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## 25<sup>th</sup> BLG Awards U SPORTS Athlete of the Year nominees announced

*General public invited to vote online for third straight year*

April 20, 2017

TORONTO (U SPORTS) – U SPORTS and national law firm Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG) announced Thursday the eight finalists for the milestone 25<sup>th</sup> annual BLG Awards.

**Photos of nominees:** [http://en.usports.ca/blg\\_awards/2016-17/photos/index](http://en.usports.ca/blg_awards/2016-17/photos/index)

**Media Box:** [BLG Awards Dropbox](#)

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The BLG Awards were established in 1993 to recognize the top female and male athletes from universities affiliated with U SPORTS.

On Monday, May 1, the eight national nominees will be honoured at the Martha Cohen Theatre in Calgary. The female and male winners will receive a \$10,000 post-graduate scholarship, while all finalists will return home with a commemorative gold ring from Jostens.

This year's event will mark the 22<sup>nd</sup> presentation of the awards gala in Calgary. Over the years, the event has also held been held in Toronto (2009, 2013) and Vancouver (2011). The 2017 ceremony will air nationally later in May on Sportsnet.

Although the 2017 recipients will be determined by the Canadian Athletic Foundation, a not-for-profit board which has selected the winners for the past 24 years, the general public is once again invited to vote online for the third straight season on [usports.ca](http://usports.ca).

“We are extremely honoured to be hosting the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BLG Awards in Calgary,” said **Doug Mitchell**, National Co-Chair of BLG. “This year's gala will mark a historic milestone in the celebration of the very best of these outstanding athletes, and we continue to be amazed by their talents and accomplishments. Each year, as we follow the past winners and hear about their accomplishments or what they are involved in, we realize how important their university sports



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background has been to them. We congratulate the universities who have provided the great education and athletic programs for these students to succeed in their careers.”

“Celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BLG Awards is a special way to conclude the U SPORTS season,” said **Graham Brown**, chief executive officer of U SPORTS. “The BLG Awards represent the highest honour for our student-athlete nominees, who are not only exceptional on the field of play, but also leaders in the classroom and in the community. They are tremendous ambassadors for the entire U SPORTS membership.”

The 2017 nominees for the Jim Thompson Trophy presented to the female BLG Award recipient are StFX X-Women hockey player **Sarah Bujold**, Laval Rouge et Or soccer player **Arielle Roy-Petitclerc**, Queen’s Gaels cross country runner **Claire Sumner** and UBC Thunderbirds volleyball player **Danielle Brisebois**.

On the men’s side, the finalists for the Doug Mitchell Trophy are UNB Varsity Reds hockey player **Philippe Maillet**, Laval Rouge et Or football player **Mathieu Betts**, York Lions men’s soccer athlete **Jonathan Lao** and Trinity Western Spartans volleyball player **Ryan Sclater**.

#### **2017 Female BLG Award Nominees (Jim Thompson Trophy):**

AUS: **Sarah Bujold**, hockey, StFX (Riverview, N.B.)  
RSEQ: **Arielle Roy-Petitclerc**, soccer, Laval (St. Nicolas, Que.)  
OUA: **Claire Sumner**, cross country, Queen’s (Calgary, Alta.)  
CWUAA: **Danielle Brisebois**, volleyball, UBC (Caledon, Ont.)

#### **2017 Male BLG Award Nominees (Doug Mitchell Trophy):**

AUS: **Philippe Maillet**, hockey, UNB (Terrebonne, Que.)  
RSEQ: **Mathieu Betts**, football, Laval (Montreal, Que.)  
OUA: **Jonathan Lao**, soccer, York (Unionville, Ont.)  
CWUAA: **Ryan Sclater**, volleyball, Trinity Western (Port Coquitlam, B.C.)

#### **[All-Time BLG Award Nominees and Winners](#)**





Following are profiles on each of the eight finalists.

### **2016-2017 FEMALE BLG AWARD NOMINEES (Jim Thompson Trophy)**

#### **Atlantic University Sport (AUS)**

##### **Sarah Bujold**

St. Francis Xavier University

Sport: Hockey

Year of eligibility: 3

Academic program: Human Kinetics

Hometown: Riverview, N.B.

