

SPORTS

Six and counting for Groves

Speedskater joins another Mortimer as Ottawa's top athletes in 2009

BY MARTIN CLEARY

There was a familiar ring to the names of the female and male athletes of the year announced Wednesday night during the 57th Ottawa Sports Awards dinner at Algonquin College.

While the surnames Groves and Mortimer were in the spotlight for the second consecutive year, the first name for the latter athlete was different this year at the city's annual celebration of amateur sports achievements by athletes, coaches, officials and media.

Kristina Groves, who is ranked as the world's fourth best all-time long-track speedskater and capable of winning as many as five medals at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, was the unanimous selection as female athlete of the year by the dinner's organizing committee. It was the fourth straight year Groves, 33, won the prestigious honour and the sixth time in her career. Both achievements are Ottawa Sports Awards records.

Ian Mortimer, a six-year Canadian flatwater canoe team member, kept pace with his brother, Angus, and was selected the male athlete of the year.

Angus Mortimer and Rhys Hill shared the same athlete of the year award for their efforts in flatwater kayaking in 2008.

The sold-out dinner, which attracted 450 people, honoured athletes in 57 sports for their success in 2009 and presented 12 major trophies.

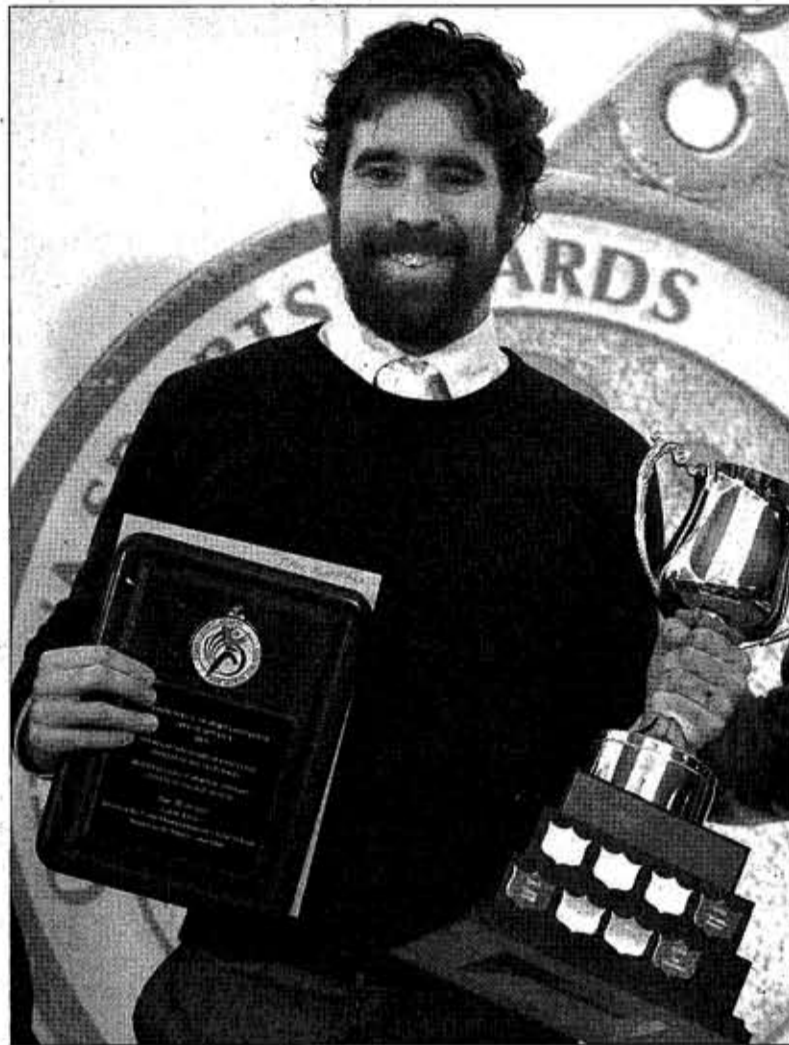
"It's great. It's nice to be recognized for something you've done," said Groves, who carried the flame Tuesday in the 2010 Olympic Torch Relay.

"That's my hometown. I love being from Ottawa. It's an honour to win. But we need more girls to start to pick it up. I hope this spurs them on. But it takes a lot of time."

She should know. Groves was in her late 20s before she made an impact on the international speedskating scene.

While Groves was the overwhelming choice as female athlete of the year for winning the 1,500-metre World Cup title a second straight year, finishing second overall at the world all-around championships and winning three medals at the world single-distance championships, a strong contingent of other Ottawa female athletes also made impressions on the world scene.

That list includes track and field's Esther Akinsulie, ball hockey's Danika Smith, basketball's Courtney Pilypaitis, flatwater kayaking's Kristin



JOHN MAJOR, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Canadian flatwater canoe team member Ian Mortimer matched his brother's accomplishment in being named male athlete of the year.

Gauthier, cross-country skiing's Perrianne Jones, curling's Rachel Homan, rowing's Lauren Wells, speed skating's Ivania Blondin, squash's Samantha Cornett and tennis's Gabriela Dabrowski.

