

Canadian legend calls it a day

Silken Laumann to be inducted this summer

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The person who arguably put rowing

on the Canadian map, reached a difficult decision yesterday announcing her retirement.

Silken Laumann, 32, and now a resi-

dent of Victoria, chose to end her 15-year competitive rowing career.

While Laumann won a number of gold medals over her career, she will be best remembered by most Canadians for her courageous comeback at the 1992 Olympic Games.

Three months prior to the Games, Laumann's right leg was severely damaged in a collision with a German boat.

While doctors said there was no way she would be able to walk, never mind row, the pictures of Laumann getting into her boat with the aid of a cane, and coming through with a bronze medal still bring tears to Canadians' eyes.

Her courageous comeback from a severed calf muscle made her a hero of superhuman proportions that Canadians from coast to coast admired for her desire, determination and the pursuit of a dream.

"Rowing has been a blessing in my life," said Laumann. "It has presented me with many opportunities and memorable experiences; it has taught me lessons that I will carry throughout my life.

"It is now time to move on to the new challenges and opportunities," she added. "I feel that I have fulfilled my dreams and aspirations in competitive

rowing."

A member of the Canadian National Rowing Team since 1983, Laumann's climb to the top was a long and arduous one, battling chronic back problems which threatened to end her rowing career.

But her dedication and hard work paid off in 1991 when she won the overall World Cup Series Title and the World Championship.

Her rowing career includes three Olympic medals, and numerous awards and honors including the 1991 Lou Mash Award as Canada's outstanding athlete.

In 1997, Silken and husband John Wallace gave birth to their first child, William. And with William, came a new priority in her life.

Silken, along with her sister Danielle and first coach Fred Loek, will be among this year's inductees into the Mississauga Sports Hall of Fame in June.

That Silken ever got into a boat, never mind becoming an international story, is a story in itself.

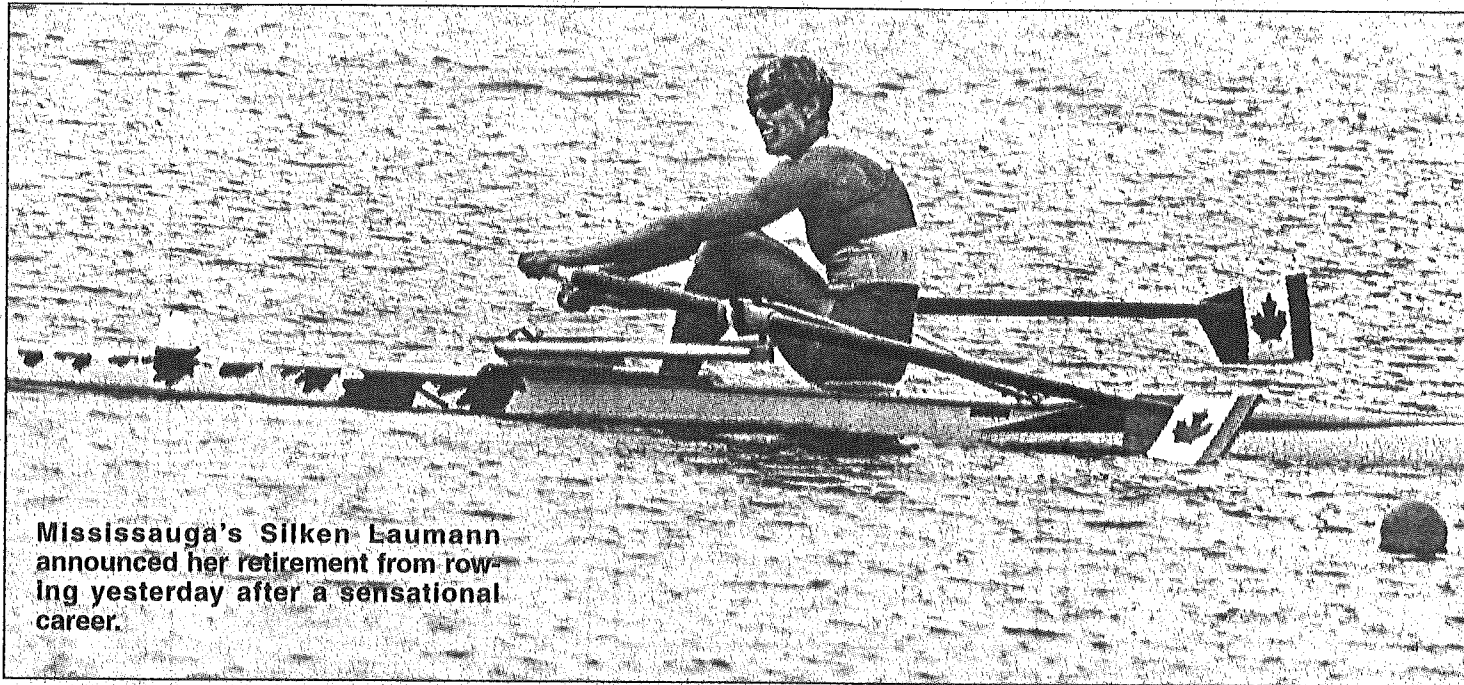
Silken teamed with Danielle at the 1984 Olympics in Montreal where they came away with a bronze medal.

While Danielle chose to retire shortly

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LAUMANN



Mississauga's Silken Laumann announced her retirement from rowing yesterday after a sensational career.

Laumann became the best on hard work

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after, Silken chose to concentrate on her career in singles sculls.

It's Danielle however, who was responsible for getting Silken into rowing almost as a last resort.

"Danielle was part of the Lorne Park Secondary School rowing program," recalls Loek. "Silken never wanted to be a part of it. She was only interested in track.

"But after getting stress fractures from running, she had to get off her feet, so she tried rowing."

The rest as they say is history.

Less than two years after making her first stroke, Silken, along with Danielle, were a

part of a quad that almost qualified for the final at the Worlds in 1982.

"She had an incredible work ethic," says Loek. "She was horrible technically. She didn't know how to row to save her life, but she was out (on the river) and stayed out there.

"I was driving over the bridge on Lakeshore Rd. in Port Credit on a fall afternoon very late in November and there were big wet snowflakes falling. When I looked over, there was a lone figure going up and down the river — it was Silken, and she was still just a high school student.

"She wouldn't miss a day."

Loek, who coached from the late 70's to 1990, adds, "I coached her sister and I

humored her.

"I would wind her up and away she would go.

"I would just tell her to go hard, until you can't go anymore."

Now, with a young family and in demand as a public speaker, Laumann has concluded she can't go anymore."

The Laumanns and Loek will be inducted this June at the Sports Celebrity Dinner.

"I'm delighted about the Hall of Fame," says Loek. "Certainly, the company couldn't be better.

"The Hall of Fame is just the icing on the cake."

Tickets for the dinner can be purchased from the Mississauga Sports Council at 896-5858.