**Sarah Bujold** is the first female hockey player from St. Francis Xavier University to be nominated for the BLG Award. Hard to believe for a perennial powerhouse that has captured half of the AUS conference banners since the sport made its U SPORTS debut back in 1997-98. This year, however, the selection committee would have been hard pressed to look past the performances of the latest X-Women star.

Bujold was simply dominant in her third university campaign. Over 24 regular season games, the 21-year-old forward led the country in points (43), goals (24) and game-winning markers (6), while also finishing second in the nation in +/- rating (+29). The human kinetics student became only the second AUS standout to be named U SPORTS Player of the Year, following in the footsteps of former X-Women great Brayden Ferguson (2008).

In the conference playoffs, StFX suffered a heartbreaking triple-overtime loss to top-seeded Saint Mary's in the decisive game of the AUS championship series but the result still earned the X-Women a return trip to the national tournament, after a one-year hiatus.

Growing up in Riverview, N.B. - a town adjacent to Moncton - Bujold was quickly initiated to sports by her father, a major source of inspiration she looks up to "because he taught me about hard work and never quitting until you achieve what you desire." A fraternal twin, she is the second oldest of seven children - two boys and five girls - all of whom played competitive soccer and hockey.

During her first year at StFX, Sarah was a dual-sport athlete but she turned her attention to the ice after suffering an injury on the soccer field early in the season. One of the main beneficiaries of that decision was X-Women head hockey coach **David Synishin**.





“From the first time I watched Sarah on the ice during our recruiting process, I knew she had some intangibles other players did not possess. Her willingness to compete every shift far surpassed any other players we were recruiting,” Synishin says. “Sarah has had a phenomenal season and has developed immensely as a player and person. She is not only one of our top players, she is also one of our hardest workers. She leads by example in her off-ice training as well as her play on the ice.”

“Sport has given me the opportunity to grow as a person on and off the ice,” says Bujold. “Without sport, I would not be here at StFX and I would have not met some of the most impactful people in my life - my teammates and coaches. Sport is who I am, and I will be involved in sport for the remainder of my life, in hopes I can give younger athletes the same opportunities that I have been provided.”

### **Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ)**

#### **Arielle Roy-Petitclerc**

Laval University

Sport: Soccer

Year of eligibility: 4

Academic program: Management

Hometown: St. Nicolas, Que.

The cornerstone of the Laval women’s soccer team, **Arielle Roy-Petitclerc** won the Chantal Navert Memorial Award, presented to the U SPORTS Player of the Year this season. She became the third Rouge et Or representative to get her hands on this prestigious title, after Francine Brousseau (2007) and Marie-Claude Dion (1996).

The midfielder finished tied for first place in the RSEQ with 18 points, including 10 goals in 14 games. In addition, Roy-Petitclerc was named most valuable player of the game on seven occasions, including the provincial semifinal and final. She continued her good work at the nationals, where she led the Université Laval to its second title in three years, while being named to the U SPORTS Championship All-Star Team. Those performances earned her the Rouge et Or Athlete of the Year award.

A member of the first all-RSEQ team in each of her four campaigns in Laval, she also was a Second Team All-Canadian in her first three seasons. Quebec’s rookie of the year in 2013, she greatly contributed to the first Canadian title won by the Rouge et Or the following year in Quebec City.





In the summer of 2015, the St. Nicolas, Que., native was also an important part of the Canadian team at the Universiade in Gwangju, South Korea. A member of the starting lineup, Roy-Petitclerc, helped Canada finish in fourth place, the country's best result at the world university games.

"She's our leader," said Rouge et Or head coach **Helder Duarte** about her protégé. "Playing midfield, her vision and sense of the game are definitely above average. Arielle is the captain of the team and she assumes her leadership role with great professionalism. She's definitely the heart of our team and has had a great influence on the excellent season we've had."

"I did not expect that, it's an incredible honor to be recognized at this level," said **Roy-Petitclerc**. "In four years, I have matured a lot, as a player but also as a person. There is a whole world between the person I was in CEGEP and the one I am today. Being team captain has helped me to be a positive leader and to represent the Rouge et Or, both on the field, during practices and matches, and off the field at charity events or in my classes. Soccer led me to spend four more years in school, which I thought was unimaginable five years ago. I now have a bachelor degree - I am proud of that and I owe a great deal to the sport and to the Université Laval."