Ian Mortimer also had a strong year. A member of the Rideau Canoe Club since 1993, he was part of two Canadian boats that narrowly missed medals at the 2009 world senior canoe/kayak championships. He was in the C-4 200-metre final, which placed fourth, and in the C-4 1,000-metre final, which was fifth. The C-4, 200-metre result was a best-ever for Canada.

At the Canadian championships, Mortimer was captain of the gold-medal women's junior and women's juvenile war canoe crews.

It was first time Rideau had won a women's war canoe title since 1996.

"I'm really happy (winning the award), especially after coming back from my injury," said Mortimer, who missed the 2006 and 2007 seasons because of a loose shoulder which caused multiple separations.

"I sat at this award for six years. Every year it has been a career goal that I can do enough to be the athlete of the year."

After surgery, he spent the 2008 season rebuilding his career and returned to the national team in 2009 to race at the worlds in Dartmouth, N.S.

The dinner also put the spotlight

Coaches in Canoe and Kayak for 10 years.

■ Howard Darwin, (posthumously) the Mayor's Cup for outstanding contribution to sport in Ottawa: A cornerstone of sport in the city, Darwin was instrumental in providing solid sports entertainment through his ventures into professional baseball, junior hockey, boxing and wrestling.

■ Tom Casey, the Ernie Calcutt, Eddie McCabe, Brian Smith Memorial Award for Lifetime Achievement in Sports Media: During his 39 years as a sports writer and sports editor with the *Ottawa Citizen*, Casey enthusiastically covered the Ottawa Rough Riders and the CFL, the Montreal Canadiens and the NHL, the Ottawa 67's and the North American indoor track and field scene. He also is a member of the Football Writers of Canada Hall of Fame.

■ Kevin Frost, Special Recognition for Achievement in Sport: At the inaugural Russian Paralympic Open Blind Cup long-track speed skating competition, Frost won all four of his age-group races in world-record times;

■ Wally Herman, Special Recognition for Achievement in Sport: A distance runner for the past 34 years, Herman, 83, has run 716 marathons, including at least one in each of the 50 American states, 13 Canadian provinces and territories as well as 99 countries;

■ Carleton University men's basketball team, the Male Team of the Year Award: As the team of the past decade in Ottawa, the Ravens won their sixth Canadian Interuniversity Sport men's basketball title in the past seven years under head coach Dave Smart.

■ Ottawa Rowing Club, women's eights, the Female Team of the Year Award: The 2009 Row Ontario Club of the Year Award winners, members of the eights compiled four victories in different races at the Ontario and Canadian championships;

■ Ottawa Lions Track and Field Club, the Amateur Sport Club of the Year Award: The Lions were the Canadian senior club and national junior club champions as well as the overall Ontario outdoor champions.

For the first time, the Ottawa Sports Awards dinner presented two \$500 bursaries to student athletes attending an Ottawa post-secondary institution. The winners, who had their names drawn, were flatwater kayaker Kristin Gauthier of the Rideau Canoe Club and whitewater kayaker Ben Hayward of the Ottawa River Runners.

Ottawa Sports Award dinner: See complete list of winners, B4



PHOTO GALLERY Check out the winners at Wednesday's Ottawa Sports Award dinner.

OTTAWACITIZEN.COM

Homan rink wants quick route into title match

BY TIM GALL

SOREL-TRACY, Que.

Rachel Homan and her team have all but guaranteed themselves a playoff berth with an undefeated mark of 8-0 at the Canadian Junior Curling Championships.

The team added two more victories to its résumé Wednesday, beating the British Columbia rink of Dalene Sivertson in the evening, after a 9-5 decision over Camille-Mar Lapierre and her Quebec team the morning.

"There's a lot of teams almost four (losses) which might get in, but we just have to keep going (and strive for the top)," said Homan.

"We can't let up (because) it's not good to go into a losing streak into the semi's."

The Ontario foursome was still in first place after Wednesday night win. Northern Ontario and Saskatchewan were tied for second at 7-2.

If Homan and her Ottawa Curling Club team of Emma Miskew, Laur Crocker, and Lynn Kreviazuk conclude the round robin in first place the rink will advance directly to Sunday's championship. The second- and third-place teams, barring tie breakers, will play in a semifinal on Saturday. If tie breakers are required, they would be played Friday and Saturday.

The Homan squad is representing Ontario for the second straight year at the championships. After losing to Manitoba in the championship final last year, the team's mission is to win it all this season. The defending champions — now skipped by Breanne Meakin as former leader Kaitlyn Lawes aged out of the junior program — were at 4-5 and in extreme danger of missing the playoffs.

Homan admitted it's hard to say what stands in her team's way during the final four games of the round robin. "We haven't played any of (the remaining) teams. Everyone is new. There are still some tough games for sure."

On the junior men's side of the championships, Manitoba was in first place with an 8-1 mark. Saskatchewan was at 7-2, as was Jake Walker and his Ontario team out of Kitchener-Westmount. The Ontario men lost in an extra-end to B.C. Wednesday night to create the second-place tie. Defending champion Prince Edward Island (Brett Gallant) was at 7-3.

Northern Ontario, featuring Ottawa area native Christian Toluoso, handed Manitoba its first loss Wednesday morning, but an afternoon loss to Nova Scotia put the team at 4-5 and virtually out of the playoff picture.