

HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES OF THE YEAR. TORONTO REGION

# Matt Marcoccia: A Trojan horse



ADRIEN VECCAN/TORONTO STAR STAFF

A handful of the Toronto Star's athletes of the year from the Toronto region, from top left clockwise: Stevan Manojlovic, Tessa Jourdain, Matt Marcoccia, Reece Hall, Cathryn Rogers and Elisabeth Stathopoulos, all pose for the photo at the HTO park in downtown Toronto.

Workout for two-sport athlete involves pushing around a 15-seat bus; Star honours T.O.'s best

**DAVID GROSSMAN**  
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There's no single secret to Matt Marcoccia's athletic success, but he has found that it helps to take a bus to practice — literally.

Marcoccia, a 6-foot-2, 280-pound graduate of Toronto's Michael Power/St. Joseph High School was often seen pushing a 15-seat bus around the school track this past year, all in the name of "staying in shape."

The power pushing paid off at the provincial high school track and field championships, where Marcoccia won a gold medal in discus and set a personal best of 54.35 metres.

The 19-year-old's performance gives him a shot at a spot on Canada's national junior team that competes at the world championships in Trinidad later this summer. Scholarship interest is also heating up between three U.S. universities trying to lure him to Louisiana State, Troy (in Alabama) or South Carolina.

And now the latest accolade: top male athlete at Power, a school with about 2,000 athletes.

"My club coach says I am a teddy bear and don't show much emotion," said Marcoccia, who also was a lineman on the Trojans' senior football team. "Yet, in competition, I'm more of a monster."

Other than his mid-60 grades, Marcoccia has had an amazing final school year.

"I'll never forget fouling my first two throws at the Ontario school finals, then facing elimination if I didn't make my next attempt, feeling the pressure and very nervous. Then, I got it going and went on to win the gold medal upsetting the former champ."

The efforts of Marcoccia did not go unnoticed as schools across the Greater Toronto Area reviewed potential candidates, then polled their respective coaches and eventually chose their athletes of the year.

In this first part of a three-part series, the *Star* is acknowledging 233 individuals as the top athletes in the Toronto public and Catholic school boards, for their leadership skills and contribution to sport. Across the GTA and eight leagues, 648 student athletes — including 32 repeat winners — were singled out for the prestigious award.

Elisabeth Stathopoulos, a four-sport star at Sir John A. Macdonald, won her school's female athlete of the year and scored a hat trick in almost every hockey game this year. As a goalkeeper, she helped her soccer team win a regional gold medal, was MVP in lacrosse and top scorer in field hockey. She's off to the University of Connecticut on a hockey scholarship.

Martingrove's 6-foot-5 Stevan Manojlovic was a huge factor in the Bears winning a citywide basketball title and later a fourth place provincial medal. Returning for his graduating year, he already has a list of Canadian and U.S. colleges and universities interested in him.

Tessa Jourdain was a former rookie of the year at HumberSide, MVP in three sports, junior athlete of the year and capped her high school sports career with the prestigious top senior award to go along with a fourth consecutive stint on the academic honour roll.

The year-end spotlight also focused on Reece Hall, who helped launch a football team at Sir Sandford Fleming, was school MVP in cricket, recipient of the most improved award on the basketball squad and, after the getting the nod as the top male athlete, now is hooked on rowing.

Silverthorn's Cathryn Rogers was one of the more dominant soccer players in Toronto this year — and her excellence was spotted by Ohio University, who quickly offered her an athletic scholarship.