

Tiny talent Tracy ready for the world

By MIKE TOTH
Sports Editor

Diminutive "centennial baby" Tracy Wainman, a surprise choice to represent Canada in the junior world figure skating championships in France next month, is all set to meet her biggest ice challenge head on.

The 10-year-old Mississauga skater who packs 27 kilograms of dynamite talent into a tiny 130-centimetre frame (if you have trouble sorting out the metric mess, it translates to roughly 60 pounds of weight distributed over a four-foot three-inch frame, give or take the odd hair's width or two) stole the headlines at the 1978 Canadian figure skating championships in Victoria, B.C.

It was a big enough shock that Wainman displayed almost too much spunk and pizzaz for such a tiny talent to earn top marks in winning the free skating portion and pull up from seventh place to fourth in the final standings of the novice ladies category.

Her free skating was dynamic enough to place little Tracy on the junior Team Canada earmarked for the world championships near St. Germaine, March 24-25.

"I was very, very surprised when they announced that I was on the team," confessed Tracy after a few hours of catch-up sleep in her Mississauga home Monday.

Two girls have been chosen for the junior Team Canada — both from the novice ranks, a move designed with a telescopic view at a distant future. Joining Wainman is newly-crowned novice titlist Lorri

Baier of Mitchell, Ont.

In choosing the Canuck tandem for the global challenge, selectors skimmed over the junior ladies ranks, bypassing — among others — Mississauga's fast-rising Nancy Buys, last year's novice champion who came fifth in the overall standings of her rookie junior championship at Memorial Arena.

Mississauga had three skaters in the Victoria ice capades and it was the lone male participant, Shaun McGill, who managed to skate away with a medal.

The 15-year-old Applewood high school student — a club mate of Wainman's at the Toronto Cricket, Skating and Curling Club — threw caution to the wind and skated a near faultless free program to jump from fourth to second place in the final novice men's standings. Until the final figure, McGill was in third place and in gold medal contention, but slipped a notch via a flaw in his loop.

Like Wainman in the novice ladies, McGill won the novice men's free skate with 15 ordinals and 104.98 points.

Both McGill and Wainman are coached by Ellen Burka, the grand lady of Canadian figure skating who is well-known left, right and centre ice as the "maker of champions". Burka's claim to fame is a glittering parade of top-notch skaters, including her daughter Petra (world champion in '65) and the incomparable Toller Cranston.

McGill, who qualified for the Canadian finals by coming first in the Eastern Canadian divisional championships in Peterborough

three weeks ago, will move up into the junior ranks.

But first, he's taking a week's rest in way of a bonus for his silver medal performance in Victoria.

There is no rest for pint-sized Tracy Wainman, though.

Yesterday, a mere 48 hours after her fourth-place finish, she was back on the ice working on her program for France.

"I have a month to work on a short free skating program," said Tracy, whose repertoire for novice competition included only figures and a free skating routine and will have to muster (ever so quickly) a compulsory short routine, too.

"I like skating and I like competition," admitted Tracy. She seems to grow up to pressure, a quality she demonstrated in Victoria, too, with a superb free skate routine.

It was the same story earlier in the Eastern Canadians in Peterborough, where she went into her free skating program sitting in seventh place, eventually pulling up to fourth — the final qualifying spot for the Canadians.

