

NOTL's Kaleb Diestch is no treat for IceDogs

Eighteen-year-old Kaleb Dietsch was mostly nervous leading up to playing with the Ottawa 67's against the Niagara IceDogs last Thursday.

"I definitely felt a little nervous in front of everyone, knowing that there's a bunch of people that I know and people who support me that are coming to watch me play," Dietsch told The Lake Report.

Lucky for the Niagara-on-the-Lake-raised hockey player, the game ended with a win for Ottawa with a 2-1 final score.

Thursday marked the second time Dietsch played in St. Catharines with the team this season, it being his home game for family and friends to come show support.

A large group of NOTLers, including his dad, Paul, bought out a section of the Meridian Centre Arena to cheer him on.

Dietsch thanks all of his supporters for coming out to the game.

Looking ahead, Dietsch has big goals.

"My goal is to get drafted to the NHL. The draft comes out soon and I'm just hoping to see my name come up," he said.

The races, the medals and the moment Carter Simpson won't forget

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Carter Simpson returned home to Niagara-on-the-Lake last week from the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Italy, sporting a pair of bronze medals in addition to a fourth-place finish in another race.

The 31-year-old alpine skier arrived in Turin on March 5 with Team Canada, where he was welcomed with cheers and excitement. The opening ceremony on March 8 left a lasting impression on his mother, AnnLiz Simpson.

"It was so beautiful," she said.

"They made it snow inside the arena," said her husband, Mike Sweeney.

Seeing Carter compete at such a high level was a proud moment for the family.

"There's really no words that can sum it up — seeing your kid compete at an international level," AnnLiz said.

Carter's two younger brothers, towering at 6'3" and 6'4", celebrated by lifting him up after his races.

When AnnLiz told Carter the news that he would be competing at the World Games in alpine skiing in Sestriere, he was jumping up and down and screaming out of excitement, she said.

Carter said finding out was extremely exciting and rewarding, as was the experience in Italy, where, alongside competing, he got to make some friends.



Carter Simpson proudly displays a Canadian flag signed by his Good Life spin class. The 31-year-old alpine skier earned two bronze medals in the Special Olympics. PAIGE SEBURN

His favourite part of all was the excitement of racing down the slopes, said Carter.

After receiving his first medal, Carter ran over to his family and yelled, "I did it," after stepping off the podium, AnnLiz said.

"We were all emotional; everyone was crying," she said. "It really hit him there: 'Here I am competing on a world stage.'"

The slopes presented some challenging conditions while there, though, with heavy snow and poor visibility, AnnLiz said.

On the final day of races, the intermediate slalom final was nearly canceled due to weather, which AnnLiz said would have been extremely disappointing.

But organizers decided on one run instead of the usual two, a decision that Carter handled with his usual calmness, she said.

"Was it scary?" asked AnnLiz.

"No," said Carter.

The community's support has been incredible, AnnLiz said.

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said council invited Carter to the next Town meeting and he looks forward to presenting congratulations to him.

"We are very proud and extremely excited for him," he said.

Coun. Andrew Niven, director of marketing and hospitality at Konzelmann Estate Winery, said the winery plans to celebrate Carter with a community reception.

It will be a chance for people to congratulate Carter and for him to sign autographs. There's no cost to attend and visitors can enjoy a small wine sample, said Niven. The celebration is April 10 from 4 to 7 p.m.

Carter's win was a proud moment for Canada, he said, especially since the country is more united than ever.

"It's an interesting time, when we're so proud of Canada," he said. "It just made the moment even more magical."

Carter's journey has inspired many, including Niven, who met him through Niagara-on-the-Lake Ambassadors' kick-off-to-the-season celebrations at Konzelmann.

"I'm blown away by it. But I feel he deserves it. He's worked very hard," she said about the town's support, adding that Carter's accomplishments were also acknowledged on the digital sign at the community center.

Carter has inspired himself, too.

He has been wearing his two bronze medals so proudly that AnnLiz thinks he has gone to sleep with them on.

"Because I could hear the clang," she said.

Carter, who moved to town with his family three years ago from Sault Ste. Marie, began skiing at age five, but the 2025 games marked his first international competition.

Previously, he competed in the 2024 Special Olympics Canada Calgary Games and two provincial games, said AnnLiz.

Carter's spin class at Good Life Fitness has rallied behind him, with instructors using the mountain design on the wall to motivate athletes ever since he made Team Canada, AnnLiz said.

She said the instructors would say, "Carter, take us to the top of it! Who's gonna be first? Carter, who are you gonna beat?"

"They've been absolutely incredible," AnnLiz said.

Carter's hero, Canadian skier Jack Crawford, sent Carter a message before the race wishing he could be there to watch.

Carter, who wants to ski with him one day, has a connection through his younger brother Chandler, who has skied with Crawford on Team Ontario.

Support on social media also meant a lot and kept the crew motivated while in Italy, said AnnLiz.

As for Carter, no difficult conditions on the slopes can hold him back, as he's already focused on the 2029 World Games in Switzerland.

Next year, Carter will compete in a divisional competition, followed by Provincials in 2027. If he earns a spot on Team Canada, he will compete in Nationals in 2028 and, if successful, head to Switzerland in 2029 for Worlds, AnnLiz said. But he said he's confident.

"I'm good," said Carter.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com.