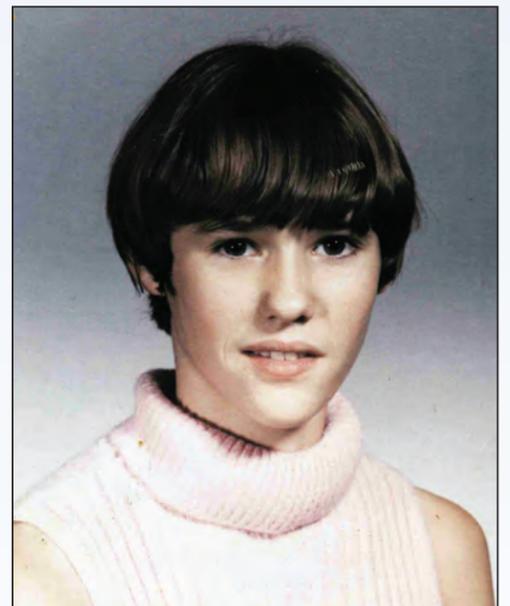


HOMETOWN HEROES



Debbie Brill was a world-class high jumper for 20 years, but she got her start right here in Maple Ridge. Debbie was a student at Garibaldi Senior Secondary, where her track and field success turned into worldwide fame. She went on to revolutionize the world of high jumping with her reverse jumping style know as the “Brill Bend,” and was the first North American woman to jump six feet. In 1982, Brill set a world indoor record with a jump of 1.99 metres. Brill was named B.C. Athlete of the Decade in 1980, was inducted into the Canadian Amateur Sports Hall of Fame in 1982 and was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1983. At a ceremony inducting her into the Ridge Meadows Hall of Fame Society, Brill pointed to the core values learned here as a youth that have taken her to the top of her sports career.

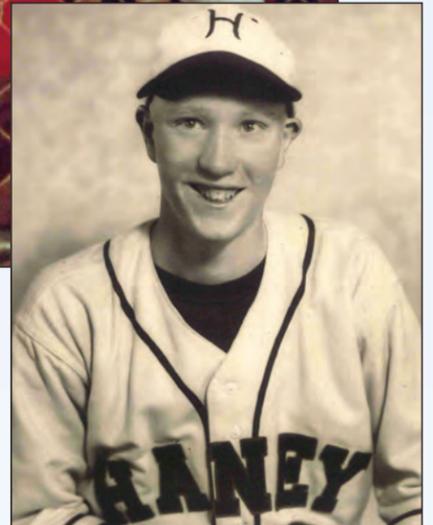


Debbie Brill

Dare to Dream



HOME TOWN HEROES



Jim Robson

Legendary broadcaster Jim Robson is no stranger to sports fans. He grew up in our community attending Alexander Robinson School and moved on to Maple Ridge Junior & Senior High School. The trusted "Voice of the Vancouver Canucks" for over 25 years, this hockey Hall of Famer was perhaps the most famous voice in the West. Years ago, Jim was also well known in Maple Ridge for his exploits on the field. He once played basketball for Maple Ridge High School and baseball for the Haney Junior team before moving on to play-by-play of baseball, hockey and other sports. Jim called over 2,000 NHL games before he retired, and was named to the media

section of the NHL Hockey Hall of Fame. Jim was also inducted into the BC Hockey Hall of Fame and in the year 2000 he was inducted into the BC Sports Hall of Fame.

His career highlights include his broadcasts of Stanley Cup finals in 1975,80,82 and 94, of NHL all-star games for Hockey Night in Canada in 1973,76,77,81 and 83, and his commentary on basketball for CBC at the 1984 Olympic Games. Jim's knowledge of sports in BC is nothing short of encyclopedic, and when he attended the 1999 Meadowridge Rotary Sports Banquet he showed the class and poise that has made him a legend in our community.

Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES



Kim Eagles attended Meadow Ridge Elementary School, Alexander Robinson, Garibaldi and Thomas Haney School in our community. Kim Eagles first took up target shooting at age seven as part of the four events of the tetrathlon: running, riding, swimming, and shooting. She used to practice her shooting at home on a range built at her parents' property. No longer competing in tetrathlons she now competes nationally and internationally in target shooting and is a Canadian champion. Her gold medal in air pistol at the 1999 Pan Am Games ensured Canada a spot in the women's air pistol events at the 2000 Summer Olympics. Kim has studied Kinesiology at the university of Victoria, and is pursuing her nursing degree from Douglas College and Malaspina College. Kim will represent our country, and her home town, at the Sydney Olympics.

Kim Eagles

Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES



Jodi Barnes Rob Williams

Cousins Jodi Barnes and Rob Williams have been wowing figure skating fans since they first began slicing the ice together as pairs skaters in 1979 with the Maple Ridge Figure Skating Club under the direction of coach Christine McBeth. Rob attended Websters Corners and Blue Mountain before moving on to Garibaldi. Jodi attended Pitt Meadows Elementary and Pitt Meadows High School. The two competed for nine years at the national level, winning bronze in the national juniors in 1987 and representing Canada at

the world junior championships.

In their last amateur year in 1993, they joined with another pairs team to win gold in the Canadian fours. Now, the pair are delighting audiences around the world as professional skaters with Walt Disney's World on Ice. They have toured with Disney to Europe, South America, Mexico and throughout the United States. In 1999 the pair toured Japan and Asia, New Zealand and Australia as the principal pairs skaters in Disney's Toy Story on Ice.

Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES



As a kid in living in Maple Ridge, Dan Stinson loved to play basketball, soccer, and hockey. Dan attended Mt. Crescent Elementary School and moved on to Maple Ridge Senior Secondary. But Dan wasn't content just competing - he loved telling other people about the sporting events in their community.

His writing career started at the Maple Ridge Secondary school paper, writing about the school teams, and when he was just 16, he became sports editor at the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows Gazette.

He went on to study journalism, and by 1972 had joined the sports desk at the Vancouver Sun. He's been a reporter there ever since, still doing what he loves, telling people about the sports that he loves, using words to bring to life the sports action and issues for his readers.



Dan Stinson

Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES



Shannon attended Whonnock Elementary Kindergarten and Glenwood Elementary in our community before her skating took her around the world. Shannon fondly recalls her early involvement in Baseball (as a pitcher), track & field and basketball. Like many young children in Ridge Meadows, Shannon Allison Collins wanted to be a figure skater. She was just three years old when she learned to skate with the Maple Ridge Figure Skating Club with then coach Christine McBeth.

And boy did she learn to skate. Shannon became one of the best ever to come out of the Maple Ridge club, spending five years with the Canadian national team and capturing the Canadian novice championship, junior silver, and senior bronze. Internationally, she won bronze at the junior worlds and was an alternate on Canada's 1988 Olympic and world teams. Outside the competitive rink, she dazzled audiences as she toured with Champions on Ice and performed in a Kurt Browning TV special. Now an elementary school teacher, she also helps aspiring skaters as a freelance skating coach.



Shannon Allison Collins Dare to Dream

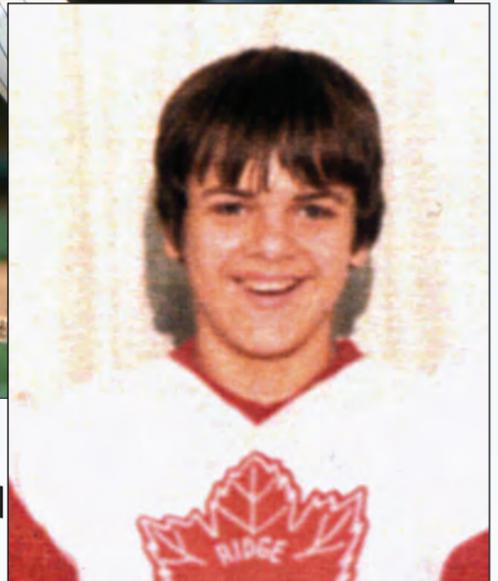
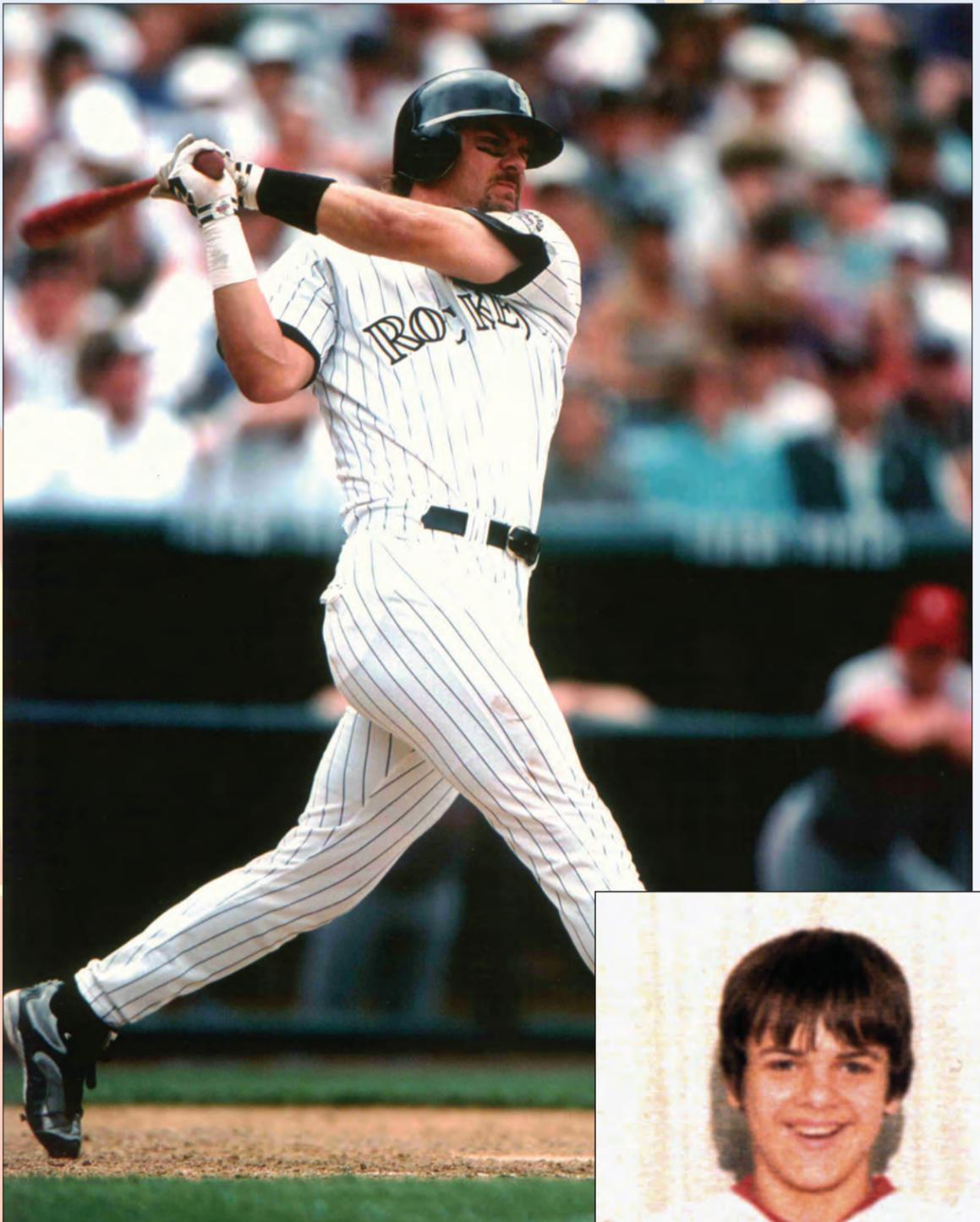


HOMETOWN HEROES



Larry Walker began his quest to be a major league ball player here in Maple Ridge. He was a gifted athlete who developed his skills with our local sports associations and school system. From an early age, Larry showed a deftness for hockey and volleyball as well as baseball. He was active in his chosen sports at Westview School. In one early photo from his hockey days with Ridge Meadows Minor Hockey, he's decked out in his goaltending equipment next to his team's captain, NHL great Cam Neely.

