

## May hopes to lead Mustangs to v-ball title

By Todd Devlin, Special to The Londoner

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It's been over 30 years since the Western Mustangs have been crowned Ontario University Athletics (OUA) champions in men's volleyball. But incoming freshman Garrett May has his sights set even higher.

"I want to eventually win a CIS championship," said the 18-year-old, who was recruited heavily by several Canadian universities.

And why not? The Toronto native knows a thing or two about winning. Not only is the youngster coming off back-to-back OFSAA championship seasons with his high school team, the Birchmount Park Panthers, but last month he also earned the remarkable title of world champion for his play on the beach.

At the 2010 World Junior (Under-21) Beach Volleyball Championships in Turkey, May teamed up with fellow Toronto native Sam Schachter, 20, to win a gold medal over the No. 2-seeded Brazilian team of Ivaro Filho and Vitor Felipe.

"It was pretty unbelievable," May said. "It was our goal [to finish first] going into the tournament, but it was so surreal when we did win it."

May and Schachter, who entered the 78-team tournament as the No. 18-seed, went a perfect 7-0, losing just three sets the entire event. One of those came in the opening set of the final. But following that, the duo won two straight against the Brazilians, 21-16 and 15-13, to become the first-ever Canadian team to win gold at a world beach volleyball championship at any level.

"We were awestruck," said Jim Sage, Western's men's volleyball head coach. "When we found out he won it, the guys on the team were like, 'that is incredible.'"

Of course, while May was tearing it up on the beach, the 18-year-old's new teammates were already practicing on campus at Western in preparation for their 2010-11 season. May has since joined them and has been making the transition back to the indoor game after a summer on the sand.

He got his feet wet last weekend, as Western saw its first action of the season at an exhibition tournament at Ryerson University. Prior to Western's first match, a straight sets 3-0 win over the hosts, May was recognized for his accomplishments on the international stage, as he was presented with a custom-designed Overkill championship shirt by Ryerson head coach Mirek Porosa and May's beach volleyball coach, Mark Heese, the three-time Olympian and most decorated Canadian beach volleyball player of all time.

"It was very nice, and I was very flattered," May said. "They all congratulated me. Now I'm trying to find a balance of enjoying that win and still staying focused on the indoor season."

That shouldn't be a problem for the newly-crowned world champion, at least according to Sage, who considers May Western's top recruit during his 13 years as Mustangs head coach.

"He's very competitive, but he's a very humble individual," Sage said. "[During recruiting], the thing that I was most impressed with was what he was like as a person. He really listens, and he's such a team player."

An Ontario scholar, one of the main reasons May chose Western was strictly academic -- he received early acceptance into the well-respected Ivey business program. But he also felt the Mustangs would be very competitive on the volleyball court following a season in which they finished third in the OUA standings and lost a semi-final matchup to the eventual-champion Queen's Gaels. On top of that, there was a connection between Sage and May's dad, John, who competed against each other during their own playing careers on the beach.

While the longtime Mustangs coach thinks it will take a bit of time for May to get acquainted with the speed of the university game and, as a result, he may not start right away, Sage also believes the left-side hitter is primed for a great career at Western.

"His potential, as far as his all-around skills, are really limitless," he said. "He really doesn't have a weak skill. He can serve, he can pass, he can hit, he can block. And he has that winning attitude."

CIS championship dreams aside, at least for now, May is focused solely on the upcoming OUA season and how he can help his new team accomplish something they haven't in over 30 years: win a league championship.

"We'd like to get a lot of wins during the [regular] season, and try to host the OUA's so we can play on home court," May said. "That would mean finishing first in the standings, and I think there's definitely an expectation that we can do that. "We know we're good enough, so that's the goal."