



# Skills Academy Newsletter

April 2015



## The Good Old Hockey Game

By James Irving

On January 14th, the Riverview Collegiate Hockey Canada Skills Academy hosted its 4th Annual Hockey Day at Riverview. The day was a chance for all hockey academy students from grades 4-12 to showcase their hockey skills and talents for fellow students, family members, and friends. The Beginner and Junior Programs started the event with a practice and inter-squad scrimmage. Next, all programs (Beginners, Juniors, and Seniors) took the ice for the traditional team photo. After that, the Juniors and Seniors competed in the annual Coach Kitt's Team

vs Coach Irving's Team game which saw Coach Kitt's team win for the second straight year. Finally, the day ended with the fan favorite Alumni vs Seniors game which saw the best of the best (the South Hill Alumni teachers and staff ) take on the Senior hockey program. It was a close game this year as the Alumni squeaked out an- other victory, 9-8, winning for the fourth straight year. A big thanks to all the students, staff, parents and guardians, and volunteers that helped with the program and made it a great success. To close out the semester on January 27th,

the Senior hockey program students participated in the 2nd Annual HCSA Outdoor Classic, also known as Slush Bowl 2015. Rising temperatures due to the return of global warming caused slushy and slippery ice conditions which was a direct contrast to last year's game which had -45 degrees Celsius temps. The afternoon of drills and scrimmage was a fun way to close out the 2014-2015 season! ■



Photo: Andre Ringuette/HHOF-IHF Images



# From Project Ice to Drumheller Dragons

By Laurence Heinen



Back in Grade 6, Brody Valette made a decision that paid off in a big way. He heard about a new Hockey Canada Skills Academy that was getting started up in Blackie, Alta., which is about 15 minutes west of his hometown of High River.

“They just implemented the hockey program at the end of my Grade 5 year and I heard about it,” said Valette, whose mom Debbie is the vice principal at Blackie School. “I thought it would be a good idea, so then I transferred schools to Blackie and attended the hockey academy from Grade 6 to 8.”

Now 19 and in his second season as a defenceman with the Drumheller Dragons of the Alberta Junior Hockey League, Valette still draws upon skills he learned during his time with Blackie School’s HCSA, which is cleverly named Project Ice.

“It really just helped over the three years of being on the ice almost every day and working on those skills consistently,” he said, adding he learned the finer points of basic skills such as skating, shooting and passing. “It just made a big difference.”

Valette said that he attributes much of his on-ice success to the skills he learned from Project Ice instructor Brian Erickson

“He was a big influence,” Valette said. “He had lots of input and he always helped me out every day. I just thank him for where I am today, because I probably wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for his help all along the way.”

Earlier this season when the Dragons played in Okotoks, Erickson took a group his current students out to watch the game.

“We took the whole Project Ice group to Okotoks to watch Brody play against the Okotoks Oilers,” Erickson said. “There’s some pride there that continues on as well.”

Erickson remembers back to when Valette started with Project Ice seven years ago.

“He came to Project Ice with a love for the game and a good understanding of the game,” Erickson said. “He took it upon himself to work as hard as he could on the skills. By the time he was in his third year, his Grade 8 year, nobody could take the puck off him. They could hardly keep up with him as well just because Brody took it upon himself to push himself. His skating has tremendously improved and his puck control has really improved as well.”

Earlier this season, Valette recorded his first AJHL hat trick and added an assist during a 6-2 road win for the Dragons over the Calgary Canucks. Four days later in Drumheller, Valette recorded a pair of assists to help the Dragons edge the Brooks Bandits 4-3. For his efforts, Valette was recognized as the AJHL’s Player of the Week.

“It was a pretty big honour and a nice little personal accomplishment,” said Valette, who’s eligible to return to the Dragons for a third season next year. “It kind of helped build confidence.”

Due to his solid play, Valette has been approached by NCAA scouts about continuing his education south of the border while getting to play hockey at the same time.

“I have a few that I’m contacting right now and keeping in touch with,” he said, while noting that Project Ice helped him learn how to juggle school and hockey at the same time. “You kind of relate that to what it might be like in college having practice each day and then going to school. It’s the same thing as I did last year in Grade 12. I’d go to school in the morning and then to practice in the afternoon, so it was kind of the reverse thing from the hockey academy. It goes hockey in the morning and then school in the afternoon. It helps you get used to the routine.” ■



# National Sledge Hockey player talks to Morley youth

By Lindsay Seewalt -Cochrane Eagle

“Scars should remind you of where you’ve been — they don’t need to dictate where you go...”