In retrospect it was obvious that Larry liked the feeling of the glove more than the pads and stick, because he began the pursuit of a dream that few Canadians have achieved, to be a Major League Baseball Player. Larry's a future Hall of Famer with a consistency in batting that has the fans bringing the gloves to the bleachers to snag one of his growing number of home run balls. Larry's one of those special players who hits with power when unleashed, but hits intelligently so his team benefits. Larry has strong ties to our community, and apart from his batting titles and golden gloves, his generosity and commitment to remembering his roots in Maple Ridge make him a home town hero.



Larry Walker

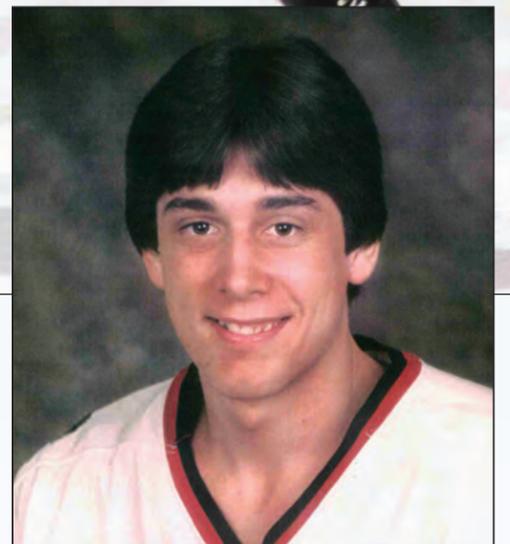
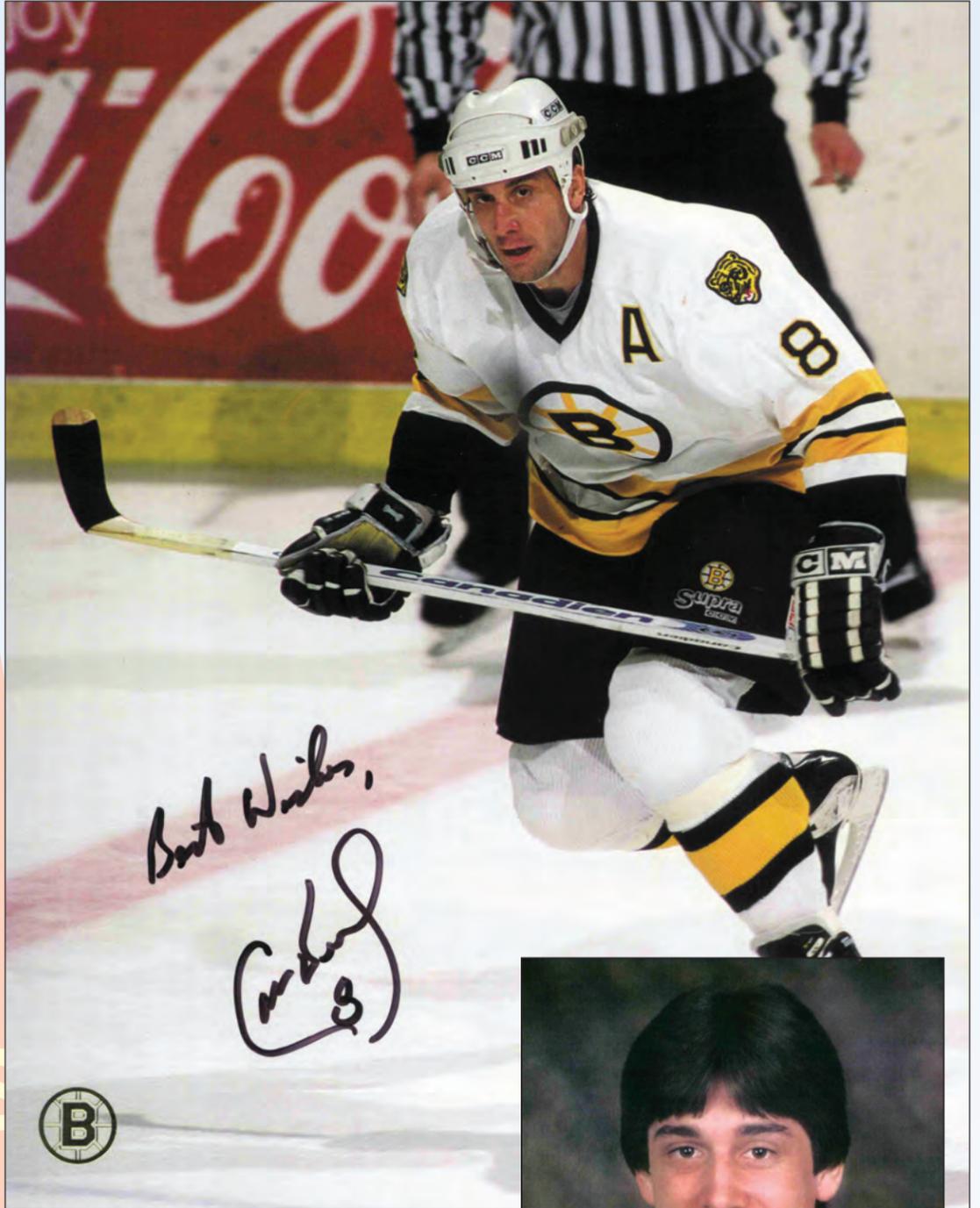
Dare to Dream



HOME TOWN HEROES



Cam Neely attended Golden Ears Elementary School, Westview and Garibaldi as he grew up in our community. Maple Ridge's Cam Neely was the perfect hockey player, a blend of toughness, intimidation and scoring touch. Cam began his drive to the top of the hockey world as part of the Ridge Meadows Minor Hockey program from 1976 through 1981. In fact, Cam was captain of a team that included another local sports legend, Larry Walker. Cam played Ridge Meadows Minor Baseball from age 11 to 16 in addition to his hockey pursuits. The term "power forward" described Cam perfectly. Neely played 13 seasons in the NHL, starting with the Vancouver Canucks but made his name with the Boston Bruins. When he retired after 726 games, he had recorded 395 goals, 299 assists and 1,256 minutes in penalties. Neely showed his heart when he returned from serious injury to record his third 50-goal season. Cam Neely was inducted into the BC Sports Hall of Fame in the year 2000 and continues to be a hero for local youth playing hockey in the arena named after him at Planet Ice.



Cam Neely

Dare to Dream



HOME TOWN HEROES

INTERNATIONAL



Greg Moore

D

Maple Ridge's Greg Moore attended both Meadowridge School and Pitt Meadows Secondary School. Greg began his racing career driving go-karts in the Lower Mainland. His talent at driving karts allowed him to climb through the ranks quickly, ahead of much older drivers. Greg was a sensation on the Indy Lights circuit, winning 10 out of 12 races in 1995. When he was promoted to the Indy series, he became the youngest driver ever to win a CART race. Greg was famous for his skill on the oval circuits in CART. His win at the Michigan 500 is among his most impressive.

Greg started the 1999 season by winning the season-opening race in Miami. At the final race of the season at Fontana, California, Greg died when his car went out of control and hit the wall. Over the next few days the outpouring of love for this Home Town Hero was felt throughout the world. A public service in Maple



Ridge drew a standing room only crowd of over 3000 people, including fans from around the globe. Greg was inducted into the BC Sports Hall of Fame in the year 2000. His number was retired by CART as a tribute to a young racer who made his mark in his chosen profession. The Greg Moore Foundation, continuing the legacy of generous support for causes that were near and dear to Greg's heart, is a legacy to the community that he loved so much. He will be missed by us all.

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HOMETOWN HEROES



Representing your country in one sport is dream enough for many local athletes. Sandy Espeseth has done it in two. Basketball was her first love. The Maple Ridge Secondary graduate was a key player on her senior girls basketball team when it competed in the B.C. championships in her Grade 12 year. Sandy also attended Eric Langton and Mt. Crescent Schools and was involved in track and field during that time. She went on to play guard for

the University of Victoria's women's basketball team throughout the 1980s.

But the pinnacle of her basketball career came in 1985 when Espeseth became a member of Canada's senior women's basketball team, staying with the national squad until 1988. These days, Espeseth is finding athletic success not with a bouncing ball but with the swiftly spinning wheels of a racing bicycle. A 10-month cycling tour of Australia and New Zealand three years ago turned her on to the thrill of cycling and, in 1998, she started riding in competitive road races. In 1999, Espeseth found herself representing her country in sports once again, this time in cycling as part of a five-woman Canadian team which competed with some of the best long distance road racers in the world in the women's Tour de France.

Sandy Espeseth Dare to Dream



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HOME TOWN HEROES



Karina Leblanc is a dynamo, and her mother's scrapbook documents a life of diverse interests and the pursuit of excellence. She attended Fairview Elementary and Maple Ridge Senior Secondary Schools, where she was a standout in a number of sports. She played basketball, volleyball, track & field and of course, soccer. She also took part in band and took tap dancing at Peggy Peat's School of Dance. Her abilities at soccer were the path to her current fame. Karina played soccer for the Magic, Golden Ears United and the Royals locally, and she credits her early coaches in our community, Kim Switch and Rory Koghler for instilling the skills and discipline needed to compete at an international level.

Karina decided to attend The University of Nebraska where she established herself as the premier goalkeeper on the Cornhuskers. In 1998 Karina started 20 games for Nebraska and logged a minuscule 0.70 goals against average, allowing



just 14 goals while recording 11 shutouts. This play caught the attention of Canada's national program, and in 1999 she played on Canada's National Women's World Cup Team. Another impressive statistic is Karina's 3.046 grade point average as a Business Administration major. Karina demonstrates that one can achieve their dreams on the field and off with dedication and commitment.



Karina Leblanc

Dare to Dream



HOME TOWN HEROES



Brendan Morrison of Pitt Meadows was a scoring sensation in minor hockey. He came through Ridge Meadows Minor Hockey Association, and was such a standout, he attracted the attention of the NCAA.