## **Ontario University Athletics (OUA)**

### **Claire Sumner**

Queen's University

Sport: Cross Country

Year of eligibility: 4

Academic program: Life sciences

Hometown: Calgary, Alta.

It is often said about elite athletes that talent runs in the family. In **Claire Sumner's** case, it literally does.

The 22-year-old cross country standout from Queen's University credits her mother, Kate, and her aunt, Alison, for starting the running trend. Both represented Canada at the world cross country championships, with Alison winning a silver medal in 1983 in England.

Her father, Glen, was a football player at Queen's and has since made running a part of his life, including multiple marathons. Younger sister Madeleine, a freshman on Princeton University's cross country / track and field team, competed at the 2015 world youth track and field championships, while older sister Sarah was a four-year swimmer at Harvard before graduating in 2015.





Claire kicked off her own varsity career at the University of Toronto in 2013 before transferring to Queen's, where she enjoyed instant success and merited All-Canadian status in both 2014 and 2015. Those performances earned her a spot on the Canadian squad for the 2016 FISU world university championships, last spring in Italy.

Despite her impressive resume, however, the life sciences student, by her own admission, “hadn’t won a race in a long time”. That all changed in the span of a month last fall, when she went a perfect 3-for-3 in her third campaign with the Gaels. After claiming individual gold at the Queen’s Open, she repeated the feat at both the OUA conference meet and the U SPORTS national championships, where she also led the Queen’s women to second place in the team standings, their best result in 13 years.

Success has stuck with Sumner since the end of the university season. She reached the podium (bronze) at the Canadian senior championships in late November, finished fourth at the NACAC championships in early March in Florida, before placing a respectable 52<sup>nd</sup> in a field of 104 runners in her IAAF world championships debut in Uganda, on March 26.

“The biggest thing this sport has taught me is that perseverance and consistent hard work will always pay off,” says Sumner, a Vancouver native who went on to live in Vermont and Ontario, and now calls Calgary home. “I strongly believe the life lessons I have learned from cross country will be extremely valuable in my future endeavours. Academically, after graduating from life sciences, I hope to pursue a career in medicine.”

“The psychological and emotional sources of Claire’s ability to win are not immediately evident upon meeting her,” says Queen’s head coach **Steve Boyd**. “At 5-foot-10, with a long, powerful stride, she is an intimidating physical presence in the lead pack. But, she is capable of having simple fun with the sport in a way that is relatively rare in athletes of her caliber. She does not *need* to win, and can live with less than perfect results; but, when the opportunity to succeed presents itself, she takes it with aplomb!”

## **Canada West Universities Athletic Association (CWUAA)**

### **Danielle Brisebois**

University of British Columbia

Sport: Volleyball

Year of eligibility: 5

Academic program: Arts (Psychology)

Hometown: Caledon, Ont.





The UBC Thunderbirds are making a habit of competing for U SPORTS Female Athlete of the Year honours. Volleyball standout **Danielle Brisebois** is the seventh Jim Thompson Trophy finalist from the Vancouver institution over the past nine seasons, including 2009 winner Annamay Pierse (swimming), 2010 recipient Liz Cordonier (volleyball) and former teammate Shanice Marcelle, who was honoured in 2013 following Brisebois' rookie campaign with the program.

Brisebois, who moved all the way from Caledon, Ont., to join the T-Birds five years ago, completed her stellar university career this season the same way it had started, by helping UBC capture a national title. With one major difference: after playing a supporting role in her freshman year, the 6-foot left-side hitter was now the star of the show.

Playing in front of friends and family in Toronto, the psychology student was named MVP of the U SPORTS Championship at Ryerson University after she averaged tournament highs in kills (5.27) and points (5.8) per set, including a remarkable 20 kills against only four attack errors in a 3-1 gold-medal triumph over top-seeded Alberta, which a week earlier had defeated the T-Birds in the Canada West conference final.

