



Sports & Recreation

SPORTS HOTLINE • JAMES MCCARTHY
Phone: (867) 873-4031 • Email: sports@nnsi.com • Fax: (867) 873-8507



Yellowknife takes the top



The Yk Blue duo of Benji Straker, left, and Mike Mathison get up to try and deny Matt Craig's kill attempt during the men's final of the Canadian Tire Open at Weledeh Gymnasium on Sunday.



Brianna Helyar of the Potential Volleyball Club's 18U girls outfit gets her hand to a shot from Allie Hinchey during the women's Tier 1 final of the Canadian Tire Open at Weledeh Gymnasium on Sunday.



James McCarthy/NNSI photos

Tamara Mathison of the Crush 15U girls, right, sets one up as Naledi Ndlovu watches on in anticipation during the women's Tier 2 final of the Canadian Tire Open at St. Pat's Gymnasium on Sunday.

Yk Blue and Potential Volleyball Club win men's and women's titles respectively in Canadian Tire Open

by James McCarthy
Northern News Services

Another weekend, another volleyball tournament in the city and for the fourth weekend running, Yellowknife featured prominently in the final standings.

The Canadian Tire Open saw a total of six men's team and 12 women's teams take to the courts at Weledeh and St. Pat's Gymnasiums looking to win one of the biggest adult titles of the season.

On the men's side, Yk Blue made it look easy as they ran the table to win that title, wrapping things up with a straight-sets win over Deep Tips in the final. In fact, the champs dropped just one set in total on their way to victory.

Andrew Goodwin of Yk Blue said there was some daylight between the two teams in terms of the set scores but their opponents did well getting to the final.

"They're a good team and they played us tough," he said. "They were actually pieced

together; they were solo players and (the organizers) put them together as a team so they had never played with each other before. You could see a huge improvement from their first game right up to the final. They were starting to gel pretty good."

There were plenty of long rallies in the final and those can go either way once the ball stays in the air long enough.

Goodwin said his team's strategy was to try and find Christopher Mathison to put the rally to bed.

"He's a really, really talented young player, just turning 17 I think," he said. "Once we get into those long rallies, we try to get it to Chris and he'll put it down."

Something else Mathison did which impressed Goodwin was his ability to place the ball even while seemingly hanging in the air.

"He has a crazy amount of hang time and you can see him try and pick out where he wants that ball to go," he said. "He has a lot of vision

when he hits and it's pretty awesome to see."

The women's division was split into two tiers for the playoffs with the top eight teams moving on to play for the Tier 1 title. The four teams that missed out went on to play for the Tier 2, or consolation, crown.

The Tier 1 champions this year are the Potential Volleyball Club's 18U girls as they downed That's What She Set in the decider. It went all five sets as That's What She set came back from 2-0 down to force the fifth-set tie break but Potential was able to hang on and win the final set, 15-11.

Darren Horn, Potential's coach, said he knew his girls would be up against a team that would be taking chances down two sets but they held their composure.

"The girls played really well," he said. "If you would have told me these girls would do so well, considering we only had one practice before the tournament began, I would have said you were nuts but their composure was great.

They told me they were good, all casual even after the other team came back."

Horn also said he tried out some players in positions they normally don't play and that helped.

"If I rolled out a different line-up to start a set, they just went with it," he said. "They all supported each other and it's a great way to start the year."

The Potential club hosted this year's tournament, which made its return following a one-year absence and Goodwin, who serves on the club's board of directors, said he was surprised to see as many teams get in on the action as there was.

"It was very last-minute," he said. "We didn't have a lot of teams near the deadline but they all came out of the woodwork at the last minute. We had out-of-town teams from Whiti, Deline and Behchoko and that's always good. We weren't sure if we got the word out fast enough but it looks like we did."

SPORTS Check

with James McCarthy

e-mail: sports@nnsi.com



Team Galusha back in action

Kerry Galusha and her rink of Sarah Koltun, Shona Barbour and Jo-Ann Rizzo are hitting the road again this week for their next big event on the World Curling Tour circuit.