Brendan chose college over Junior Hockey, attending the University of Michigan. He helped the Wolverines win the national championship in 1996, scoring the winning goal in overtime. He was named MVP of the 1996 NCAA Championship Tournament and named to the NCAA Championship All-Tournament Team in the same year. In 1997, Brendan won college hockey's most prestigious honour - the Hobey Baker Memorial Award, presented to the outstanding player in college hockey.

Morrison was drafted 39th overall in the NHL entry draft by the New Jersey Devils, but made his way home to Vancouver when the Canucks traded for him at the trading deadline during the 1999/2000 season.

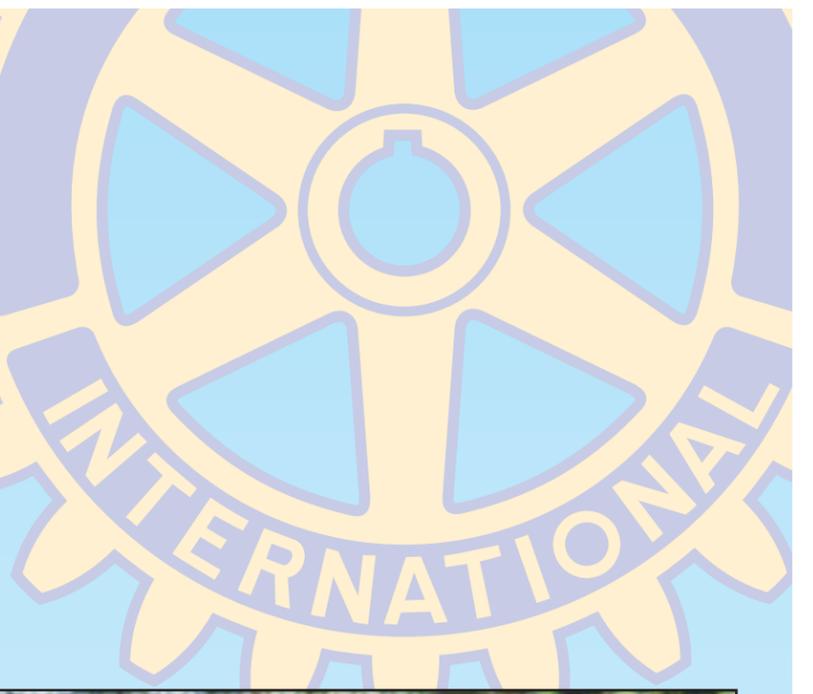


Brendan Morrison

Dare to Dream



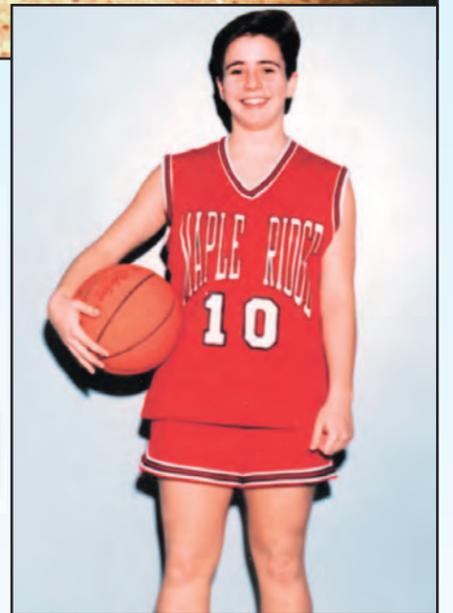
HOMETOWN HEROES



Lesley McPherson has gone from playing minor softball on the fields of Maple Ridge to catching for her country at the Olympic Games. Lesley was in Grade 8 when her family moved here from Ontario and she started playing ball on house teams with the Ridge Meadows Minor Softball Association. By the midget level, she was playing for rep teams, and she moved into elite junior ball after graduating from Maple Ridge Secondary in 1989. A leader on the field, she went on to captain Simon Fraser University's women's softball team against the best NAIA clubs in the United States, and to catch for our national team at the world championships. In the year 2000, she was a force for Canada behind the plate at the biggest show in women's softball, the Summer Olympics. Lesley, now a teacher at her old high school, believes Olympic dreams aren't out of reach for those willing to work hard for them. "As a kid watching the Olympics on TV, you always think it's for somebody else, but all the people I met there weren't that much different from me."



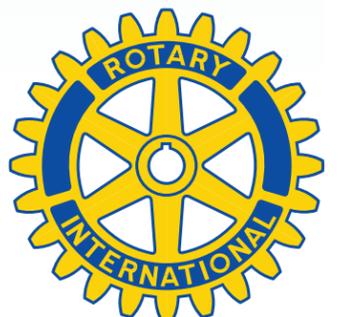
Lesley McPherson



Dare to Dream



Meadowridge Rotary Club



HOMETOWN HEROES



Kelly Law

Kelley Law rocked the curling world when she skipped Team Canada all the way to a gold medal in women's curling at the 2000 world championships.

Kelley grew up in Maple Ridge between the ages of nine and 19, and was a student at both Maple Ridge Elementary and Maple Ridge Secondary. She was just 11 years old when her parents introduced her to curling at the Golden Ears Winter Club. Her first games were just for fun, but her talent and her instinct for a good shot quickly drew her into the sport's competitive side. She won district junior titles in her teens before moving on to ladies play.

Joining with teammates Diane Nelson, Julie Skinner, and Georgina Wheatcroft, Kelley skipped Team B.C. to the Canadian title at the 2000 Scott Tournament of Hearts. A few months later, the foursome earned the title of best in the world by following their motto of giving all they've got on the ice — and having fun out there.



Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES

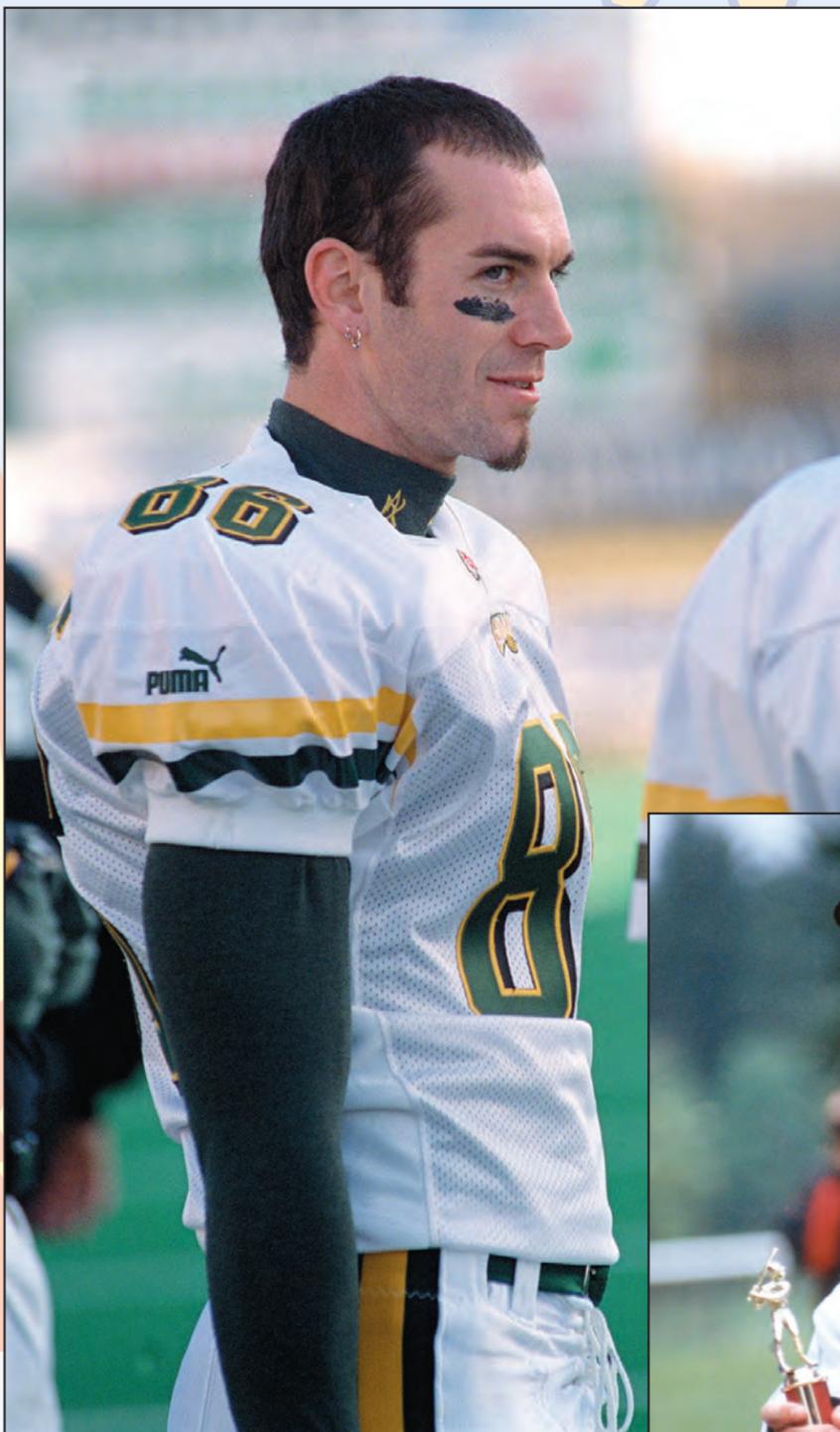


Scott Robinson used to toss a football with his dad in the backyard. Now he's playing catch with the pros in the Canadian Football League.

He first tried football at age 11 with the Coquitlam Wildcats, but it wasn't his only sport. He also played with Golden Ears Soccer club and Ridge Meadows Minor Baseball Association squads into his late teens.

At school, he was into basketball at Maple Ridge Elementary, and basketball and rugby at Maple Ridge Secondary for grades 8 to 10. He played football at Terry Fox in Port Coquitlam for half of Grade 11 before finishing the year at Thomas Haney. In 1996, he graduated from Westview where he'd played both soccer and basketball.

Other sports gave him fitness and fun, but football fueled his ambition. After excelling with the Simon Fraser University team, he was picked by the BC Lions in the 2001 CFL draft. He is now a wide receiver with the Edmonton Eskimos. Wherever his career takes him, Scott is proud to say he's from Maple Ridge. As he describes it, "I'm just a kid who grew up in Maple Ridge and followed his dream."



Scott Robinson

Dare to Dream



PATERSON SCHULTZVOLPATTI
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS



HOME TOWN HEROES



Kathy Ruddick

A knee injury playing her favourite sport changed the course of Kathy Ruddick's life, and now the Maple Ridge Senior Secondary School grad has landed a spot in Canadian fly fishing history. Once a dedicated womens field hockey player for the provincial-finalist MRSS Ramblers squad, a graduation-year knee injury on the field prompted a lengthy recovery, several surgeries and a leg that couldn't support any high-impact action.

Her love for fishing began at an early age, back when she was known as Kathy Turner out on the waters of the Alouette River with her mother. Since her early casts with a basic rod and reel, Kathy has become something of an anomaly in the traditionally male-dominated sport – an incredibly successful fly fisher.

