

Written by John Crumlish

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Diligently rehabbing from an ankle injury she suffered at the World Championships in Stuttgart last fall, two-time Canadian Olympian **Ellie Black** updated International Gymnast Online this week on the status of her recovery, her training progress and her hopes to lead Canada at this summer's Olympic Games in Tokyo.

The 24-year-old Black, who has won six Canadian national all-around titles and two Pan American Games all-around titles, sprained her right ankle on landing her vault, her last event in the all-around final in Stuttgart. She nonetheless finished fourth, which marked her second-best all-around ranking in the six Worlds in which she has competed and her best all-around finish since she won silver at the 2017 Worlds in Montreal.

At full capacity, Black looks to lead the Canadian team in Tokyo, where she could well improve upon her achievements at the past two Games. She placed eighth on vault at the 2012 London Games and fifth all-around finish at the 2016 Rio Games. The gallant Black shares her thoughts in this IG Online chat.

**IG:** Your vault landing aside in Stuttgart, you made an impressive improvement from the 2018 Worlds in Doha (12th place) and came close to your performance in Montreal in 2017. What about your Stuttgart performance gave you the most satisfaction?

**EB:** For me I was satisfied with hitting all four events, and doing good routines on each. I scored one of my highest beam scores in a while in the all-around competition and improved my floor and vault scores. Placing fourth in the all-around, with so much depth and these high-calibre athletes, was very satisfying, and I am very proud of my whole performance. It's great to show that Canada can be near the top.

**IG:** What was the official diagnosis of your ankle injury, and what is the expected recovery time until you have 100% strength on it again?

**EB:** I had a high ankle sprain and a tightrope surgery repair. The expected recovery time until I am back to full strength on it is around four to five months. Things are coming along well and I am happy with the recovery progress thus far.

**IG:** Given the time needed to rest and rehab your ankle, how are you adjusting your training program - for example, perhaps spending more time on non-leg events and upper-body conditioning?

**EB:** After surgery we took some time to rest my ankle and the rest of my body, mentally and physically. Since then we slowly started to work on ankle rehab, strength, stability and proprioception. While in the early stages of rehab I continued to work on conditioning the rest of my body, and maintaining some basic bars. Once I was able to start walking, doing low-impact jumping and landing, I was able to start training a higher load on bars and continue building the strength back in my leg and the rest of my body. Now I am able to continue more normal bars workouts and start some basics on all of the events, progressing every week as long as the ankle handles the new things we try. We are still managing the load and how many repetitions we put through the ankle to give it the best healing and recovery increase.

**IG:** With several teams now bunched together in a fight for a podium finish, what do you think Canada will need to consolidate between now and Tokyo, to challenge for a team medal there?

**EB:** We are very excited to have qualified a team for Tokyo. It is going to be a great year and journey to build towards the Olympics in the summer. I think our team needs to continue to increase difficulty, execution and consistency on all our apparatus. We have been working hard to come together and push one another to be better. We are working on the confidence and unity of our team. Belief and confidence will be key as well. All of these things will play a part in being the best team we can be for Tokyo.

Ellie Black is featured in the following issues of International Gymnast magazine:

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Black on cover photo collage, 2019 Worlds preview (October 2019)

Black center poster (September 2019)

2017 World Championships special issue (November 2017)

Black on cover photo collage, 2017 Worlds preview (September 2017)

"Canadian Candor" - Black interview (July/August 2017)

"Canadian Beacon" - Black interview (September 2015)

"Canadian Promise" - Black chat (July/August 2014)

"Canadian Diversity" - Black profile (July/August 2013)

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