

## Downing heading to third university games

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By Tom Patrick

Yukon native Mackenzie Downing wants to get her Games-face on.

With London 2012 in her sights, and the Olympic trials less than a year away, the 24-year-old will be getting some big-event experience this summer in preparation.

At the end of last week Canadian Interuniversity Sport and Swimming Canada announced its team of 42 swimmers for the 26th Summer Universiade this August in Shenzhen, China.

Included on the roster was Downing, a student-athlete at the University of Victoria, who swims for the Victoria Academy.

"I'm excited. It's just a really good experience," said Downing. "It's a lot of fun and it's great because it's the second biggest Games after the Olympics, in terms of size. All the sports are there and you're in this big village, so it's good to be in that environment with a lot going on and a lot of distractions. It's good to have that training for the Olympics."

It will be the butterfly specialist's third time heading to the biennial event. Downing first competed at the event - also called the World University Games - in 2005 in Turkey, and then in 2007 in Thailand winning a gold in the 100 fly, a silver in the 200 fly and a bronze in a relay.

"The competition obviously is not as steep as it is in the Olympics, so it's a good stepping-stone," said Downing. "It's a good experience to try and get to the top of the podium."

Downing is one of only two on the swim team going for a third Universiade, a partmanteau coming from the blending of university and Olympiad.

"After head coaching the 2009 team, I am very excited to return to that competition," said Team Canada head coach Mike Blondal in a media release. "With less than one year to go until Canada's Olympic trials this meet will be the first stop on the final step to make the main show in London in the summer of 2012."

The former Glacier Bear, who still holds seven Whitehorse club records, also has five provincial records, three national records and seven national titles.

At the Commonwealth Games in October, Downing made two finals and also came ninth in the 100 fly. At the Pan Pacific Swimming Championships last year in Irvine, California, the Greek and Roman studies major made finals in the 100 and 200 fly.

Downing has also competed at the World Championships, reaching the semis of the 100 fly, in Melbourne, Australia, in 2007.

Last month at the 2011 World Championship Trials in Victoria, BC, Downing, who was suffering from a tonsillar abscess, missed a spot on the Canadian team by just two spots, finishing fourth in the 200 fly.

"I'm feeling a lot better now," said Downing. "I was sick for so long; I'm just starting to get back to my training form from before I got sick. It took a lot more out of me than I thought."