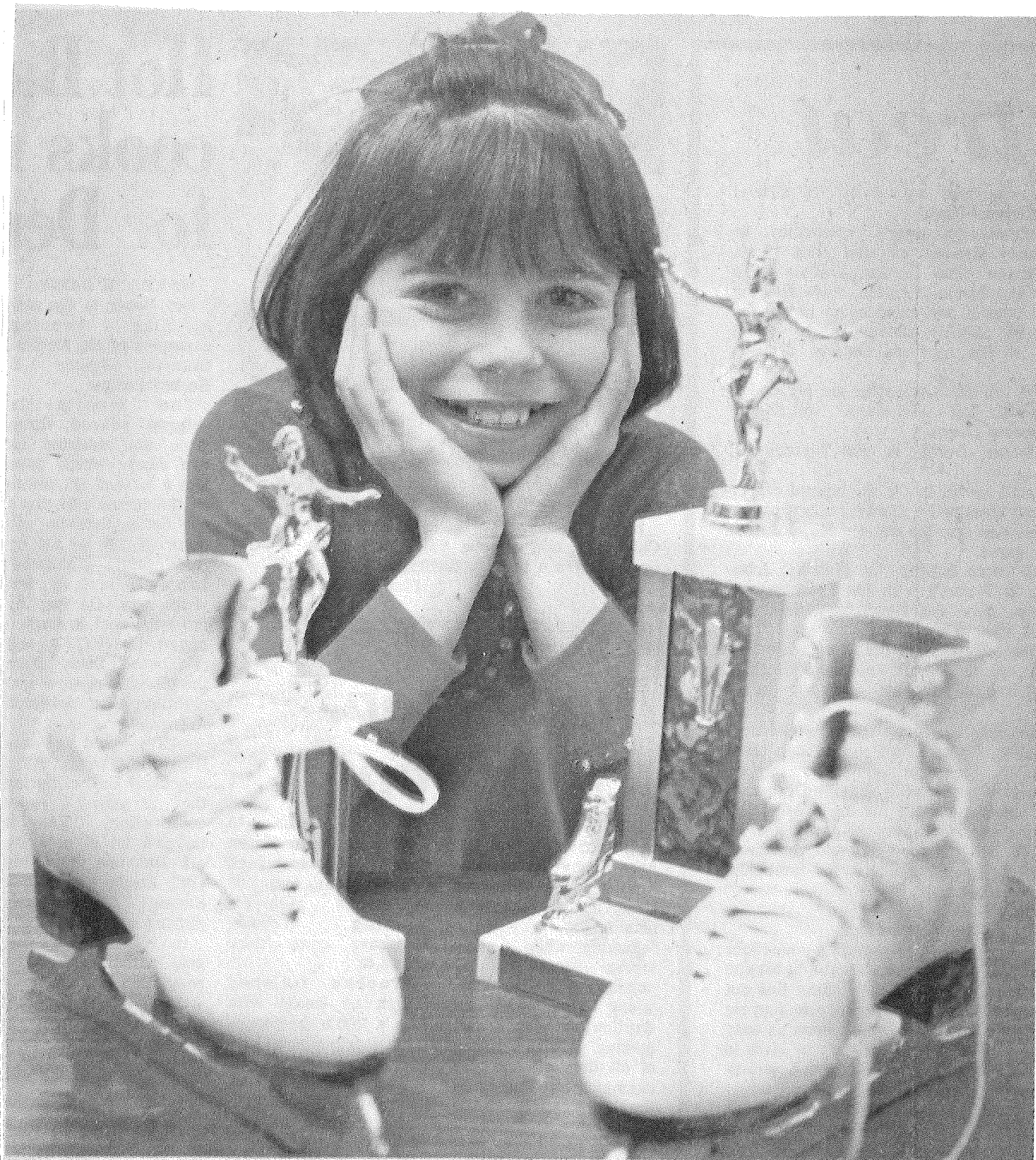
Sixteen-year-old Cawthra Park high school student Buys ran out of miracles in Victoria. Since stepping up into the junior ranks, Buys took turns to skate to gold medals in both the Central Ontario sectional and the Eastern Canadian divisional championships, a splendid pair of back-to-back achievements for the slender Cinderella skater.

At the Canadians, Buys was fourth after the figures, but failed to flash her finest form in the ensuring short compulsory and free skate programs, eventually ending in fifth spot with 37 ordinals and 113.94 points.

While the fifth place finish may be a disappointment for the auburn haired beauty, it's still a long way.

While the fifth place finish may be a disappointment for the auburn haired beauty, it's still a long way from her very first step at a Mississauga learn-to-skate program at Huron Park Arena.

That was only seven years ago.



Tracy Wainman, the youngest figure skater chosen to represent Canada in the junior world championships,

relaxes at her Mississauga home following the Canadian championships. (Staff photo by Fred Loek)