

Rosie MacLennan overcomes to repeat as Olympic trampoline champion

ca.sports.yahoo.com/blogs/eh-game/rosie-maclennan-overcomes-to-repeat-as-olympic-trampoline-champion-211732930.html

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8/12/2016



RIO DE JANEIRO – History was stacked against Rosie MacLennan.

No Canadian summer athlete had ever defended his or her gold medal at the Olympics. No trampoline gymnast had ever defended gold, either. Throw in the so-called, likely dubious curse of the flag-bearer – MacLennan led Canada's Olympians into last week's Opening Ceremony as the country's lone gold-medallist from London 2012 – and the odds of another triumph in Rio seemed long.

And then the most difficult obstacle, her recovery from the concussion she suffered that threatened to derail this very day from being possible. The headaches were debilitating, and intensified when MacLennan pushed herself too hard, too fast physically. Her eyes would shake, and she had trouble focusing on the trampoline. It wasn't until mid-March that she felt normal again.

Normal wouldn't be enough to return to the podium, though. Not with this competitive field eager to take top spot for themselves. But with a clear heart and mind MacLennan was extraordinary Friday afternoon in Rio's Olympic Park, jumping, flipping, and twisting her way to gold with a final-round score of 56.465.

The same result as London. The same cheery, patriotic singing of 'O Canada' during the medal ceremony [to please mom](#). But there was one key difference from four years ago. An older, wiser, more pragmatic MacLennan opted, under the guidance of her coach Dave Ross, to play it safe with her final routine compared to her bold performance in London while maintaining the same fearlessness and attention to detail that won her the gold.

"I held back, I did my easy routine. I was a lot more confident in it. The other one was a little bit shaky and I knew it would have been a bit of a gamble and the Olympics isn't a time to gamble," said MacLennan. "The last Games I knew going into the final I had absolutely nothing to lose and I knew what mentality I wanted to be in, the mental and

physical state, so I really tried to get back there.”

Mission accomplished. MacLennan’s combination of difficulty, execution, and flight time put her ahead of Great Britain’s Bryony Page, who took silver, and bronze-medallist Li Dan of China.

MacLennan’s gold continues the dominance of Canadian women at these Games – women account for all nine of Canada’s medals. It also was special as she carries the legacy of friend and teammate Karen Cockburn, who paved the way for MacLennan with silver medals in Beijing and Athens and a bronze in Sydney. Between MacLennan and Cockburn Canada has had a medallist in women’s trampoline at every Olympics since the sport was introduced in 2000.

“She’s the one who changed my childhood dream into an actual goal. She’s guided my athletic career,” said MacLennan of Cockburn. “Even before this competition she was in the gym with me, helping coach me and made a change to my routine that made a really great difference.

“I think we have an incredible group of women down here and I hope it inspires a new generation of female athletes and encourages women to stay in sport.”

Cockburn was quick to congratulate her former teammate.

Role models like MacLennan will ensure that’s the case. She’s bright, supportive, and audacious, even if she chose to be careful with a medal on the line. Say, Rosie, what might you have had in store if the situation had called for you to open your bag of tricks?

“What I would have loved to do is the three-triples at the beginning, which no girl has competed at the Olympics before. A few girls have competed it at World Cups and I tried it a few months ago but it didn’t score as well and it made the rest of the routine a little bit harder,” said MacLennan. “It’s something that I’m really excited to get back and train and hopefully compete next year.”

Two gold medals. Unprecedented success for both her country and in her sport. And still chasing greater heights.

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