



University of
Lethbridge

NEWS RELEASE

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Bosch, Crozon realize Paris dreams, while track coach Steinke readies for sixth Olympic appearance

Multiple athletes and coaches with University of Lethbridge Pronghorns ties will represent Canada in Paris beginning July 24

Could it really happen any other way? Kacie Bosch (BA '20) and Paige Crozon punched their ticket to the Paris Olympics in the most dramatic of ways, winning the bronze medal match in the final 3x3 women's basketball Olympic qualifying tournament. After years of crossing the globe, jumping through qualifying hoops and racking up win after win as the world's top-rated 3x3 team, they are Paris bound.



“It doesn't really feel real yet,” says Crozon, who along with Bosch is an assistant coach for the Pronghorns women's basketball team. “We've been preparing the last five years for this, just hoping and wishing we'd get this opportunity. I'm so proud of our team and the resilience we showed to even get to this point, and we are honoured to play amongst these women in Paris.”

The duo, who will compete alongside Olympic veterans Michelle and Katherine Plouffe, earned their spot in Paris the hard way. They fell one win short at an Olympic qualifying event in Japan, then needed a top-three finish in Hungary to secure their Olympic berth, only to lose a semifinal game to Spain on a fluke shot in the last second. It set up a winner-take-all match against the home Hungary side, and while they easily dispatched the hosts, the adversity they faced is seen as welcome experience.

“That loss to Australia in Japan was devastating for our group and we were really disheartened. We wanted to come home, come back to our families and have more

time to train for Paris and instead we had four days at home and it was back on the road for another qualifier,” says Crozon.

Bosch says the experience of the Plouffe twins guided their emotions through the nerve-wracking final qualifying tournament. They also refocused their sights on what truly guides their success — having fun.

“The pressure was on, and we started to focus on the outside noise, like who was refereeing and what might happen if we lost and that’s not good for us,” says Bosch. “That’s not how we play our best ball. When we have joy, when we’re laughing and joking before we run on the court, that’s what makes us play well.”

With their spot now secure, the focus is on gearing up for Paris. The Olympics begin July 24, with the 3x3 basketball tourney running July 30 through Aug. 5. While Bosch rehabilitates a litany of knee injuries, Crozon is playing with Canada on the FIBA professional circuit. The group will reconvene in Toronto for a short training camp and head to Paris a week before their Olympic opener.

“I’m a very emotional person, so I’m already picturing us wearing our Canada jerseys and competing for our country,” says Bosch. “It’s such a huge tournament and to have friends and family there who have been supporting me since the start of my career is going to be amazing. It’s a full-circle moment — everybody has worked so hard to get to this point, and I’m so thankful for all the people behind the scenes who have supported and pushed and been practice players for us and sacrificed their time. Putting that jersey on is just an amalgamation of everybody’s efforts.”

Crozon eyes the opportunity with gratitude and joy.

“To share this with all the individuals who have helped us get to this point is something I’m really looking forward to,” she says. “It will be a big stage, but it doesn’t change why I play basketball because I just love to play. I feel free and so much joy playing basketball, so I don’t think the stage matters, I’m just excited to have another opportunity to play the game I love with everybody I care about.”

As far as who they will meet in Paris, there are no surprises. All the world’s best teams will be there, and they have faced each other many times on the professional circuit. They fear nobody.

“We’ve faced every team multiple times in games that have come down to the last few seconds, overtime games, we’ve gone through the gauntlet,” says Bosch. “All the things we’ve had to overcome, that’s our advantage going into Paris.”

Pronghorns in Paris

Pronghorns track coach Larry Steinke (BA '94) has been running the most prominent throws program in U SPORTS for years and has been consistently involved with Canada's elite athletes at the international level. He is excited to make his sixth Olympic appearance and says this may prove to be the most memorable yet.

"It's always an honour to represent Canada at the international level. This one will be unique, as each one is, but we go in with the best Team Canada we have ever had in track and field, including six world champions. Without a doubt it will be a special Olympics in that regard," says Steinke, who will serve as Team Coach.

As well, former Pronghorns swimmer Apollo Hess and cyclist Sarah Orban (BA '18) will compete for Canada in Paris.

Hess swam for the Horns for two seasons, winning gold in the 200-metre and 50-metre breaststroke at the 2022 U SPORTS Championships where he was named U SPORTS Rookie of the Year. After another outstanding 2023 season, he moved to Toronto to join the High Performance Centre. Hess is a member of the Kainai Nation, and the first Blood Tribe member and swimmer of Indigenous descent to participate in the Olympics.

Orban played Horns women's soccer and ran track while at ULeithbridge. In 2017, she participated in the RBC Training Ground program and won the Alberta Regional Final, sparking interest from the national skeleton and cycling teams. She chose to focus on cycling and was named to the national team 18 months later. She won team sprint gold at the 2022 Commonwealth Games and bronze at the 2023 Pan American Games. Orban graduated with a double major in kinesiology and psychology.

Lethbridge Sport Council will be holding a community sendoff for all the local athletes heading to Paris on Monday, July 8, 11 a.m. at the Legacy Park Basketball Courts (400 Blackwolf Blvd N).

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/olympic-dreams-realized-bosch-and-crozon>

PHOTO: Kacie Bosch, left, and Paige Crozon, middle, celebrate with teammates Michelle and Katherine Plouffe after they clinched their spot in the Paris Olympics.

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Contact:

Trevor Kenney, Manager of Public Affairs
403-329-2710
403-360-7639 (cell)
trevor.kenney@uleth.ca

@Ulethbridge

Our University's Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.