This winter Hayden Wickenheiser led Team Canada to gold at the Vancouver Olympics. It was the fourth Olympic medal for Wickenheiser, a woman who started her long athletic career in Shaunavon, Saskatchewan.

This spring, Wickenheiser will be recognized at the University of Regina’s Spring Convocation ceremonies where she will receive an honorary Doctor of Laws degree.

“My mom attended the U of R and went back when I was nine years old to finish her teaching degree,” says Wickenheiser. “I have fond memories of visiting her as she lived in residence there while we lived in Shaunavon. It was a hard time for her to be away from us, but she taught us about sacrifice and the value of education. So, to be able to receive an honorary degree from the U of R has great personal meaning for me.”

Wickenheiser, who was recently named number 20 on the Top 25 Toughest Athletes in the World list compiled by Sports Illustrated, was chosen for the Canadian Women’s National team at age 15 and went on to lead them to six gold medals and one silver at the Women’s World Hockey Championships. She also earned a silver medal at the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan, and gold medals at the Winter Olympics in 2002 and 2006.

In January 2003, Wickenheiser made hockey history when she became the first female hockey player to notch a point in a men’s professional game with the Kirkkonummen Salamat of the Finnish second division. Wickenheiser also played in Eskilstuna, Sweden with a men’s professional division-one hockey team for the 08-09 season. In addition to hockey, Wickenheiser has mastered a number of sports. An elite softball player, she participated in the 2000 Summer Olympics as a member of Team Canada and worked as a softball analyst as part of CBC’s coverage of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics.

Wickenheiser is also a community leader, mentor, and an accomplished businesswoman. She gives back to the community through numerous organizations dedicated to helping young people, including KidSport, Right To Play, Dreams Take Flight, Clean Air Champions and Spread The Net.

Wickenheiser has led numerous projects with the goal of raising the profile of women’s hockey around the world. She is constantly working to provide mentoring opportunities for young athletes and is currently planning an international women’s hockey festival in Burnaby, BC in late 2010. She is also an accomplished musician, dedicated to helping young people, including KidSport, Right To Play, Dreams Take Flight, Clean Air Champions and Spread The Net.

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“Education opens you up to many possibilities. Our athletic careers don’t last forever, and we need something to fall back on. While athletes have allowed me to travel and receive an invaluable education of the world, academics can never be fully replaced and should be a priority for all athletes,” she says.

Wickenheiser will receive an honorary degree on Wednesday, June 9. Canadian author Alistair MacLeod will receive an honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Regina on Thursday, June 10 and accomplished musician, actor and humanitarian Tom Jackson will receive an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts from the University of Regina on Friday, June 11.