These were memorable words to wrap up a talk with a group of juniors registered in the Hockey Canada Skills Academy program Feb. 23 at Morley Community School (MCS).

The slogan is gospel to Canada’s National Sledge Team forward Chris Cederstrand — who ventured to the Morley high school this week to chat with the junior hockey kids (Grade 6-9) and give willing skaters a chance to give the sleds a whirl on the ice.

Sledge hockey is an innovative team sport that incorporates the same rules and principles as regular ice hockey, where the players sit on sleds or ‘sledges’ — with sled blades underneath the seat, using two sticks for passing, stick handling and shooting the puck.

The sport was invented in Sweden in the 1960s to accommodate participants with a physical disability who wished to continue to play ice hockey; sledge

players battle with such disabilities as single and double above and below knee amputations, as well as affected lower body parts resulting from spina bifida.

It has become one of the most popular sports in the Paralympic Games.

“Aside from us sitting on the ground, there’s not a lot of differences,” explained Cederstrand to the Nation youth. “If anything, sledge is more physical.”

The six-foot-three elite athlete and former Western Hockey League (WHL) player shared his story of forging ahead in the face of adversity.

The Martensville, Sask. native grew up on skates, moving on to a higher level of playing by his early teens.

Following a two-year run with the Red Deer Rebels then being traded to the Swift Current Broncos, Cederstrand’s WHL career was cut short by a battle with concussion problems.

By 2004, he was attending fire school in Vermillion, where he finished at the top of his class. Upon graduation, he and now-wife Shannon relocated to Calgary where he began to work in road construction as he was applying for firefighting positions in and around the city.

An accident with a piece of heavy machinery left Cederstrand no choice but to jump off a rolling packer — only to be partly caught underneath the 30,000-kg machine.

The emergency surgery that saved his life also saw his right leg amputated above the knee.

Following a grueling four-year recovery process that saw the athlete getting off pain medication and working through the mental and emotional turmoil of having the course of his life significantly altered, Cederstrand trumped adversity and is celebrating his new lease on life with his wife and two young children, Kasey and Carter, in Okotoks.





After less than four years of his journey into sledge hockey, Cederstrand was drafted to Team Canada last month.

He is also the first above-knee amputee firefighter in North America (with the MD of Foothills Fire Department) — thanks in part to the fundraising efforts of his family and friends for an ‘Otto Bock X3’ prosthetic leg with a \$100,000 price tag. He continues to battle physical pain as a result of nerve damage on a daily basis — without the use of pain meds. This fuels his passion to engage with youth and motivate them to keep moving forward.

“With what I’ve learned through my experiences, you can never give up — you create your own destiny.”

It’s a story that may resonate with some Morley youth — where strong school attendance is a struggle for many.

“This program is going to revitalize the minor hockey community in Morley,” said enthused MCS teacher and program coach Shane Maguire, who runs the program with fellow teacher Emily Parkin.

Both teachers are hopeful the community will take the initiative to ramp up a Morley hockey team once again.

This is the second year for the Hockey Canada program in Morley — a community filled with budding athletes that has gone without a Nation-based team since the 2008/09 season; last year was the first year for the junior skills program and this is the year for the senior program (Grade 10-12).

According to MCS principal Wes Malo, the program is growing in leaps and bounds and has been successful at reeling in students whose interest in attending school had drastically declined; there are 24 junior program registrants and 15 seniors.

“Stoney Tribal Administration (STA) has been very helpful and supportive of this program,” said Malo, adding that STA and the Stoney Education Authority have worked together to get the program running and perform necessary repairs to the Morley arena located next to the school — including ice and board repairs.

There is also some cost sharing with MCS to maintain the ice; community hockey advocate Marty Wildman manages the rink.

“The bar is set high for these kids as student athletes,” said Malo, adding that maintaining a minimum 75 per cent attendance record, demonstrating good behaviour and keeping up with their academics are all components.

No skating experience is necessary to register in the skills-based program.

