

Guess who's coming to Sports Dinner

Shand is a repeat winner as disabled athlete of the year

By TOM MICHIBATA
Special

Shocked was the initial reaction of Charmaine Shand upon hearing the news she was named Mississauga's Disabled Athlete of the Year for 1994.

The 18-year-old Mississauga native had a solid campaign last year, finishing runner-up in the CP (Cerebral Palsy) 7 100 metre and 200-m events at the World Track and Field Championships for Disabled Athletes in Berlin, Germany.

But getting the phone call from the City of Mississauga's sport committee for the third time (she received the award in 1992 and 1993) literally caught her off guard.

"I was not exactly expecting to win it again because a lot of different athletes have done very well in different sports," explained Shand, who will be honored at the annual Mississauga Sports Celebrity Dinner and Awards night June 1 at the Capitol Banquet Center. "I was shocked to get the phone call but I was very happy. It feels pretty good."

Getting into track and field about six years ago through a friend and fellow CP 7 competitor Michelle Armstrong, also of Mississauga, Shand has always loved the feeling of being on the track for race day.

"It's the competition and challenge. I like to have different people to go up against," said Shand, who turns 19 next month. "You get to meet people from different countries."

Currently Shand is training diligently five days a week in hopes of making amends for a disappointing showing at the 1992 Paralympic Games in Barcelona, Spain. She got off to a great start, smashing Canadian records in the 100-m and 200-m qualifying.

But in the finals, she was sixth in the 200-m and ninth in the 100-m. In the latter event, she fell at the start, picked herself up and managed to finish.

Shand said being her first Paralympic Games, she just sustained a bad case of stage fright which she'll chalk up to experience.

"There were so many people watching and I was running in front of the whole world," explained Shand, who is taking an office administration course at George Brown College in

Toronto. "Before the races I was in a small room with the other athletes who were all looking at each other. My palms were sweating.

"This time I'll have the advantage of knowing what the competition is going to be (for the 1996 Paralympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia)."

But first Shand must hurdle a major stepping stone this August when the Canadian Paralympic team holds its time trials in St. John, N.B. There her major competition will be Christine Lucus of Edmonton, who won the 100-m and 200-m in Berlin last year.

"I know I can beat her because I beat her once before at the Windsor Classic last year (in the 60-m and 200-m events)," she said. "I have to be focused on what my coach (Faye Blackwood of Etobicoke) tells me. I have to focus on my own lane and no-one else in the race matters. I'll just do the best I can and if I win that's great."



CHARMAINE SHAND