year's world championships in Japan. She and the Spanish national team fell just short of qualifying for the Olympic Summer Games in London. Colussi-Pelaez also represented Ontario at last year's Canada Winter Games, tying for first overall and earning bronze on bars. In April 2011, she won the overall provincial senior title, placing first on beam, second on bars and third on floor.

"Silvia has a lot of pressure on her because she's got two sisters also practicing gymnastics," said Barac. "She knows she's a role model and is trying to inspire other kids. It was a really tough road for her, going to Spain and then coming back and training in a different system. I'm very happy to see she signed a (scholarship) and is good to go."

Paterson, an Abbey Park student, is in his eighth year on the Canadian men's national team and will compete in the senior division for the first time next year. He was the Canadian men's 16-and-under champion last year and was the national 13-and-under champion in both 2007 and 2008. Paterson has won

more than 30 Canadian individual apparatus titles in his career as well as numerous provincial and eastern Canadian championships.