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## SPORTS

# Stirton has arrived

Mississauga's Erika-Leigh Stirton came up with a stunning performance at the Elite Canada Rhythmic Sportive Gymnastics Championship at Humber College over the weekend.

The 1994 National Junior champion showed she belonged with the country's elite when she came away with a silver medal after entering the second day of competition in third place.

While Lindsay Richards led from start to finish scoring 90.150, Stirton moved ahead of Vancouver's Camille Martens for a score of 89.350 and the silver.

Martin was the Canadian athlete who won the most medals at the Commonwealth Games with a team gold and four individual silver medals. Richards also represented Canada at the Commonwealth Games where she won team gold and an individual bronze.

Erin Burkett and Gretchen McLennan, two more Games team members, placed fourth and fifth respectively.

"Sure I was nervous," said Stirton, who earned five gold medals earlier in the year at the Junior Pan American Gymnastics Cup in Mexico. "I was competing against Canada's best. Camille is the Canadian Senior champion. She, Lindsay (Richards) and Gretchen (McLennan) had competed at the world championship in

Paris last November. The rest of the senior division are all strong competitors with lots of experience. I had competed against some of the seniors in the old High Performance category, but that was in June '93 when I finished ninth.

"My goal was to focus on each element of the routine as I performed it; not to worry about the other competitors, the judges, the audience or anything else beyond my control."

On the final day of competition, Stirton started with three nearly flawless routines. Scoring 9.2 in Ball, 9.2 in Rope and 9.1 in Hoop the top score in each apparatus. She scored an 8.8 in Ribbon, and 9.05 in Clubs to climb past Martens and close the gap to 0.8 behind Richards.

Richards, who trains at Sport Seneca in North York, Stirton, who trains at the Etobicoke Olympium RSG Club and Martens, were named to the Four Continents Team that will compete in Cairo in April.

Fellow Mississaugan Victoria Dinsmore from the Etobicoke club placed sixth in the junior division.

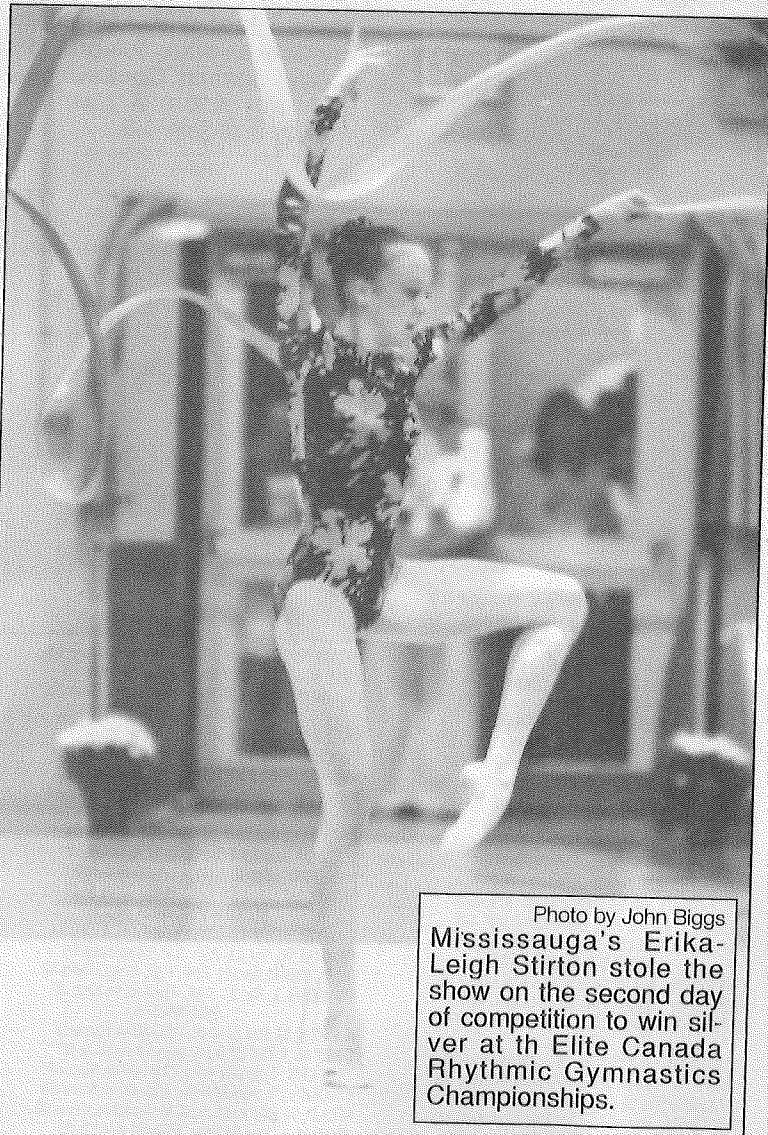


Photo by John Biggs  
Mississauga's Erika-Leigh Stirton stole the show on the second day of competition to win silver at the Elite Canada Rhythmic Gymnastics Championships.