She has taught the craft of fly casting to the rich and famous, and traveled the world seeking exotic water-borne quarry. Now the co-owner of Ruddick's Fly Shop, her talents for fishing have earned many accolades since her days in Glenwood Elementary and Haney Central, when she fished with the local Dogwood Fly Fishing club and once caught more fish than all of the men.

After a decent showing at the prestigious American One Fly

competition, she moved to the big time in competitive fly fishing as part of Team Canada in the 1997 World Fly Fishing competition.

It was two years later in Australia where Kathy showed the world what she is truly capable of. Fishing against 109 other anglers – all of them men – she said her well-funded and experienced international competitors viewed her as the token female of the event. But Ruddick gave them all a wake-up call in one day.

Back at the lodge resting after the first day of competition, she realized that all the strange looks after all the fishing had been more than mere chauvinism. She was actually ahead of the pack, and number one in the world.

Overall, Ruddick finished in 10th place, one of the best-ever finishes by a Canadian at the world level. Buoyed by her results, the Canadians finished seventh out of over 20 countries in the competition.

"I was the first woman on the Canadian team and one of the few in the competition. I would never have thought, in a million years, that I'd be doing what I'm doing."

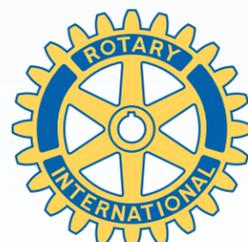
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HOMETOWN HEROES



Greg Hart

Many kids clamber over trees and branches during their childhood years, but Greg Hart never stopped climbing.

This 41-year-old knows trees – he's spent the past 25 years climbing them, performing and competing as part of the growing spectator sport of logging skills competitions. On July 15, 2001 the veteran tree-climber capped his career traveling to New York and capturing the gold medal in the tree-topping event at the Lake Placid ESPN Great Outdoor Games.

Although he's now the top in his class and a regular performer at the Maple Ridge Fair and at the PNE, Greg was once a student at Haney Central and Yennadon Elementary. He started tree topping at the age of 16 while attending Garibaldi Secondary, and knew what he wanted to do the first time he stared up at men clambering up a 40-foot high tree in seconds.

"Even as a kid I used to love climbing trees, then in Mission I saw the sport... right from the time I first saw it I wanted to be a tree climber," he says, adding he wanted to do something a "little more crazy and dangerous than the run of the mill stuff."

It was the competition, along with the ever-present thrill and danger of the speed climbing that intrigued young Greg, who says his event is "by far the most spectacular, everybody wants to see the speed climbing."

But when he first set out to become the best tree climber in the world, Greg couldn't enrol in a course or take an after-school class. The only way for him to learn was by the other champions' examples, and by his own mistakes along with a lot of practice.



As he practiced the speed climbing, Greg stayed in shape with school sports. He played eighth-man on the rugby pitch for Garibaldi's Rebels, and even went to the provincials in track and field with long-distance sprinting. It was the competitive spirit that drove him.

"It doesn't ever seem to go away."

And now that he's the best, Greg is teaching others how to become a world-class climber, passing on the wisdom he learned from so many other champions when he was young.



Dare to Dream



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PATERSON SCHULTZ VOLPATTI
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS



HOMETOWN HEROES



Stroking through the waters at the Hyack swim, now known as Haney Neptunes in Maple Ridge and strapping on her running shoes with a local track club, young Jill Savege couldn't even imagine where she would be 19 years later.

Now 28 years old, Jill spent the first nine years of her life in the local pools and running the local tracks attending Laity View Elementary.

Her mother Vale kickstarted the local school district's French Immersion program, and her grandmother Juanita is still a resident of Maple Ridge.

Since those days, Jill and her family have traveled east to live and learn, where she earned success and an Olympic tryout with swimming, and she spent her grad year at Centennial Secondary across the river in Coquitlam.

After earning an athletic scholarship to an American university, Jill realized it was time to get out of the pool. After running just for fun with the Simon Fraser University track and cross-country teams, Jill found peace in Penticton along with a new goal. The Ironman Triathlon.

Jill finished sixth in her first triathlon in 1999 after a years training, and was in a solid third place during the race in 2000 when she got a wake-up call that has forever reminded her never to ignore your body's messages. She had to walk the remainder of the race because her dreams of victory caused her to ignore the proper nutrition.

Two years later, Jill is on top of the world. She captured the title at the International Triathlon Union's World Cup race in September 2002, and then trumped the competition again in October in Japan. Now, the girl from Maple Ridge has her sights set on the 2004 Olympics and winning the Ironman one day.

"Win or lose it is more important to enjoy the process than to only focus on the destination," Jill says. "Challenge yourself to be the best you can be and make sure to have fun along the way."



Jill Savege

Dare to Dream



HOME TOWN HEROES



Graig Merritt

It's all about hard work for Maple Ridge catcher Graig Merritt. The 25-year-old baseball player is the first one to point out that it wasn't endless talent for the diamond that got him knocking on the door of the major leagues.

He credits his mother and father for instilling a passion for the game. His dad's first name is Gehrig and his is Graig. His dad is named after baseball legend Lou Gehrig and Graig is named for New York Yankee Graig Nettles. That passion for baseball was tempered with a strong dose of reality. "Hard work is my key to my success. I wasn't born with a lot of talent," he says with modesty. "God blessed me with a good arm, but I still continue to work hard every day."

Merritt, currently playing ball for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays' minor league affiliate team and the Orlando Rays AA squad, comes home every year from his baseball travels that take him to California, South Carolina and Orlando.

From holding court with the Little Dribblers in Pitt Meadows Youth Basketball during his elementary school years in Pitt Meadows and Hammond, Merritt also played soccer with Golden Ears United at ages nine and 10. He also played on the Ridge Meadows Rustlers until the Atom A-division call, when he had to trim his sports selections and settle on a goal. And the natural choice for this young man was baseball - the sport he's played since he was four with Ridge Meadows Minor Baseball. Graig went on to become a member of the Champion BC Select National Team 1995 and Team Canada 1996. Graig has had an impressive College baseball career with a staggering 200 victories against

only 50 losses in four years. In 2003 in the minor leagues, Merritt impressed the big boys at the Devil Rays, enough to get a callup to spring training and rub shoulders with general manager Lou Piniella.



He has one recommendation for any kids looking to play ball in the big time: "Sports is just supposed to be fun. So go out there and have fun. Everything else will take care of itself."

Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES



Travis Gillespie

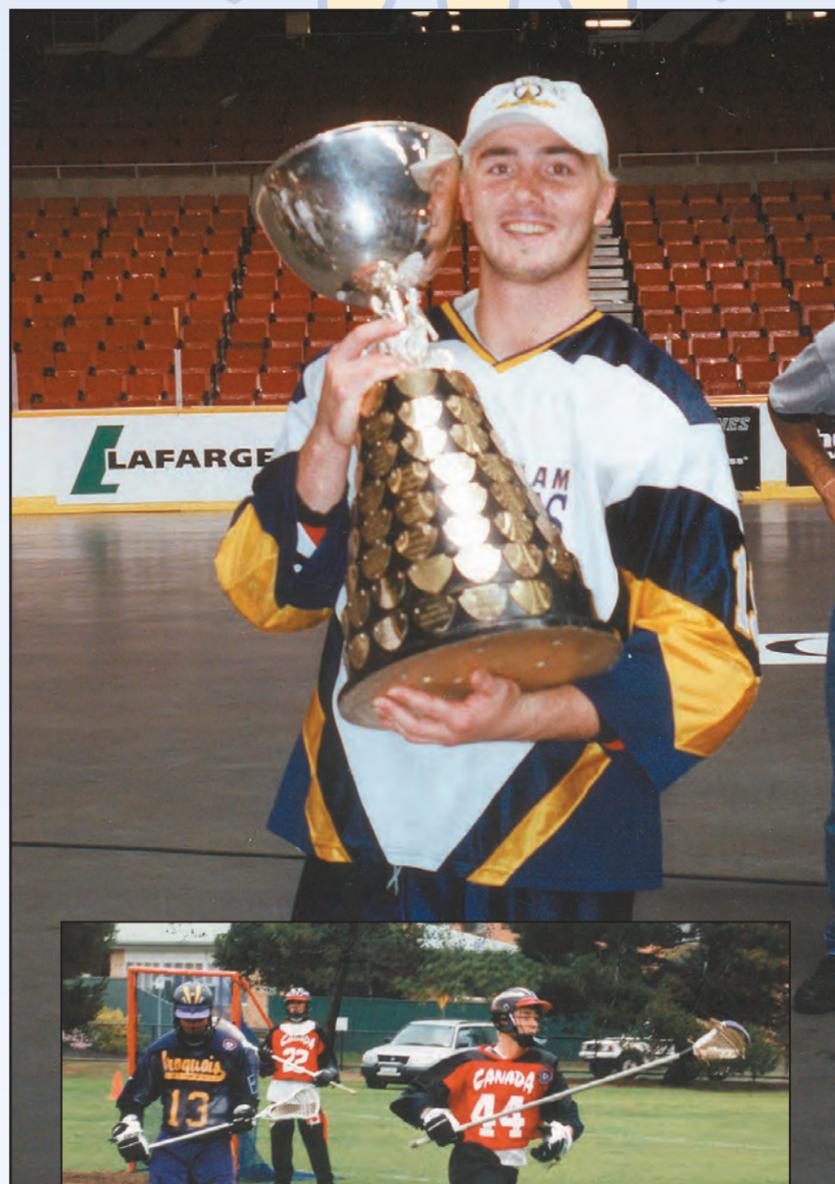
His lacrosse career has taken him from coast to coast, but this Maple Ridge athlete is always glad to come back home. Lacrosse League (NLL) defenceman Travis Gillespie is a Ridge man through and through. After posting one of the league-leading ground ball stats in his rookie season with the Columbus Landsharks, Gillespie came right back home to become a firefighter.

"It's definitely a great place to be from," the Maple Ridge Secondary School graduate says. "Once you've traveled, you really appreciate what this community has to offer." One of the things he gets a chuckle out of is the reaction of other athletes in the locker room when they hear where his hometown is. "They say they've never heard of it, until I mention Larry Walker, Cam Neely and Greg Moore."

In fact, Gillespie's classmates at MRSS were something of a sports phenomenon. When he played with the Ramblers rugby team in '96 and '97, one of his teammates was CFL player Scott Robinson. He also noted that 2003 Canadian national team goaltender Karina LeBlanc was also in his classes at MRSS. "It was really interesting, a lot of people got big opportunities," he recalls.

This outstanding lacrosse player is definitely not lacking in shining moments. Selected Rookie of the Week for the NLL in March 2003, Gillespie was at the top of senior box lacrosse in 2001, with the Coquitlam Adanacs WLA squad that hoisted the Mann Cup. In New York on a lacrosse scholarship, Gillespie was an 'All-American' three times - 2000 Honourable Mention, 2001 second team All-American and in 2002 First Team and Academic All-American.

