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Double bronze for Special Olympian

Christopher Taptoona nabs two swimming medals at summer games

by James McCarthy
Northern News Services

Christopher Taptoona's hard work seems to have paid off.

The 19-year-old swimmer was the king of the pool for Team NWT at the 2010 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games in London, Ont. Taptoona captured bronze medals in the 50-metre backstroke and the 100-metre freestyle and followed in the footsteps of other great NWT Special Olympians such as Terry Kuliktana, who captured a silver medal at the Special Olympics World Games in Shanghai, China, in 2002.

Ian Legaree, who worked with Taptoona during his time as head coach of the Yk Polar Bear Swim Club, said he was pleased to hear that his former pupil has done so well.

"He's just a great guy with a lot of positive energy," he said.

"He's put a lot of his energy into swimming and he goes a

smile a mile with it. There's only two speeds with him: on and off, and on is all the way to the finish." Legaree admitted he was a little surprised to hear about Taptoona's success in the backstroke event as it was a discipline he struggled with for a while.

"He had a tendency to get disqualified a lot because he would turn onto his front when he made the turn and with backstroke, you have to turn while on your back," he said.

"It appears Tracey (Robertson, Taptoona's coach) has been working with him to correct that and it looks like it stuck. He's a hard worker and it's just great to see him get those results."

There was also a team of bowlers at the games from Yellowknife. Phoebe Betsedea, Jean-Marc Dupras, Pierre Lafond, Clara Tutcho and Johnny Aitaok competed against their counterparts from around the country and

while they weren't as lucky as Taptoona, head coach Dom Perrino said they did their absolute best.

"A couple of the players shone, but most of them bowled around their average," he said.

Betsedea's tournament ended earlier than expected after she broke her wrist during a game. Perrino said she got a little too excited after throwing a strike.

"She was celebrating and her left wrist hit the ball return mechanism," he said.

"She's on the mend, but it did affect our score." The team ended up down one point every time Betsedea's match was supposed to be played, Perrino added. Overall, the coach said he was proud with the team as a whole.

"We have a motto in Special Olympics: 'Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt,'" Perrino said.

"We were certainly brave out there and we're disappointed with no medals, but we all had a lot of fun."



photo courtesy of Jane Anychuk

Christopher Taptoona shows off one of his two bronze medals won in the swimming pool at the 2010 Special Olympics Canada Summer Games in London, Ont., which wrapped up on July 17.

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