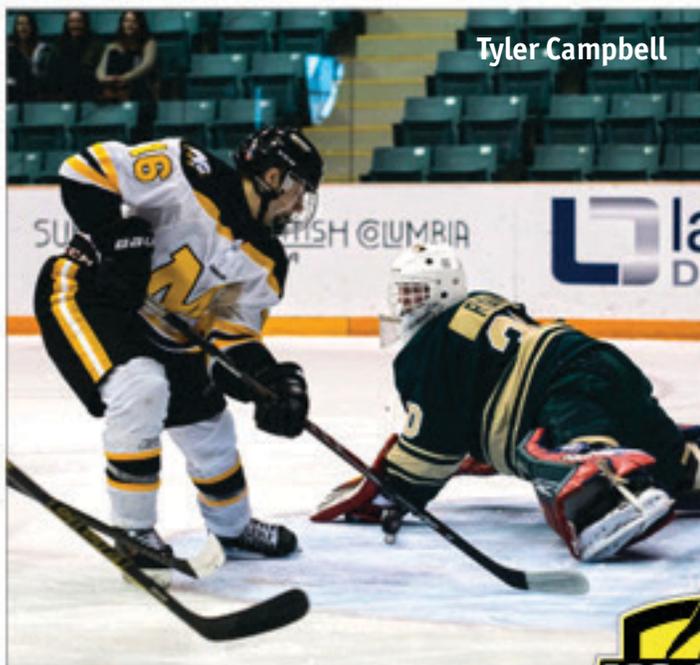
Cederstrand credits fellow Team Canada teammate, defenseman Kieran Block, for pushing him into the sport.

While uncertain at first, Cederstrand said that his passion quickly grew for the challenging, physical sport of sledge hockey — he is noted for his powerful physicality and size on the ice.

Cederstrand now has his eye on the grand prize — the gold medal at the 2018 Winter Paralympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea.” ■



# Great Potential at Shaftesbury Hockey Academy



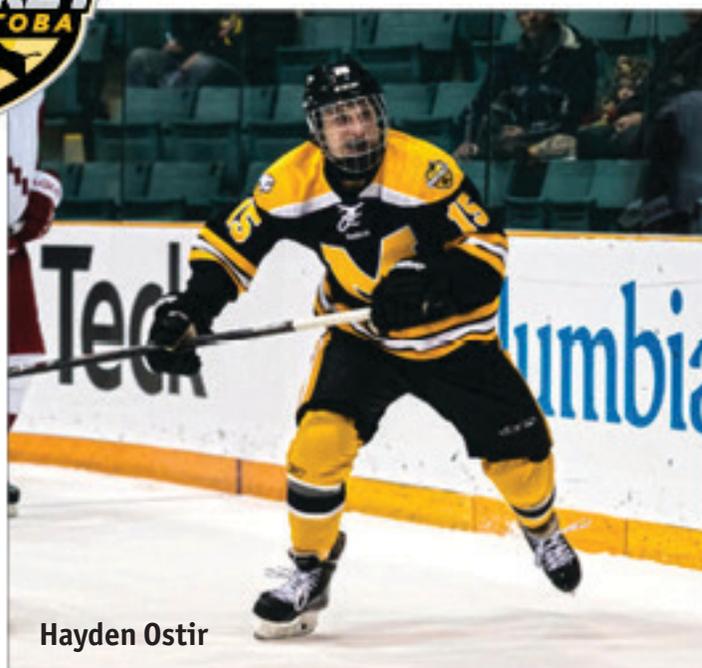
Tyler Campbell



Kayla Mee



Kristen Campbell



Hayden Ostir

Shaftesbury Hockey Academy had great representation at the 2015 Canada Winter Games in Prince George. Four members from our hockey academy represented Manitoba. Kristen Campbell and Kayla Mee played women's hockey and Tyler Campbell and Hayden Ostir played men's hockey.

Kristen Campbell is in her second year at Shaftesbury and has represented her province twice on the national stage. Kristen also was a member of the U18 Team Canada

team that earned silver at the U18 World Championships held in Buffalo this past year. Kristen is committed to the University of North Dakota for the 2015 season. Kayla Mee is in her third year at Shaftesbury and has been a member of the provincial team twice. For the 2015 season, Kayla will be joining three former members of the Shaftesbury Hockey Academy who presently play at the University of Connecticut.

Hayden Ostir, plays for Winnipeg Wild of the AAA Midget Provincial League. Hayden was drafted 36th overall by the Spokane Chiefs of the Western Hockey League. Tyler Campbell plays for the Winnipeg Monarchs of the Winnipeg AAA league. Tyler Campbell is eighth in scoring in the league with 21 goals and 24 assists in 32 games. Both Hayden and Tyler are attending Shaftesbury and the hockey academy for the first time. ■





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