"Even if we didn't get paid we'd still be playing. It's an addiction, it's really hard to explain with lacrosse." He says. Even though he was in love with lacrosse from an early age, it took Gillespie some time to narrow down his sports growing up. During elementary in Yennadon and Alouette, he spent a lot of time playing hockey in the Ridge meadows system, also playing with the Golden Ears United Soccer Club, and



spread the sports around even more in high school - "anything I could try really, but mostly hockey and lacrosse."

Gillespie played field lacrosse for four years with the Maple Ridge Mountaineers in high school, and hit the pitch with the rugby team and also wrestled for the Ramblers in high school.

Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES



Andrew Ladd

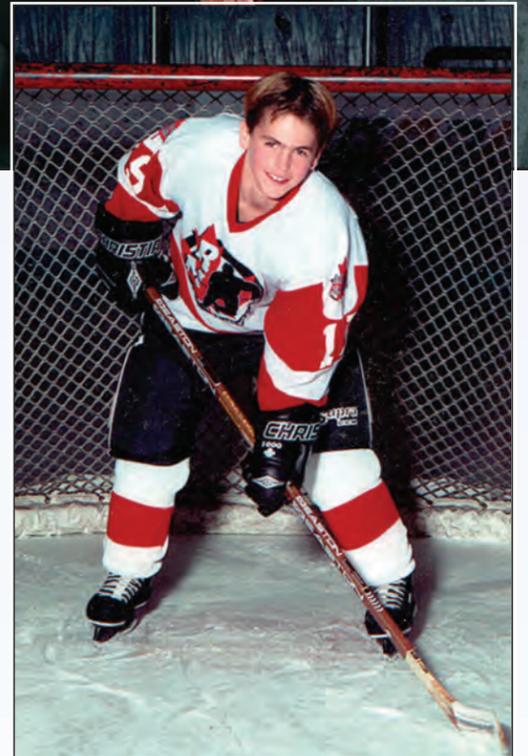
Andrew Ladd was a versatile athlete growing up in Maple Ridge. During his days at Riverside Elementary and Albion Elementary, he tried his hand at numerous sports including soccer and hockey. He played for Golden Ears United Soccer Club up until the age of 12, when he decided to focus on hockey as a member of the Ridge Meadows Minor Hockey Association.

Ladd, a graduate of Maple Ridge Senior Secondary, got his first taste of junior hockey with the Port Coquitlam Buckeroos of the

Pacific International Junior Hockey League, before making the step up to the BCHL's Coquitlam Express.

It wasn't until his 2003-2004 season with the WHL's Calgary Hitmen that he became a hot commodity with NHL scouts and after putting up 75 points in 71 games, he was drafted fourth overall in the 2004 NHL Entry Draft by the Carolina Hurricanes.

Throughout his hockey career, Ladd has benefited from the support of his parents Dave and Kim and his brothers Mike and Josh.



Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES



Donal Brandon Yip

Brandon Yip got his start in hockey at a young age, shooting around with his dad Wayne in the family's basement in Maple Ridge. It wasn't the backyard rink like the kind made by Walter Gretzky, but it did the trick.

When Brandon was six, Wayne and his wife Gale signed him up in the Ridge Meadows Minor Hockey Association where

he played through to midget. In 2002-2003, Yip went on to the Ridge Meadows Flames of the Pacific International Junior Hockey League. From there, he got a shot with the B.C. Hockey League's Coquitlam Express in the 2003-2004 season and was named the Express' top rookie. He was named a BCHL first-team all-star at the end of the season.

Yip, a graduate of Fairview Elementary and Maple Ridge Senior Secondary, was drafted by the Colorado Avalanche in the eighth round of the 2004 NHL Entry Draft and has accepted a full scholarship from the Boston University Terriers.

Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES

Ever since she started playing at the age of 10, Amber Allen has always made forward progress in soccer. Used as a sweeper in her first year with the Pitt Meadows Metro team, Allen was soon moved up to striker. "My coach decided I would be better up front since I often left the defensive line to attack the other team's net, ending up next to the forwards on my team," she said.

Nearly 20 years later, Allen is still attacking the opposition's net, now a top scorer for both the Vancouver Whitecaps and Canada's national women's team. There were many stops on the road to the national team for the Pitt Meadows native. Along with playing Metro, Allen also suited up for Pitt Meadows Senior Secondary and the provincial U16 Team before heading off to McGill University where she became a two-time Canadian university scoring champion.

"I have fond memories of playing with my high school team. Travelling and staying in hotels with friends. Loading up the mini vans and playing in front of the high school crowd."

Following graduation from McGill, Allen returned to B.C. and joined the Whitecaps, setting a then-team record of four goals in one game in her 2001 rookie season. Her best soccer memories, however, didn't come from playing in games. "I would drag my dad out to the field every day after he arrived home from work. We worked on passing, trapping the ball and shooting for hours. When he would come home late I would go over to Highland Park Elementary on my own kick the ball against the gym wall. I never tired of playing soccer and was excited all week for my next Sunday game."

Looking back, she credits her early coaches with instilling a love of the game. "Ann Steen introduced me to the game of soccer. She was my very first coach. Mr. Stoney, Mr. Humphries and Sherry Fort all contributed to my development and confidence. My dad was also a big influence in my life and playing soccer together was a special time for me. My mom continues to be my biggest fan."



Amber Allen

Dare to Dream



Meadowridge Rotary Club



S.D. No. 42
MAPLE RIDGE - PITT MEADOWS



HOME TOWN HEROES



From her early years playing with the Golden Ears United Royals to three seasons spent with the Vancouver Whitecaps women's soccer club, every time opportunity knocked, Sadie McLure answered.

A stalwart defender, McLure spent 11 years honing her craft with the Royals, winning several provincial championships and playing in the nationals. She was also a member of the provincial women's team from 1993 to 1996 and represented Team BC at the 1997 Western Canada Games.

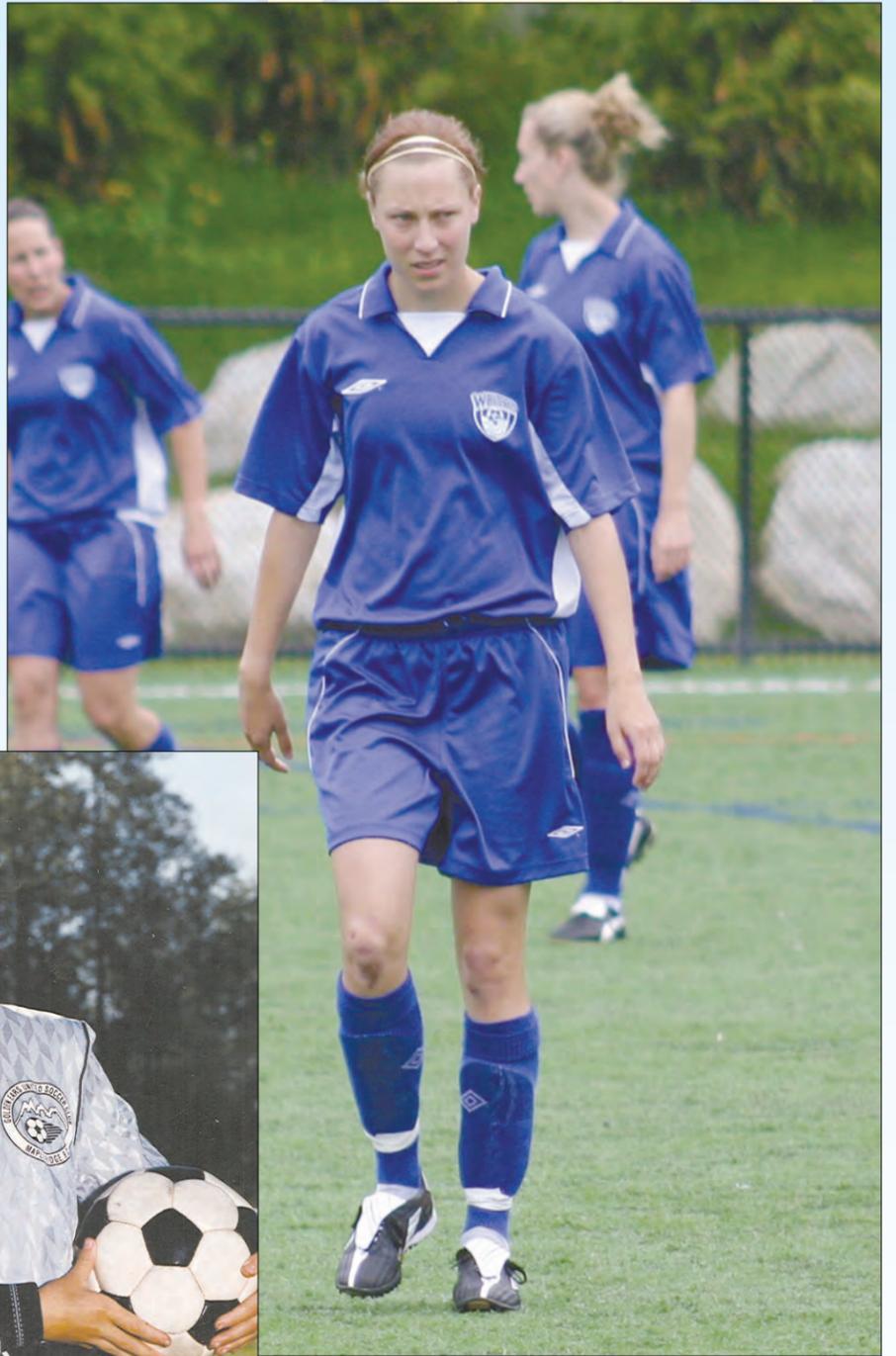
After graduating from Thomas Haney Secondary the same year, McLure headed to Simon Fraser University where she became an NAIA All Region & All American manning the backline for four seasons with the Clan.

The Clan won the NAIA National Champions in 2000 with Sadie wearing the Captain's 'C' on her jersey. She earned a degree in psychology at SFU, then travelled to Colorado in 2001 and spent one year with the Fort Collins Force. The next year McLure returned home to B.C. and suited up for the Whitecaps. In 2004, Sadie was part of the amazing Women's League Championship Team that set the standard for the franchise.

Taking to the sport in Grade 2, McLure had to make a choice to play what's known as the beautiful game. "My first year I had to decided between soccer and Brownies. I actually started in Brownies but it just wasn't my gig. Wearing the skirt wasn't really for me. I was way too much of a tomboy for that."

Looking back at her years playing for GEU, McLure said several coaches were instrumental in her development. "We were pretty fortunate because we had a good group of parents who were skilled when it came to coaching. Sharon Folka was our first coach then Neil Cook came in and (Sharon) became an assistant and kind of our manager. Then Rory Kogler came in for the last few years."

Wanting to give back to the sport, McLure started Impact HP, offering soccer seminars for female youth players and continues to play in Vancouver's Metro League.



