

## Water polo player makes a big splash with national team

By Peter Brown, Special To The Record

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A common sports motif is the hard-working local talent who is plucked from obscurity and sent to big leagues.

That story doesn't just happen in baseball, hockey or football. How about water polo?

Six months ago, Emily Bidinosti was a 15-year-old, nine-year veteran of the [KW Water Polo Club](#).

So when the KW squad merged with one from Hamilton to send a team to the 16-and-under Boys' and Girls' National Club Championships in Vancouver in May, Bidinosti figured she was just getting a trip to the west coast to compete at a national level in her favourite sport.

Then a few weeks later, the phone rang.

Apparently she had been visible enough to be spotted by the coaching staff for the national women's 17-and-under team, which happened to be preparing for the Junior Pan American championship in Puerto Rico in August.

Would Emily care to attend a tryout? Of course she would.

Three weeks later, she headed to Montreal for a 12-day audition, made the team and trained for two more weeks, and then it was off to Puerto Rico for the two-week tournament.

She returned with a gold medal as Canada knocked off the United States in the five-team event. "So she was away from home for six weeks for a team that we didn't know existed in the spring," her father Greg Bidinosti says with a smile.

"The national coaches try to find out where the up and coming athletes are, but they also need to see them firsthand."

For Emily, the experience was invaluable as she had a chance to take on the best in her sport. "I was the third youngest out of 13 team members," she says. "So it was great to train against the older girls, with a couple of other national teams training in Montreal at the same time."

Emily was also one of just two players from Ontario. The rest of the roster hailed from west of Manitoba, somewhat a surprise given Quebec's typical strength in water polo.

Emily, now 16 years old, also plays basketball at Huron Heights Secondary School, where she is in Grade 11. But other than that, her dabbling in other sports has come to an end. Rugby, for instance, was a non-starter after Emily witnessed a few sprained ankles and broken fingers.

"I played just two games," she says. "But I couldn't afford to get injured because I had nationals coming up."

Even though she's focusing on water polo now, her background in other sports can help her in the pool, says her father Greg, who is a former Ontario university all-star and national team member.

"With six field players in the pool at once, and only one with the ball, the others are creating opportunities to get open using picks and screens," he says. "You end up drawing on basketball, soccer, wrestling, a lot of other sports for some of your technique."

Greg started coaching with the KW Water Polo Club when he arrived in the region 15 years ago. As soon as Emily was old enough, she wanted to try it out as well.

"There was no push or pull from me," says Greg. "It's been all on her own. She took to it quite naturally."

Because of the Junior Pan Am win, Canada qualifies for the world championships in Australia in December 2012.

Bidinosti isn't assured of a spot on that team, but you can bet she'll be helping her KW club team achieve more provincial and national greatness while she gets ready for that phone call.

And she'll be ready to fly at a moment's notice.



**Emily Bidinosti:** Emily Bidinosti of the KW Water Polo Club won a gold medal playing for Canada's 17-and-under women's team at the Junior Pan American championships. David Bebee/The Record Source: The Record