They will be part of the field in the Boundary Ford Curling Classic in Lloydminster, Alta., and it all gets underway on

Friday. Galusha and company will get going in the afternoon versus Nola Zingel of Alberta in her first game of the triple-knockout format spiel, meaning each team has three chances to make the playoffs, which start next Monday.

Unlike most other World Curling Tour events, each game will be 10 ends as opposed to eight ends, the format used at the Scotties Tournament of Hearts.

Hall of Fame adds three

The NWT Sport Hall of Fame is set to grow by three this weekend as the induction ceremony will happen at the Elks Hall on Friday evening.

It's a trio of athletes this year as gymnast John Tram of Yellowknife will join the late Floyd Daniels, one of the finest fastpitch softball players to ever play the game in the NWT, and the late Roseanne Allen, a graduate of the Territorial

Experimental Ski Training (TEST) Program and 1972 Winter Olympian.

Everything is scheduled to get underway at 7 p.m.

Club curlers off to nationals

The next national curling championship involving the NWT is on the horizon and it's for the club-level curlers.

The Canadian Curling Club Championships kick off in Leduc, Alta., this coming Monday and the Yellowknife Curling Centre will be providing the men's entry as Chris Kell will skip his rink of Trevor Moss, Travis Weagant and Nick Rivet into action. They'll get underway with their first game on opening day against Nova Scotia.

The women's rink hails from the Hay River Curling Club and is skipped by Katrina Delorey. They will take on P.E.I. on Monday evening in their first contest.

The volleyball bonanza continues



Allie Hinchey volleys one over her head during a rally in the women's Tier 1 final.



Taya Straker manages to get a passing shot up during the women's Tier 2 final.

Northern News Services

For the fourth weekend in a row, volleyball took over Weledah and St. Pat's gymnasiums as the Canadian Tire Open hit the courts. The finals happened on Sunday with three championship games – men's, women's Tier 1 and women's Tier 2 – and here's some of the best of the action from championship Sunday.

VOLLEYBALL Feature

by James McCarthy



Thea Marzan manages to get in a passing shot during the women's Tier 2 final.



Benji Straker, right, prepares to send one down over the outstretched block of Matt Craig during the men's final.





FJORD

FJORD is one of four husky pups we currently have from Kugluktuk. They are all beautiful and looking for homes. Check out the others on our website.



BRUCE WAYNE

BRUCE WAYNE is the perfect cat for a one pet home. He loves his people but is not ok with children or other animals. Bruce is about 4-1/2 years old and currently in foster care.



MARS

MARS is a beautiful orange male cat who needs a little socialization. He enjoys being around people but not when you're in his face. Mars needs his space and would do best in a home as the only pet.



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REGGIE JR. is a great dog. Friendly with people and kids, great to walk and a happy boy. He is under 3 years old and quite the handsome boy.

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A photograph of a male volleyball player in a blue jersey jumping to hit the ball. Other players are in the background.

Scott Thomson saves the ball during a rally in the men's final.

A volleyball tour for the NWT: Why not? Nunavut does it already

Northern News Services

It's always tough to organize any sort of circuit or league for the NWT. Nigh on impossible in most cases simply because of the geography but Nunavut manages to make it work for volleyball. I shall explain:

The Nunavut Open Volleyball Tournament is the final big event of the season for the sport for our neighbours to the east and serves as the adult territorial championships. The four men's and women's teams that qualify for the big show in Iqaluit do so by playing in what's known as the Nunavut Open Volleyball Tour, a series of events throughout the year where teams play and earn points toward their final total.

Teams that do make it then pay a flat \$500 fee per player to play and that includes everything: flights to and from their home community, accommodations in Iqaluit, food, team jerseys and registration fee. That's a pretty good deal considering \$500 would barely pay for the hotel for one player.