Sadie McLure

Dare to Dream



Meadowridge Rotary Club



HOMETOWN HEROES



Equestrian athlete Natalie Jones wasn't really a horse crazy girl at first. Her sister was more into that kind of stuff. But since the former Albion Elementary School student jumped onto that first horse, she became head over heels in love with her sport. The Maple Ridge resident grew up riding horses under the tutelage of Pitt Meadows's Danalynn Rooks, who taught her everything from caring for her horses to learning how to negotiate jumps. Langley's Eddie Macken, a legendary Irish equestrian show jumper and trainer for the 2004 Irish Olympic team, has also been a huge influence. He has helped her to ride at a higher and higher level. Thomas Haney Secondary School administrators and teachers did their best to help her graduate high school on time despite the fact that she was away, attending equestrian competitions, on many occasions during the school year. Jones has progressed well in her sport, having had a successful 2006 summer season at Calgary's Spruce Meadows, where she and horse Connor cleaned up at an international horse jumping competition featuring some of the top junior and amateur riders. In the Prix de Nations, she was the anchor rider and turned in a flawless performance, going double clear to win the Nations-Cup style event for the Canadian team. Because of her successes during her events, Jones was chosen to compete in the Final Four, a competition with a twist. She and the other three riders rode each other's horses as well as their own. Jones, who had two minutes to get used to each new horse, ended up winning the Final Four. While her career looks promising and she has set her sights on one day making the Canadian Olympic team, she's also happy with simply riding her horses and having fun. But she is on the path to living her dream.



Natalie Jones

Dare to Dream



MAPLE RIDGE - PITT MEADOWS



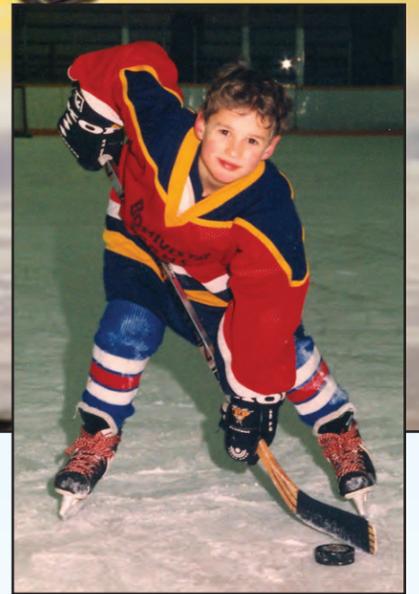
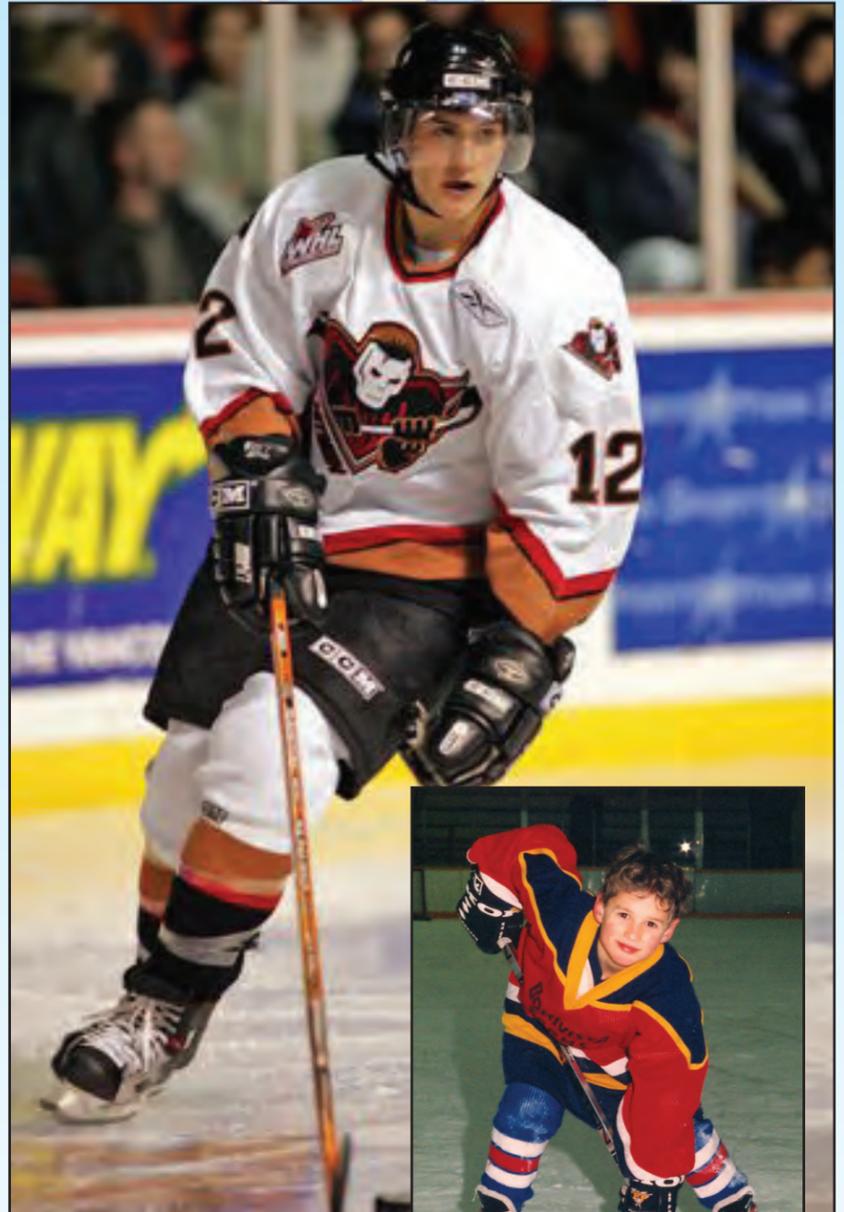
Meadowridge Rotary Club



HOMETOWN HEROES



Brett Sonne dreamed of pulling a Canada jersey over his head ever since he was a kid at Albion Elementary School. He has let that pride shine through on the ice, scoring two goals, including the game winner, in the gold medal game of the under-18 Junior World Cup. In four games during the tournament, Sonne scored five goals and added one assist. Sonne was quickly hooked on hockey. As soon as he learned that it didn't hurt when he fell on the ice, Sonne knew he wanted to keep on playing. Sonne grew up in a hockey family, with both of his older brothers playing the sport competitively, too. He learned much from older brothers Kiel and Brennan, as well as from his parents and grandparents. At Thomas Haney School, where Sonne spent Grades 8 to 11, his older brothers and his dad Stewart Sonne, the school's principal at the time, made sure he kept on track. Many Ridge Meadows Minor Hockey Association coaches helped him considerably to develop his skills in all aspects of the game. And he had players like Hall of Famer Cam Neely and Brendan Morrison of his favourite NHL team, the Vancouver Canucks, to look up to along the way. Sonne had a successful year with the Port Coquitlam Buckeroos, a Junior B team. He led the Buckeroos in scoring, and was named the team's MVP and the Pacific International Junior Hockey League's Rookie of the Year. The Calgary Hitmen had selected Sonne in the first round of the bantam draft with the 13th overall pick. Sonne lived up to his promise in his rookie season with the Hitmen, which named him the team's Rookie of the Year for the 2005-06 season.



Brett Sonne

Dare to Dream

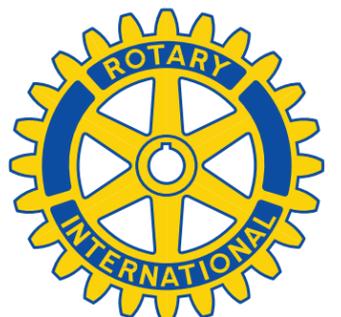


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MAPLE RIDGE - PITT MEADOWS



Meadowridge Rotary Club



HOMETOWN HEROES



Ever since Gareth Hunt stepped onto the ice at the age of three, the hockey rink was his favourite place to be. His parents signed him up for baseball, swimming and other sports but hockey was his destiny. At the age of 20 Gareth, 'the Tasmanian Devil,' has helped set the bar on passion and hard work on the Vancouver Giants. Gareth spent eight years at Laity View Elementary in Maple Ridge before moving on to Westview Secondary where he graduated in 2005. Gareth's Bantam AAA coach, Brian Crawford, remembers a young man with drive and determination that inspired the whole team. Gareth's brother Trevor is one year older which meant that in they could play on the same team every second year in minor hockey. They spent a year together playing for the South Delta Ice Hawks and a year and a half playing for the Chilliwack Chiefs. Watching his brother play inspired him to work hard at his game, and it has paid off. "I always wanted to be as good as him. I just looked up to him and I saw how hard he worked," Gareth said. "That's when hockey started to get serious." While his brother moved into NCAA hockey, Gareth signed with Giants.



Being close to home means his family can come to every game to cheer him on. But his career with the Giants has not been without adversity. Half way into his third season, Gareth hit the wall – literally – breaking his femur. There's no quit in Gareth, and he confided to his friend Nick Bruns that his goal was to get back to the ice for the 2007 Memorial Cup. He nearly made it, skating in practices and inspiring

his team mates to not let the chance of a lifetime pass them by. Determined to get back into shape for his final season with the Giants, Gareth started body building at Fit Life in Maple Ridge. His determination and hard work paid off again and he entered the Ivkar Natural Bodybuilding competition and came home with the first prize. Back on the ice in better form than ever, Gareth just wants to continue having fun with his teammates and shoot the puck into the net!

