

Simon Whitfield and Lauren Campbell Headline Triathlon Canada Annual Award Winners

TORONTO—Olympians Simon Whitfield and Lauren Campbell were named 2009 Male and Female Athletes-of-the-Year as Triathlon Canada doled out its annual awards on Friday.

The 35-year-old Whitfield, who has been a model of consistency since winning the first Olympic gold medal in triathlon at the 2000 Summer Games, won the highest-profiled race of the year when he captured the prestigious ITU Hy-Vee Elite Cup in Des Moines, Iowa after putting down another one of his trademark sprints to the finish. The two-time Olympic medallist also captured his seventh National Championship title in 2009 and finished eighth in the World Championships Grand Final.

Equally remarkable to Whitfield's season was the breakthrough campaign enjoyed by Vancouver's Lauren Campbell. The 28-year-old captured her first major podium finish of her six-year career after finishing third at the ITU Hy-Vee Elite Cup in Des Moines, Iowa. The bronze-medal finish highlighted a season where the 2008 Olympian threatened for the podium each time she hit the start line. Campbell finished fourth in a World Championship Series race in Hamburg, Germany and fifth in her season-opening World Cup race in Ishigaki, Japan. Campbell also won her second Canadian title.

"Simon is a model of excellence who continues to lead our young program and encourage our athletes, like Lauren, to believe they too can achieve podium results," said Alan Trivett, executive director, Triathlon Canada. "Both athletes had exceptional seasons which are more than worthy of this recognition."

Four rising stars proved the future is bright for Canadian triathletes. Edmonton's Paula Findlay was named top Under-23 female after finishing third in that category at the 2009 World Championships. Victoria's Andrew McCartney, who won the swimming leg at the Des Moines World Cup, and finished 15th at the World Championships was awarded top Under-23 male. Victoria's Alison Hooper had a stellar rookie season where she won nearly everything on the table in Canada's junior triathlon circles. Shortly after capturing the Junior Canadian Championships in Quebec, Hooper made history becoming the first-ever women's triathlon gold medallist at the Canada Summer Games. Joining Hooper as junior Athletes-of-the-Year was Connor Hammond, of London, Ont. A two-time Junior National Champion, Hammond finished second at a PATCO event, won a Teck National Junior Series race and finished second at the Canada Summer Games.

"Triathlon Canada has taken great efforts towards growing our sport across the country through programs like Kids of Steel, and these four youngsters are proof we are developing talented athletes who can contend with the world's best in their age groups," said Trivett. "It is the dedicated work of coaches, support teams, and volunteers who are playing a critical role in developing winners and ensuring a bright future for Canada triathlon."

Athletes and coaches will be formally recognized at the National Championships in Kelowna, B.C. this coming August. The following is a list of award winners:

Olympic Distance

Age Group 18-39 Female – Suzanne Chandler (North Vancouver, B.C.)

Age Group 40-59 Female – Stephanie Kieffer (Vancouver)

Long Distance Triathlon

Elite Male – Jasper Blake (Victoria)

Age Group 40-59 Female – Carolyn Hubbard-Brown (North Vancouver, B.C.)

Off-Road Triathlon

Elite Male – Kelly Guest (Victoria)

Grandmaster 60+

Male – Greg Sandkuhl (Whistler, B.C.)

Female – Cullen Goodyear (North Vancouver, B.C.)

Para-triathlon

Male – Brian Cowie (Burnaby, B.C.)

Elite Coach-of-the-Year – Patrick Kelly (Victoria)

Age Group Coach-of-the-Year – Alan Carlsson (Vancouver)