Now, we have the NWT Volleyball Championships but I see a way to make it a bit more exciting. The NWT Open Volleyball Tour? I don't see why not. We already have plenty of volleyball teams and communities playing within driving distance in the south and Yellowknife could be the centre of it all, much like Iqaluit is with its tour.

I was bandying this idea around with Andrew Goodwin of the Potential Volleyball Club and he liked the idea. The challenge, though, is getting teams to buy in.

The ground rules would have to be established first, starting with eligibility. As it stands, any team wishing to qualify for the Nunavut Open needs to submit a roster before the start of the first tournament in November and can only play those players on their roster if they wish to accumulate points. Any non-roster player which plays for a team in a qualification tournament means all points earned for that tournament are nullified.

The reason this is done is to stop teams from loading up on ringers to boost qualification chances and here in Yellowknife, there are plenty of chances to do just that. Rent-a-players are something teams have employed in many other sports (don't give me that look ... you know it happens and everyone else knows) and while it's not illegal – so long as eligibility rules are followed – it does give an unfair advantage to a team which does it.

The Nunavut Open is just that: an open tournament and that means anyone of any age is eligible to take part and has the exact same chance to qualify for the tournament as anyone else. The NWT Open should follow the same rule of thumb and make that part of the deal.

Now for the important part: how to do the qualification.

We just had the Canadian Tire Open in town. That could be one tournament which could give out points. The Paulou Ittungna Memorial Tournament in Inuvik is another and there are plenty of opportunities to host tournaments in the South Slave, Dehcho and Tlicho regions as well. Behchoko and Whati love their volleyball and hosting a tournament there would make sense. Deline and Fort Good Hope love their volleyball just as much.

That's been a knock on Yellowknife for many years – teams from the capital can't be bothered to go to the communities to play. This could be a chance to remedy that.

The challenge has always been how to get teams from Yellowknife to go and play.

Well, teams from the Beaufort Delta and Sahtu regions always seem to be able to make their way down to Yellowknife so why can't we return the favour? I can recall one particular softball tournament in Norman Wells where the organizers offered up a sweetheart deal for teams from Yellowknife to go and play: deeply-discounted airfare, damn-near free hotel rooms and all food expenses paid. Guess how many teams from Yellowknife took up that offer? Exactly.

Before you say anything, yes, I am aware that community teams do sometimes have their travel subsidized but they still have to pay for things when they show up. They pay for their food, their hotels, their transportation in town.

One idea which several people smarter than I have always brought up is to have a bunch of teams from Yellowknife come together and book a charter. It's a lot cheaper for a group of people to split the costs as opposed to booking a ticket for each person on Canadian North.

The Nunavut Open is always held during the same weekend as the Nunavut 18U Volleyball Championships and this could be a great opportunity to piggy-back on Spike It! It would be a tight squeeze but having the NWT Open held during the Senior Spike It! weekend makes a lot of sense. It would break up the tournament and give people some good volleyball to watch in between times.

Here's a radical idea: would it work to have senior teams – I'm thinking 19U here – play in the tour perhaps? Make Senior Spike It! a tour stop perhaps? Encourage youth to play? Food for thought.

Anyway, this is just a blueprint for something I think would be cool to do. We had the Northern Hockey Challenge with the NWT and Nunavut together but that ended up being a one-off deal, though Yellowknife and Hay River have kept it going in some fashion.

The NWT Open Volleyball Tour – watch for it in a gymnasium near you?

SPORTS Talk

with James McCarthy



James McCarthy/NNSL photo

Matt Craig lines up a big swing during the men's final of the Canadian Tire Open at Weledeh Gymnasium on Sunday. Could the Canadian Tire Open make up part of a new NWT Open Volleyball Tour?

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SPORTS CARD VOLLEYBALL

yellowknifer

AGE: 14

Oleta was part of the Crush 15U girls team which managed to get to the final of the Canadian Tire Open's women's Tier 2 final before losing to Whati. She was also part of the swimming team that competed at the Western Canada Summer Games this past August.



OLETA DURU