



Photo by Peter Thompson  
Mississauga's Lisa Alexander (front) captured two gold medals in the pool at the Commonwealth Games winning both the solo and duet synchronized swimming events with partner Erin Woodley.

# Lisa swims out of the shadow and into the golden spotlight

By JIM REID  
Special News

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VICTORIA — Smiling radiantly under her sparkling jeweled tiara, Lisa Alexander ascended the Commonwealth Games medal podium on Monday night.

And with those few steps, the 25-year-old Mississauga swimmer did more than just move deservedly into the international spotlight. She also stepped out from the shadows.

Delivering back-to-back routines of sweeping power and beauty — and with the judge's all punching up the buttons they intended — Alexander picked up the torch from former Olympic and Commonwealth hero Sylvie Frechette and nailed down a pair of synchronized swimming gold medals at Saanich Commonwealth Place.

Combining her raw strength, surgical precision and ballet-like grace, Alexander was mesmerizing during a resonant three-and-a-half minute solo routine performed to the exotic "Winter" suite from Vivaldi's Four Seasons.

Just 90 minutes later, she and Mississauga-born Erin Woodley locked up the double gold with a dazzling duet performance, continuing a dynasty in which Canada has won every synchro event since the sport was introduced at the 1986 Games in Edinburgh.

A bridesmaid once again, just as she was in Auckland, N.Z., four years ago, English champion Kerry Shacklock had to settle for the silver medal in both events.

"I have never experienced anything like this. It was a really thrilling feeling, with so many Canadians in the crowd cheering us on," Alexander, a two-time national champion, said after being presented one of her gold medals by Frechette.

"Having Sylvie present me with my gold medal was especially meaningful, as she is a good friend and someone who I really respect."

Having just wrapped up their Calgary-based training camp the day before the Victoria Games opened, Alexander and Woodley were among the last members of the Canadian team to arrive in the athletes village at the University of Victoria.

But Alexander quickly launched

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compiled a 183,9717 total.

"My solo routine is designed to create a big impact at the end," Alexander admitted after her routine, which included a double-legged surface dive, half a dozen pirouettes and an incredible, 20-second rotating corkscrew.

Alexander and Woodley were in a class by themselves in the duet final as well, dominating both the figures and routines with a combined 188,089.4 score. Shacklock and Laila Vakli took the silver medal after finishing a distant second with 182,680.3 points.

"Winning a medal at home has been just the best experience," said Woodley, who put her English stud-

ies at the University of Toronto on the back-burner while she trained for the Commonwealth Games.

"This is a once in a lifetime thing."

Alexander, who recently graduated from U of T with a degree in political science, is now looking forward to the world aquatic championships, which begin next week in Rome. She had her first major success at the worlds, where she won a bronze medal in 1991.

After the worlds, "I'm going to hang in there for Atlanta," Alexander said, referring to the 1996 Olympics where women's team synchro will be introduced as an official event, replacing the solo and duet competitions.