



Photos by Peter Thompson

SPIN TO WIN, ALMOST — Mississauga's Karen Preston demonstrates the grace and athleticism which helped her nail down second place to Josee Chouinard at the Canadian Figure Skating Championships, during the Parade of Champions demonstration which concluded the event last weekend in Hamilton. Men's novice champion Colin Thompson, of Mississauga, is featured on page S1.

Preston, Karen

Preston's second still good enough for berth at World Championships

By MIKE TOTTH

Special to The Mississauga News

HAMILTON — First the bad news: Karen Preston lost her senior ladies' Canadian Figure Skating crown.

The good news is the 21-year-old Mississauga is still going to Prague next month to represent Canada in the 1993 World Figure Skating Championships.

"That was my goal, to make the team," Preston told a small army of journalists at the championship post mortem at Hamilton's Copps Coliseum Sunday.

Turning in what she called a below average performance in both the short and long performances, defending national champion Preston lost her crown to her long-time rival, Quebec's Josee Chouinard. Susan Humphreys of Edmonton came out of the blue to capture the bronze medal.

"It wasn't a very good skate for me," Preston confessed, adding that

she found it, "very frustrating and disappointing," that she had skated clean in practices all week long only to uncharacteristically stumble in both the short and free programs.

Saturday night during the short program, her stumble cost Preston dearly. When it was over she found herself deep in the hole, sitting in third place behind a surprise leader, British Columbia's Tanya Binger, and Chouinard.

She said, she felt all right about her short program, "except for that 30 seconds," when she lost her focus. What made her slip even more frustrating is that in the three years leading up to this event she had nailed all her short program combinations in each and every competition — except this one.

Skating her long program in the final flight with the top-of-the-standings contenders, Preston was unfortunate to draw an early starting position. After finishing, all she could do was wait and see how Binger and

Early falls erase smile from skater's face

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Chouinard would fare to see what fate awaited her at the end. The stakes were high as only the top two finishers qualified for the World Championship team.

Preston said she was emotionally exhausted after having to wait so long to see if first-round leader Binger or Chouinard would replace her on the Czech Republic-bound global championship Canuck squad.

"There's nothing you can do," she said. "You have done the best you could and just have to wait it out."

Chouinard drew the final skating position and turned in what many considered the performance of her life, landing a clean routine that included six triple jumps and earned first-place votes for both

technical merit and artistic impression across the board from all nine judges.

In her technically difficult program which included seven triples, two of which were combinations, Preston looked shaky. She stumbled twice and failed to land a jump cleanly another time.

The performance, she said, was, "below my average, but maybe my average is high enough now that it was good enough."

Preston's coach Louis Stong admitted both he and Preston were disappointed with the result.

"Of course we're pleased she made the Canadian team, she worked very hard to get there, but her performance on the weekend left something to be desired," said Stong.

"She had been on all week, nailing everything. People were coming up from everywhere, commenting on how much she had improved since last year."

The main thing Preston had been hoping to improve upon in Hamilton was her on-ice persona. She was going to try and look friendlier, more accessible, while skating.

But that never materialized. She looked as grim, focused, seri-

ous and determined as ever.

"She fell early in both her short and long programs and she was never able to get into a good rhythm after that. She was so concerned with just finishing the routine, she didn't have time to smile."

No woman has repeated as Canadian senior ladies' titlist since Elizabeth Manley in 1987 and 1988.

"It's not as difficult to win the national (title) as it is to defend it," Preston said.

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