

Downing overcomes setback to earn spot on Commonwealth swim team

By [Jonathan Russell](#) on August 25, 2010 at 3:38 pm



BACK ON TRACK – Whitehorse’s MacKenzie Downing recently earned a spot on the Swim Canada team heading to the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi this October.

The past two years have been a long and winding road for swimmer MacKenzie Downing.

But the former Whitehorse Glacier Bear no longer has time to question her instincts.

Downing's recent results indicate that her instincts are right on track.

The 23-year-old was one of Swim Canada's 25 picked for the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi, India, in October, after finishing seventh in the 200-metre butterfly at the Pan-Pacific Games, held in Irvine, Calif., last week.

"It was really exciting because it was a hard team to make – 25 is a small team," Downing said, " and I haven't been swimming well over the past year."

She finished competing on the first day of the four-day competition, which meant she had to wait for the complete results to come in Saturday night before knowing if she would be heading to India to represent Canada this fall.

As you can imagine, that's one stressful wait.

"I knew it was going to be close, so I was really just waiting, watching. But I guess that makes it more exciting when you get it," Downing said, noting that she qualified for Pan-Pacs after nationals in Victoria, BC, in July, when she finished second in the butterfly (the top two in each event qualified).

Just two years ago, however, devastation took the place of that post-competition excitement.

Downing was a heavy favourite to make the Canadian team heading to the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, with a national record in the 100-metre fly – 58.8 seconds – and had also earned a spot on the 2007 World Championship team.

"I was expected to make the team, and I didn't," Downing said. "It was just so shocking and devastating. It was supposed to be my Olympics."

After that disappointment, Downing took time to reflect on her dream, to overcome her emotional setback.

The results are in on that too.

Downing no longer questions her decision to jump back into the pool.

"I'm excited about swimming again, about 2012," she said of the Summer Olympic Games in London, England. "Lots of work, lots of perseverance – it's been really hard at times – that's why I'm still here."

Making the Commonwealth Games team is "icing on the cake," she added.

Downing had a two-day break (travel days) following the Pan Pacs before returning to Victoria and jumping back into a rigorous training schedule which includes two four-hour swimming sessions and an hour and a half in the gym – seven days a week.

"Right now it's pretty crazy."

Downing has also competed for the past five years with the University of Victoria Vikes varsity team, and will now train at the Victoria Academy Centre while enrolled at U of Vic for Greek and Roman Studies.

Although a ways from home, Downing said the experience she got while swimming with the Glacier Bears still positively affects her mindset.

She admitted that while training every day she keeps one thing in mind.

"Here (in Victoria) it's all about performance, results; in Whitehorse you get the real support, everyone cares about you."