Brisebois' domination in her final weekend wearing the blue and gold uniform came as no surprise to her teammates and coaches. After all, the 22-year-old was fresh off her first selection as a First Team All-Canadian thanks to her 4.7 points and 3.86 kills per set in the regular season, good for sixth and seventh in the country, respectively.

With her varsity career now in the books, Brisebois could be tempted to follow in the footsteps of her sister Taylor, a former McMaster Marauder who now plays semi-professional volleyball in Denmark. Competing at the next level would be nothing new for the soon-to-be UBC graduate, who represented Canada at the 2015 Summer Universiade and at the 2016 FIVB World Grand Prix series, the latter with the senior national team.

"I am so proud of Dani for the growth she has shown over her five-year career," states UBC head coach **Doug Reimer**. "She leaves a legacy as one of the most dynamic offensive players in program history. But just as important to recognize is her discipline and dedication to personal improvement, on and off the court. Our entire team is thrilled for Dani because she is such a humble, soft-spoken individual, proving that you don't need a large ego to be a superstar."

"I am honoured and humbled to even be considered among the best athletes in university sport in Canada," says Brisebois. "The last five years have been the best of my life. From being a rookie and learning from amazing seniors, to growing and having the privilege to be called captain, I





couldn't be more grateful for the opportunity to play with such amazing women and they are truly the ones who got me here today.”

### **2016-2017 MALE BLG AWARD NOMINEES (Doug Mitchell Trophy)**

#### **Atlantic University Sport (AUS)**

##### **Philippe Maillet**

University of New Brunswick

Sport: Hockey

Year of eligibility: 4

Academic Program: Business Administration

Hometown: Terrebonne, Que.

**Philippe Maillet** has become one of the most prolific scorers in AUS and U SPORTS hockey during his four years with the UNB Varsity Reds.

In 101 regular season Atlantic University Sport (AUS) games, the shifty right-winger scored 60 goals and added 106 assists for an incredible 166 points, an average of 1.64 points per game.

Those numbers might be even more impressive if injury hadn't limited Maillet to just 17 regular season games during the 2015-16 season.

Statistically, Maillet's fourth season was his best. He had 23 goals and 32 assists to lead the nation in scoring, en route to being named the U SPORTS Player of the Year and winner of the Senator Joseph A. Sullivan Trophy. He followed that up with four goals and 10 points at the University Cup, taking home Championship MVP honours as UNB won the national title on home ice – the team's second straight and third in the last five years.

Maillet, who is working on a Bachelor of Business Administration degree, also led the nation in regular season power play goals, with 14 and a plus-minus rating of +34.

The Terrebonne, Que., native is also a two-time AUS MVP, a three time AUS First Team All-Star, and a two-time U SPORTS First Team All-Canadian. Maillet has twice been named the University of New Brunswick's top male athlete (2014-15 and 2016-17).





In both 2015 and 2016, Maillet was selected to join a team of U SPORTS All-Stars that took on national junior team hopefuls. Unable to play due to injury, in 2015, he registered a goal and an assist in the 2016 event in December during the annual two-game series.

Prior to joining the Varsity Reds, Maillet spent four seasons with the QMJHL's Victoriaville Tigres, registering 240 points (92 G, 142 A) in 252 regular season games.

Following the conclusion of the University Cup, Maillet signed an amateur tryout agreement with American Hockey League's (AHL) Ontario Reign, the top affiliate of the NHL's Los Angeles Kings.

"Phil has had a breakthrough season for our UNB Hockey program," says Varsity Reds head coach **Gardiner MacDougall**. "It has been said by a noted guru that 'Consistency at a high level is the mother of excellence and that incremental improvement is the father.' This year Phil personified that to the highest level with our team."

"As an athlete and a student, you aim for excellence," says Maillet. "Being named a BLG Award winner, which recognizes all sports, not just hockey, would mean a lot - it would mean I've achieved a level of excellence. I think it would reflect all of the hard work that I put in, each and every day, trying to make myself and my team better."

## **Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ)**

### **Mathieu Betts**

Laval University

Sport: Football

Year of eligibility: 2

Academic program: Physical Education and Health

Hometown: Montreal, Que.