Gareth Hunt Dare to Dream



MAPLE RIDGE - PITT MEADOWS

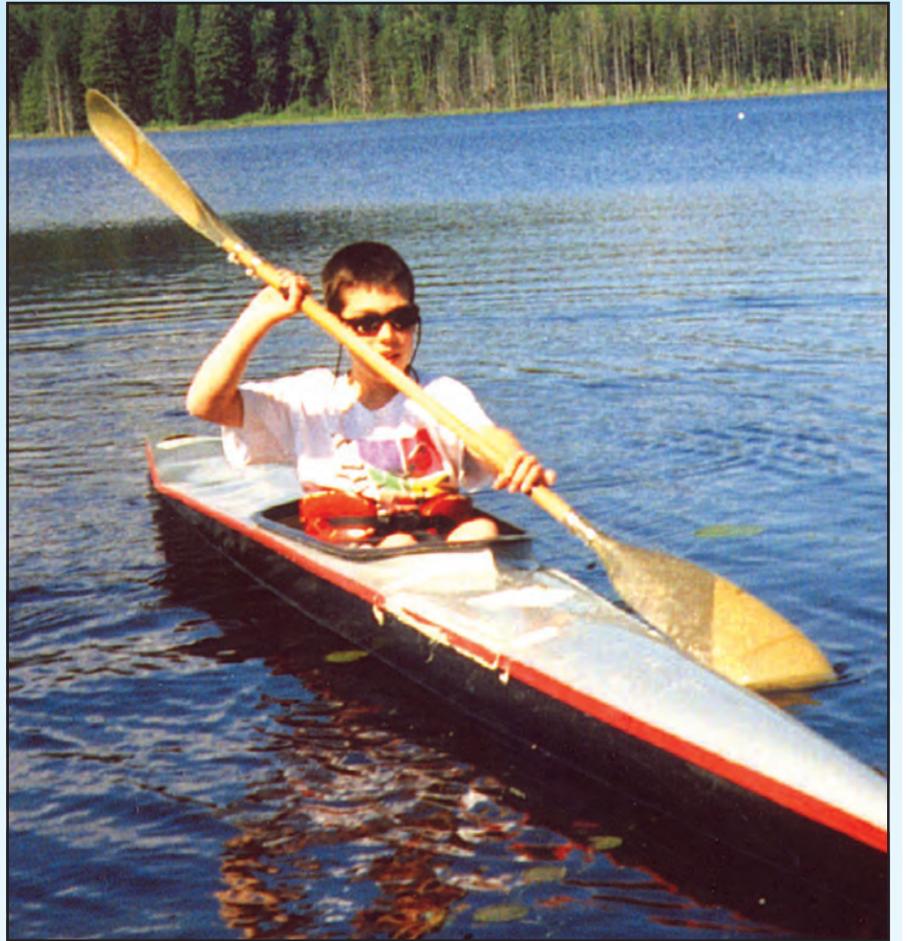
Meadowridge Rotary Club



HOMETOWN HEROES

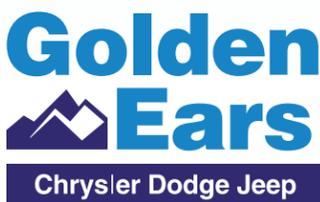


Wes Hammer is still young but his paddling has already taken him from hometown Maple Ridge across Canada and around the globe in kayaking competitions. Carrying the B.C. flag at the Western Games in 2003 and accepting the award on behalf of his hometown province was one of the highlights of Wes's athletic experience so far – but he doesn't spend much time dwelling on the past. "I want to go to the Olympics – that's my dream," Wes says. That dream keeps him on a tough training schedule while studying kinesiology at Dalhousie University. Hometown hero Wes has been paddling since he was eight years old, and started focusing on kayaking at age 11 and is still introduced as a member of the Ridge Canoe and Kayak Club at Whonnock Lake at competitions. Wes attended Fairview Elementary and Maple Ridge Secondary as he followed his dream. With the support of his parents who, through him, have become involved in the paddling scene in Maple Ridge, he went to his first competition in 2001 in London, Ont. In the next few years, he competed in the national and international competition. At the 2007 Pan Am Games in Rio de Janeiro, he took fourth place with paddling buddy Colin Corbett in the 1000-metre doubles. Wes chose Dalhousie University because it offered the best training possibilities – and that keeps him busy six days a week, on top of his school work. Training is grueling, and includes running, weights, biking, swimming, and cross-country skiing to keep his whole physique in shape as kayaking is about more than just upper body strength. But his hopes of getting to the 2008 and 2012 Olympics keep Wes working hard. And that feeling of getting into his kayak, and paddling for his country is second to none. "I like the feel of the wind."



Wes Hammer

Dare to Dream



Meadowridge Rotary Club



HOMETOWN HEROES



It took a coach from Eastern Europe to teach Maple Ridge's Kevin Mitchell a winning formula for success - and he learned his lesson well.

"Give 100 per cent to everything and always believe in yourself."

Water polo has taken Kevin around the world and finally to the 2008 Beijing Olympics - the first time Canada qualified for a spot in a game dominated by Europeans.

From a young age, his father Robert signed him up for multiple sports: he played baseball with Ridge Meadows Minor Baseball and soccer with Maple Ridge Soccer - but water was his natural element.

He and his two older brothers swam with the Haney Neptunes. His brothers Justin and Ian also played water polo, and at the age of six, Kevin decided he wanted to follow in his big brothers' footsteps.

Playing water polo soon was an integral part of his life and by the time he was in high school, he was playing elite-level water polo with Pacific Storm. His coach Michel Roy with Pacific Storm gave him a "nudge" in the right direction and got him dreaming about competing internationally and at the Olympics.

By that time the Haney Neptunes had started a water polo team and at the age of 17 Kevin started coaching in his home pool.

"I love coaching," Kevin said. "It's a good feeling when you teach someone something."

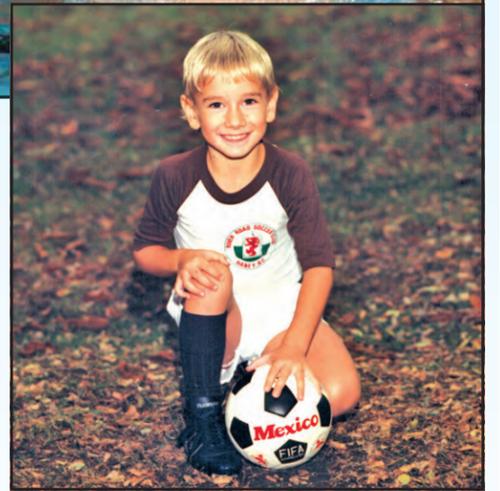
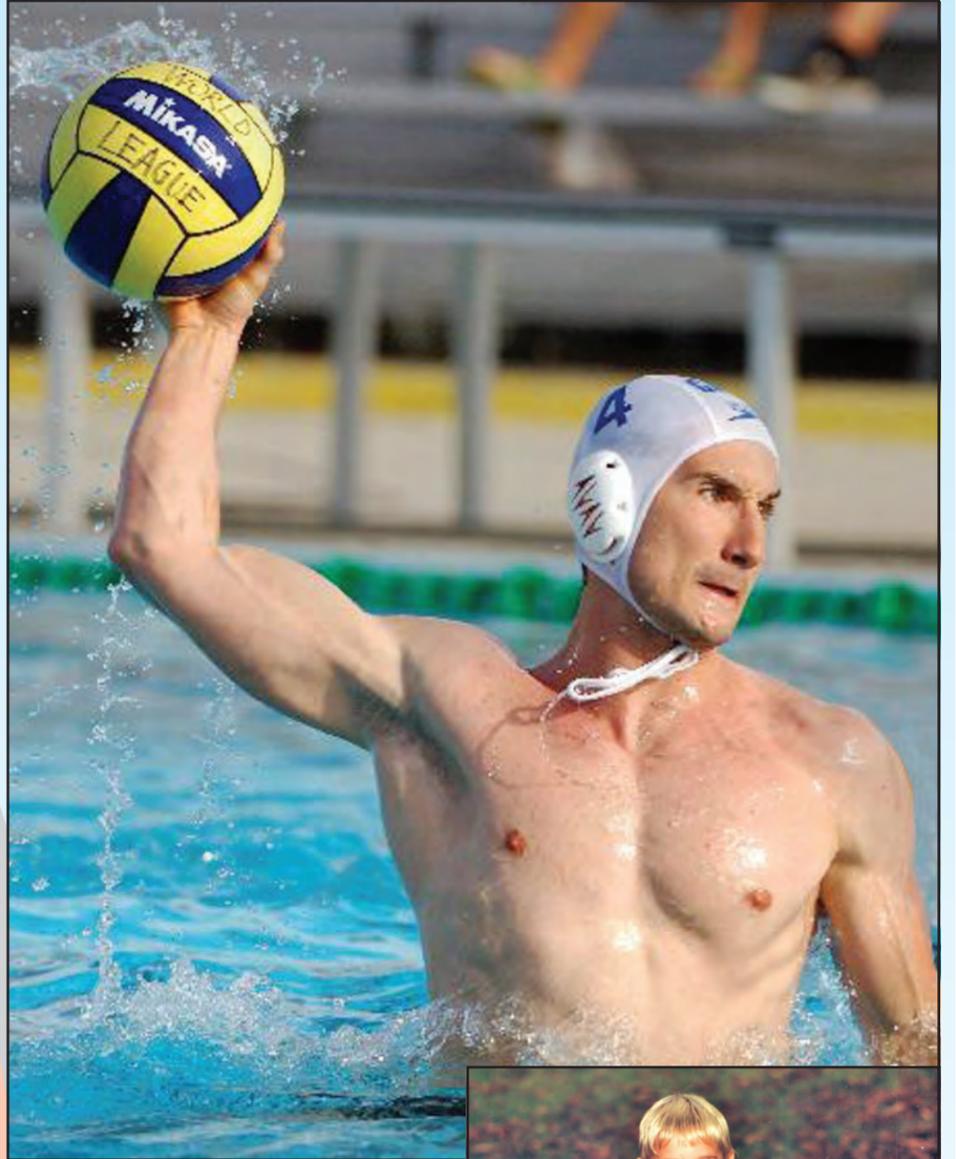
Playing with Pacific Storm and coaching started to cut into Kevin's school work and he ended up graduating from the adult education department in Maple Ridge, after starting high school at Maple Ridge Secondary and continuing at Thomas Haney.

But he kept playing on national teams and getting accolades for his aquatic prowess. In 2002, he was MVP at the senior men's championships. In 2006/07 he played in a semi-pro league on the Sydney University Lions in Australia.

Canada had never had a water polo team qualify for the Olympics - the three times they played, they got in by default.

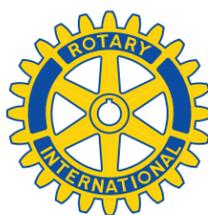
But in 2008, the national team was ready to take on the Europeans under their coach Dragan Jovanovic, who gave them the mental and technical training to take them from being the underdogs at the world championships in Romania this year to, for the first time, qualifying for a spot at the Olympics.

Kevin has signed a one-year contract to play on Ethnikos, the Greek water polo team and hopes to continue playing on elite European teams.



Kevin Mitchell

Dare to Dream



Meadowridge Rotary Club



HOMETOWN HEROES



Little Echo, K.B., Shadow, Brigadoon and The Dragon are some of the horses Jennifer McKenzie remembers from her childhood and youth as a young equestrian in Maple Ridge.

Life was a "bowl of cherries" for Jennifer for her first 17 years.

Jennifer moved to Maple Ridge when she was four years old. She attended Fairview Elementary and then went on to Westview Secondary until Grade 12.

She had been riding and swimming with the Haney Neptunes from a young age, but when she was 10, her parents sat her down and said she would have to choose the sport she wanted to focus on - she chose her pony.

Jennifer trained at the Maple Ridge Equisport Centre which was around the corner from her home, under the direction of coach Zoltan Sztzehlo.

By 16, she was the youngest rider in the North American Continental Competition, which was held in Maple Ridge in 1982.

In 1983, her life came to a screeching halt when she fell off her horse causing a hemorrhage in her brain stem from which she was not expected to survive.

Jennifer spent a year at Vancouver General Hospital and G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre.

Jennifer was paralyzed on the right side of her body, had double vision and had lost her speech in the accident. Over the years, she has regained a lot of her mobility and speech.

Jennifer started swimming after her extensive rehabilitation to regain muscle strength and improve her flexibility, but Tilly Muller of the Maple Ridge Pacific Riding for the Disabled - now the North Fraser Therapeutic Riding Association - kept taking her out to competitions and meets to convince her to get back in the saddle.

In the late 1990s, she started riding again and in 2000 was back in competitions. In 2003, she travelled to Belgium and was part of a four-member team competing in the World Dressage Championships for Riders with a Disability.

