

WMHA WAIVER WIRE

'2010 POWERSMART WINTER GAMES'

Winnipeg—

This past March, for one week amateur athletes from all over the province of Manitoba were given the opportunity to compete for their respective regional areas in the 2010 Powersmart Manitoba Winter Games in Portage La Prairie. Male and female competitors in sporting events ranging from five pin bowling to hockey gathered together for one whirlwind week to test their medal against their counterparts from all over the province in a chance to showcase their abilities in their respective sport. Perhaps just as important, the athletes were taken out of their comfort zone and had the opportunity to experience a different style of competition where team building in an individual sport (and also in a regional sense) was imperative to success both inside and outside the field of competition. The athletes were not only given the opportunity to form some strong bonds within their respective events but also had the chance interact with participants of all events allowing them to meet a variety of people and gain insight as to what preparation and skill different sports require. The WMHA was proud to be apart of the successful event sending over 80 male and female hockey players to this years games.

Firmly established in 1986, the Manitoba Powersmart Games coincide with the Olympic cycle with winter and summer games separated by two years and held every four



The unique experience to play with new players and against regular season team mates made this a fun tournament for all players involved



Both team Blue and Team Gold from Winnipeg squared off in the boys final this past winter

years respectively. The preparation required is daunting but the outcomes of the efforts of the host town (this year being Portage La Prairie) are immeasurable. With 1200 volunteers and 1800 participants plus their family and friends flocking to the games, not only is there an economic stimulus for the host town and its recreational facilities, but a greater opportunity for coaches, officials, and players to develop more expertise.

The timing of the games is not the only thing in common it has with the Olympics. For one action packed week the High School in Portage La Prairie was transformed into an Athletes Village and teams were designated a classroom that would act as their sleeping quarters and home base. Even for hockey players these were some tight quarters, and players that were battling tooth and nail only a couple days prior in a playoff series were now roommates. Paul Stoykewych a stalwart defenceman for the gold medal winning Winnipeg Blue team recalls the experience fondly. "It was a really memorable experience. It was different than anything I had been apart of before. I really got to know some of the guys I am used to playing against well in a short period of time," notes Stoykewych. Commenting on

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the Olympic style accommodations and atmosphere, the Bantam blue-liner mentions, "It was like a mini-Olympics – They even had a torch lighting outside the school that was pretty cool. They had activities going on during downtime where we would meet with all of the athletes at concerts, dances and other functions. It was a really good time."

Team Winnipeg Gold Female hockey coach Andrea Keating also saw the games as a great success both for the competitive nature on the ice and the communal atmosphere off the ice. "It was great that they had daily newsletters printed at breakfast for the athletes to see how their region was doing and keep everybody up to date with all of the events. There was a great mixing of athletes at the school and the organizers did a great job," details Keating. As for the on-ice competition Keating stated that "It is great for the girls because it gives them a chance to see how they match-up and where they stand with other competition throughout the province." From a coaching standpoint in this time condensed tournament Keating noted that "It was really important to form a cohesiveness with some unfamiliar players and also try and find some chemistry with line combinations."



When the dust settled, after narrowly defeating their Winnipeg Blue counterpart 3-2 in the semi-finals, Keating and her girls faced off against the host Team Central in the Gold medal game. With some provincial bragging rights on the line it was Team Central who came out on top with a scrappy 2-1 victory. Winnipeg Gold took the silver and Eastman took the bronze for the midget female hockey event.

The Bantam males took off where the females finished on the same day and it took the whole tournament for the two Winnipeg squads to face-off against each other, and they

would do so in the Gold medal final. Paul Stoykewych would add to an already successful hockey season with his team Blue defeating Team Gold by a 6-3 count. Team Central took the bronze in the male ice hockey event.



All in all, when asking someone who was at the games regardless of their capacity, two words always seem to come up and those are 'team-building' and 'memorable'. These games really bring out the best that sport has to offer in our great province. These athletes creating strong bonds and fond memories, while finding a new and unique arena of competition that endorses sportsmanship and competitive spirit, is what these games will be remembered for. The WMHA would like to thank Sport Manitoba for providing an experience for our players that they will never forget. The WMHA would also like to thank and congratulate all the male and female hockey players for representing us with great character and skill and the town of Portage La Prairie for hosting such a successful event.

FOR more info, news, and results on the games or the upcoming 2012 summer games in Swan Valley check out www.manitobagames.ca

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