The U SPORTS most outstanding down lineman of the year, **Mathieu Betts** became the first player in history to claim both the Peter Gorman Trophy as U SPORTS Rookie of the Year (2015) and the J.P. Metras Trophy (2016). On the list of Laval standouts to be named most outstanding down lineman, the sophomore from Montreal joins defensive ends Arnaud Gascon-Nadon (2010, 2011) and Étienne Légaré (2008), as well as offensive linemen Dominic Picard (2005) and Carl Gourgues (2001).

After setting a national rookie record with 12 quarterback sacks a year ago, Betts picked up where he left off with nine sacks in eight league games this fall, good for the RSEQ conference lead and second place in the country. Despite being double-teamed throughout the season, the





6-foot-3, 250-pound physical education and health student also ranked first in Quebec in tackles for a loss (10.5) and pass breakups (5.0), and was seventh on his team with 21 total tackles. For good measure, he also scored the first touchdown of his young university career on Sept. 10 against Concordia, returning a blocked field goal attempt 84 yards for the score.

Named to the first All-Canadian team for the second straight year, Betts helped the Rouge et Or defense finish among the national leaders in most team categories once again this season, including second in points allowed (9.8 per game) and total yards (294.0), third against the run (91.8) and fourth against the pass (202.3).

With 21 sacks in 16 contests over his first two campaigns, Betts is only 5.5 shy of the Laval career record and 10.5 off the conference mark set over five seasons by Queen's Jim Aru (1994-1998). The most recent campaign was capped off by the Rouge et Or's Vanier Cup victory, a first for Betts.

"The best compliment Mathieu could receive is to see how other teams tried to adjust to him this season," said Rouge et Or head coach **Glen Constantin**. "We saw all kinds of protections to try to counter him, but in spite of that, he was still a dominant force in our conference. The way Mathieu plays dictates our performance on defence."

"It is a great honour for me," said **Betts**. "It reflects all the work done in the past year. It was a great season, and I'm proud to be an ambassador for the Rouge et Or varsity program and the football club."

Betts had been courted by several American universities before suiting up as No.9 with Laval. Today, he does not regret his decision to turn his back on the NCAA to pursue a career in the Quebec league.

"With the year I just had, I would not change that for anything in the world. It exceeds the expectations I had before coming here," he said. "The environment at the Université Laval helps a lot, be it my coaches Glen Constantin on the defensive line and coordinator Marc Fortier's system who puts me in good situations, fitness trainers like Raymond Veillette and Guillaume Rioux, everything is in place for us to put out great performances."

## **Ontario University Athletics (OUA)**

**Jonathan Lao**  
York University  
Sport: Soccer





Year of eligibility: 4  
Academic Program: Economics  
Hometown: Unionville, Ont.

**Jonathan Lao** kicked off his varsity soccer career with a bang in the fall of 2013 when he was named the U SPORTS Rookie of the Year, OUA West MVP and a First Team All-Canadian, while helping the York Lions claim their first conference banner in six years. To say that success has followed him ever since would be an understatement.

Now a veteran of four campaigns with the Lions, Lao might soon need a bigger trophy case as his award collection has grown to multiple selections as an All-Canadian (4), First Team conference All-Star (4), U SPORTS Championship All-Star (3) and OUA West MVP (2), to go with a trio of OUA titles and a pair of national banners. Last November, the central midfielder from Unionville, Ont., reached the pinnacle of Canadian university men's soccer when he became only the second York standout to merit the Joe Johnson Memorial Trophy as the U SPORTS Player of the Year, following in the footsteps of 2008 recipient and former BLG Award nominee Francesco Bruno.

The economics student's strong play has been key to York's remarkable run of success. In the past four years, the Lions have lost only three times in 64 league games and have gone 19-5 in the playoffs, including an undefeated regular season (14-0-2) last fall followed by an OUA silver medal and a sixth-place finish at the national tournament.

Lao got an early start on the pitch, at 4, and found himself on the provincial team by the time he was 12. He then spent five years with the national team program and represented Canada at the 2009 CONCACAF under-17 championship in Mexico. After graduating high school, he headed for Europe where he spent two years with FC Rot-Weiß Erfurt of the German Liga 3, before returning home to resume his education. He got to wear the Maple Leaf again in 2015 at the Summer Universiade in South Korea.

