



## Olympic curling medallist Cheryl Bernard to run marathon for World Vision



Canada skip Cheryl Bernard calls after a shot at the Olympic Centre on Feb. 25, 2010 in Vancouver. When Bernard won curling silver for Canada at the... [more](#)



BY LORI EWING, THE CANADIAN PRESS,  
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When Cheryl Bernard won curling silver for Canada at the Vancouver Olympics, she and her teammates vowed they would do more with their medals than just "hang them in a case on the wall."

She stayed true to her word.

That's why less than a month after her heartbreaking upset at the curling pre-qualifying event that ended her dreams of a second Olympic appearance, she's already turned her thoughts to helping others.

The 47-year-old Bernard is training for the Calgary Marathon on June 1, where she'll lead a team of runners raising money and awareness for World Vision.

"People ask me all the time, 'What has been the greatest thing about the Olympics in Canada, and the medal?' and I think it's that it's given us an opportunity to do something," Bernard said in a phone interview from Calgary. "Most people in the world, I think, want to help and make a difference, and the medal and the Olympics has just given us those opportunities. So we've chosen carefully who and what we've aligned ourselves with, and this is one of the groups I wanted to do some more work with."

Bernard became an ambassador for World Vision — a Christian relief and advocacy

organization that helps impoverished children — shortly after the Vancouver Olympics, and she was doing a speaking engagement about three weeks ago when she came up with the idea.

Only days earlier she and teammates — Susan O'Connor, who was part of her team in Vancouver, plus Lori Olson-Johns and Shannon Aleksic — had been upset by Val Sweeting's Edmonton rink in Olympic pre-qualifying. The pain was still fresh.

"I think it was a little bit about us losing out of our Olympic possibilities, and I said, 'You know it's really hard to wake up every day for kind of eight years focused on something. . . I really want a different focus,'" Bernard said "(The marathon) is good for me, I've got excited again, ignited a little bit of goal-setting again that I kind of miss with the curling stuff."

Six days a week of off-ice training for curling has left Bernard in great shape, although she hasn't run, she figures, in probably 15 years. She didn't want to risk hurting her knees for curling.

"I'm one of the older athletes, at 47 in this game you have to keep yourself in good shape and it takes a lot more work than it did 15 years ago, so I do a lot of weights, crosstraining. . . just no impact stuff really," she said.

She'll train under the guidance of several marathon experts including Calgary's Dr. Peter Nieman.

Her biggest asset is the mental strength she developed over a couple of decades as one of Canada's best curlers.

"All the mental stuff that I've used for how many years of curling, all the sports psychology, I'll apply it definitely to this run," she said. "And I think the biggest advantage I have is that I can commit to something."

Bernard is trying to convince both O'Connor, mom to an eight-month-old baby boy, and Cori Morris, Bernard's lead on her Olympic team, to run on her team.

"I'm going to try to get as many people on board on this team, and mostly just for the awareness part of it, but I also think it's a great cause and it's so great when you complete something like this," Bernard said. "I think the feeling is amazing, it's like completing in an Olympics, or winning a trials, it's such a great feeling, and I want everybody to feel that."

While the recent dump of snow in Calgary hasn't been conducive to running, she's already done lots of reading up the sport.

"It's the way I am, I jump back into it, so now I'm studying all the new technology like GPS, and eating plans and training plans, so it's really been good for me. I'm kind of trying not to think about curling," Bernard said.

But that's been all but impossible. She's considering retiring from curling and devoting herself to more public speaking and perhaps some coaching, but she'll wait a while before making a firm decision.

"I go back and forth. I'll tell you, in the last month I've retired 20 times and I've said 'No I'm not going to' 20 times," Bernard said.

"I've been pretty down, it's tough, it's a hard thing to wake up every day and you're so focused on something and it's been more than eight years," she said. "But I've always said, I didn't play the game to go to an Olympics, I didn't ever play the game to win a Canadians, I played the game because I loved it and all of those things are just gravy on top. I don't think you can have that sole purpose of I played this so I can go to an Olympics, because most of us are going to be disappointed in our life with that.

"It's just kind of re-focusing, after having that focus for so long, and then waking up in the morning and going, 'Oh, that is not available anymore.'" And the trials are on right now, and they're hard to watch."

The Canadian curling trials after going on this week in Winnipeg. The winners will represent Canada at the Sochi Olympics.

Bernard admits, as hard as it is, she's been watching the action.

"I have, it's like that kind of self-torture, I can't not, I love the game so much," she said. "I'm excited for all those teams. I know what the feeling is like, I'll be in tears on Saturday night and on Sunday (for the finals) when I watch the men's and women's winners. I even get emotional now because you just know the feeling, and what they're in store for, and it will be amazing."

Bernard plans to share her marathon training progress in a blog on her website [www.cherylbernard.com](http://www.cherylbernard.com).

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