

Olympic Games Montreal 1976

# Missie paddler makes history

## John Wood's silver — only Ontario medal

By MIKE TOTH  
Sports Editor

Peel Biography SK

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MONTREAL — At lo-o-o-ng last!

For the first time in 24 years, Canada has won an Olympic medal in canoeing.

And not unexpectedly, it was blonde-haired single-blader John Wood, pride and joy of the national champion Mississauga Canoe Club, who rose high above the flatwater course at the Basin Olympique on Ile Notre-Dame here to meet the biggest challenge of his life head on and provide Canada with its very first medal since the 1952 Olympic Games.

The 26-year-old Mississaugan missed becoming Canada's only gold medalist of the XXIst Olympiad by a blink of an eye — a mere 34-100th of a second, to be precise — but he

emerged with a silver in the 500-metre one-man canoe (C-1) event Friday afternoon.

The silver was good enough for a partisan gallery of some 15,000, the largest ever crowd to witness a canoe regatta in Canada.

There was a thunderous ovation when Wood crossed the finish line in 1:59.58 seconds, behind odds-on favorite Aleksandre Rogov of the Soviet Union and just 2-100th of a second ahead of bronze medallist Matija Ljubek of Yugoslavia.

There were not only cheers, but tears, too.

"It was a highly emotional moment for us all, but in particular for me," confessed Ken Lane, the last Canadian paddler to win an Olympic medal.

Toronto businessman Lane, who teamed with Dave Hawgood to win a silver medal for Canada in the 10,000-metre two-man (C-2) canoe race in Helsinki 24 years ago, is now an international paddling official. He was right at the finish line in his official capacity as a judge when Wood triggered a 15,000-megaton cheer.

"I know how John must feel," said Lane.

For Wood, the silver medal was timely reward for years of dedication. A front-line sprinter on the international scene for the past three years, he went into the Olympics carrying an awfully heavy load as the top Canuck choice for a medal. As it turned out, he became the only Ontarian to win a medal at the Olympics.

"I paddled my own race," said Wood when it was over, except for all the cheers, hugs and handshakes of congratulations. "I didn't see a thing, I was too busy concentrating.

"I knew I didn't win the gold and I knew I was in the medal, but had no idea if it was a silver or a bronze.

"All I can say is I'm very pleased. Only a gold medal would have made me happier."

Coach Mac Hickox, who took a leave of absence from his teaching position at Port Credit Secondary School to be the silversmith of Wood's success, said "it was a very emotional thing" to see the reward for years of sacrifice and hard work.

"We had a definite goal and we felt it was realistic," said Hickox. "Now it has been achieved."

Once the Olympic silver cheer dies down, wedding bells will be ringing for the Mississauga paddler. He's getting married to former Canadian junior ladies' golf starlet Debbie Daymond in a couple of weeks.

"As far as competition is concerned, we'll just have to see what happens," said Wood. "I had to concentrate on canoeing for a long time to get ready for the Olympics.

"Now, I have to start looking for a job..."

## Our 76 Olympics coverage concludes

Obviously, there has been a lot of Mississauga excitement generated by John Wood's silver medal victory at the Montreal Olympics.

one Olympic event to another, concentraing on Mississauga involvement.

He wraps up his in-depth coverage on page S-1 with a column and further details of happenings at the Olympic Basin — site of John Wood's feat.

The Mississauga News Sports Editor Mike Toth spent his time during the entire games going from