"I have played soccer my whole life and being involved in the sport has shaped who I am today," says Lao, whose father is Chinese but was born in India, and whose mother is from French Guyana. "I'm fortunate to have been able to continue to play for the Lions while also getting an education at York. The success we've had as a program is a testament to how hard our coaches and my teammates have worked over the years. It's always nice to be selected for an individual award from a team sport and to be a BLG Award nominee is such an honour."

"Jon is a coach's dream," says York head coach **Carmine Isacco**. "He is a complete player. He makes good decisions in the offensive third, does the work defensively as well, and he's also the hardest worker. Every coach wants a guy like Jon Lao on their team as a centre point."





## Canada West Universities Athletic Association (CWUAA)

### Ryan Sclater

Trinity Western University

Sport: Volleyball

Year of eligibility: 5

Academic program: English

Hometown: Port Coquitlam, B.C.

You could call it a Hollywood script. Or a perfect ending. Those who have witnessed **Ryan Sclater**'s exploits on the volleyball court over the past five years simply call it the fitting conclusion to a special university career.

Born and raised in Port Coquitlam, B.C., just a short drive away from Langley, where Trinity Western University is located, Sclater excelled in many sports growing up. In basketball, he captained his high school, Terry Fox Secondary, to the AAA BC championship in 2012, meriting tournament MVP honours in the process. He played Metro soccer until he was 16 and was a three-time school MVP in that sport. For good measure, he also played one year of high school tennis.

“Choosing volleyball over basketball for my university career was not an easy choice,” says Sclater. “But I felt that I would be able to go further with the sport in the long-term and I was excited about the opportunity to play at TWU since they were back-to-back national champions and close to home as well.”

After playing in the shadows of more veteran stars in his first two seasons with the Spartans, the 6-foot-6 outside hitter became a full-time starter in the fall of 2014 and success quickly followed in his third and fourth campaigns, including back-to-back Canada West All-Star nods, a first trip to the national final (2015) and the first conference and U SPORTS titles of his career (2016). And then came a senior season for the ages.

The English student was simply dominant in his farewell tour in 2016-17. Individually, he finished fifth in the country in both kills (4.29) and points (5.0) per set, helping him set single-season and career school records in both statistical categories. To no one's surprise, he became the fourth TWU men's volleyball standout to be named U SPORTS Player of the Year. But more importantly, he helped the Spartans repeat as conference and national champions, a fitting end for a humble athlete who has always put team success ahead of his own.





“Sport has taught me that unrelenting hard work, self-sacrifice and teamwork are massively important, but what is most important in life is not winning or losing or even trying your best in sports, but laying down your life to help others,” says Sclater, whose wife Amy is also passionate about volleyball and coaches a high-performance team. “If I do win the BLG Award, I will be honoured beyond belief but I will not forget that my identity will not change and my purpose in life remains the same: love God and love others.”

“Ryan’s amazing year continues to amaze me,” states Trinity Western head coach **Ben Josephson**. “Ryan truly is one of those special athletes and men that you rarely get to coach and play with. He is a champion on the court, in the classroom, in the locker room and every other room he happens to be in.”

### **About the BLG Awards**

The BLG Awards were established in 1993 to recognize the top female and male athletes from universities affiliated with U SPORTS. The Awards are based on athletic accomplishments, outstanding sportsmanship and leadership. Each of the 56 U SPORTS schools nominates one female and one male athlete of the year. From these nominees, one female and one male athlete are chosen within each of the four conferences: Atlantic University Sport (AUS), Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ), Ontario University Athletics (OUA) and Canada West Universities Athletic Association (CWUAA). To be eligible, a student-athlete must have competed in a U SPORTS-sanctioned sport for a minimum of two years and cannot be a previous recipient of a BLG Award.

All nominees receive a commemorative gold ring and winners are presented with a trophy and a \$10,000 scholarship to attend a Canadian university graduate school. Winners are selected by the Canadian Athletic Foundation (CAF), a not-for-profit board established for the purpose of administering the BLG Awards and protecting the integrity of the selection process. The CAF Board of Trustees consists of 19 members from five Canadian cities representing major corporations from across the country who are committed to ensuring that Canadian university athletes receive the recognition they deserve.

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