That same year, she was named Athlete of the Year by the Horse Council B.C. She was also named Pacific Sport Athlete of the Year for the Fraser Valley for 2007/08.

In 2004, she qualified for the Athens Paralympics, but as her father Robert had recently passed away, she stayed home with her mother Vi who has been her staunch supporter in her athletic pursuits.

But 2008 was Jennifer's year - she qualified again and attended the equestrian portion of the Paralympics which took place in Hong Kong. Jennifer had the only Canadian-bred horse at the Paralympics and Valentine and Jennifer helped the Canadian team come seventh overall.

"I was proud to represent my country and community," Jennifer said.

With the 2008 Paralympics behind her, Jennifer is aiming next for the 2010 World Equestrian Games in Kentucky.



Jennifer McKenzie Dare to Dream



Meadowridge
Rotary Club



HOMETOWN HEROES



Drive and determination have steered Stephanie McDougall as an athlete and in 2008 took her to the Beijing Paralympics, which has been her goal since even before she began to swim seriously.

"I have always had a dream of going to the Paralympics ever since I was really young," Stephanie said. "I think I wanted to go even before I became involved in swimming."

This young Maple Ridge girl's dreams aren't hampered by spina bifida and hydrocephalus, a physical condition that doesn't slow her down in the pool or out of the pool.

Stephanie went to Riverside and Harry Hooze Elementary School before going to Garibaldi where she graduated from in 2006.

Before she began swimming, Stephanie was riding with the Maple Ridge Pacific Riding for the Disabled - currently the North Fraser Therapeutic Riding Association - under coach Tilly Muller, winning a first-place trophy when she was still under ten years old.

But swimming was the sport that was to dominate her life and Stephanie has now been with the Haney Seahorses for 11 years.

Stephanie first went to the Canada Games in 2001 when she was only 13 years old - and she was back in 2005 and brought home a bronze in the 100-metre breaststroke.

Travelling to Europe for various swimming competitions has been a high point in her athletic endeavours, and Stephanie said each meet brought her one step closer to her ultimate goal of getting to the Paralympics.

In 2007, Stephanie needed major surgery three months before the ParaPanAm Trials and therefore missed out - but she knew the next thing would be Beijing.

It was only seven seconds that kept Stephanie McDougall from getting to the 2004 Athens Paralympics, but that seven seconds gave her the determination to make it to Beijing in 2008.

"I wanted to do it so badly," she said.

Stephanie had a rigorous training schedule before going to Beijing, assisted by her coach Reg Shaw.

"You have to keep going no matter how hard it gets," Stephanie said. Believing in herself and keeping a positive attitude have paid off: Stephanie placed eighth in Beijing and has already set her sights on London 2012.



Stephanie McDougall Dare to Dream



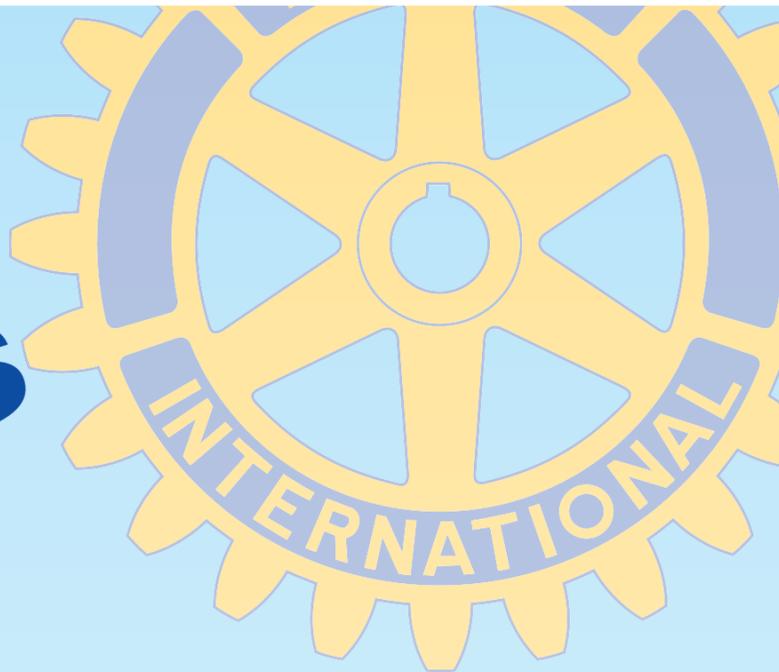
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Meadowridge
Rotary Club



HOMETOWN HEROES



Water polo player Carmen Eggens remembers looking at Home Town Hero posters as a youth never thinking she would be chosen as one herself. She could hardly believe it when she got word that she was nominated as a Home Town Hero herself.

"I was really surprised – I never thought I'd be up there with people I look up to," Carmen said.

But her hours of dedication in the pool have made her a hero in her hometown of Pitt Meadows and in Maple Ridge, and have paid off in a scholarship to the University of Hawaii on their water polo team.

Following in the footsteps of her mother who also played water polo and swam with the Haney Neptunes, Carmen and her sister Monika have played since before hitting double digits.

As a child, Carmen also spent countless hours on the basketball court, the soccer field and at the gymnastics club, but from a young age knew that water was her medium.

Carmen's favourite sport at school was basketball and Pitt Meadows Secondary coach and math teacher John Rocca's basketball camps were a highlight for her. She would have continued playing basketball except that by Grade 9, her life had been completely taken over by water polo, a sport she calls "one of the toughest women's sports out there."

As a teenager, travelling to games and competitions started eating into her school time, but the staff at Pitt Meadows Secondary were always helpful, especially teacher and soccer coach Mike Oldridge who always made sure her school was going smoothly despite her hectic sports schedule including a semester by correspondence while training in Montreal.

"All through school I had pretty supportive teachers," Carmen said.

Playing with the Haney Neptunes Swim Club, Carmen was under the tutelage of Ian and Justin Mitchell – whose brother Kevin is also a Home Town Hero and plays professional water polo – and Carmen said it was the Mitchell brothers who recognized that she would make a great water polo player. "They taught me all my developing skills," Carmen said. "They just made it so fun to learn."

Carmen went as far as she could with the Haney Neptunes, but her talents allowed her to reach beyond the local clubs and to join the provincial team Pacific Storm where she was coached by Michel Roy who would eventually get her into the program at the University of Hawaii.

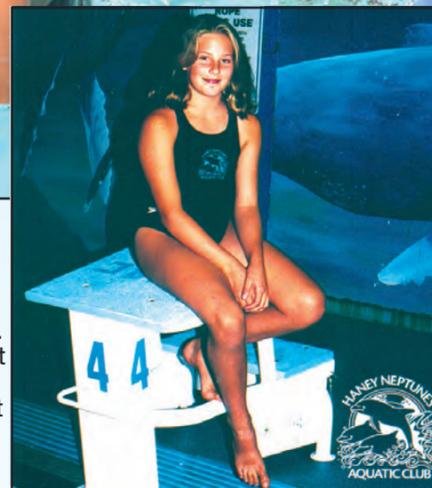
Carmen has travelled the world playing water polo. She was at the Junior Pan Ams in El Salvador in 2004 with the Canadian Junior National Team and at the Junior Worlds the next year in Perth, Australia. In 2006, she was at the Junior Pan Ams again, this time in Montreal.

Carmen went to Porto, Portugal, in 2007 to the Junior Worlds for the second time with the Canadian Junior National Team.

In 2009, Carmen competed with the Canadian Senior National Team in California, Russia and Italy.

Carmen applies the lessons she has learned over the years in the pool to her daily life – discipline and dedication to whatever she does: she hates being late for anything and she always completes her homework on time. Along with the wins, there have been disappointments along the way as well, but Carmen's attitude lets her get past them and move on to the next challenge.

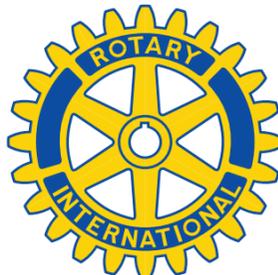
"You just have to try to brush them off and try harder the next time," Carmen said. "You can't focus on the past – you just have to move forward."



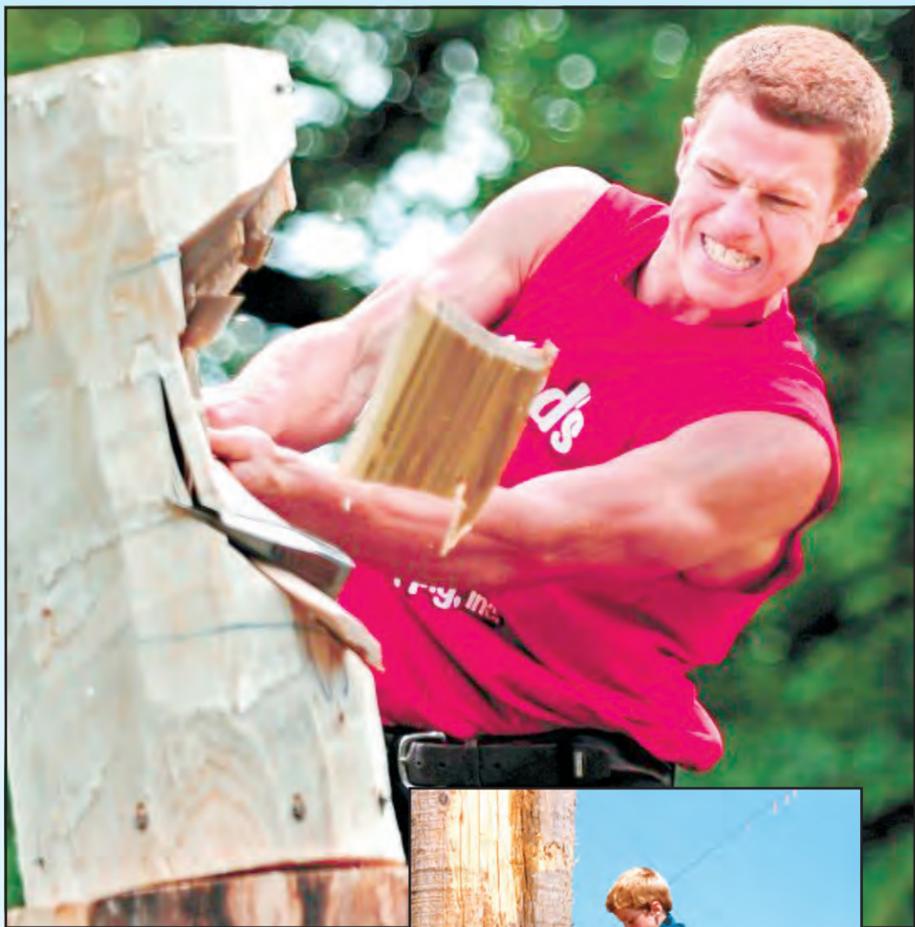
Carmen Eggens Dare to Dream



Meadowridge Rotary Club



HOMETOWN HEROES



2010 is the first year there will be a father and son who are both Hometown Heroes.

Pole-climber Stirling Hart will join his father Greg Hart in the pantheon of people from Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows who have been honoured for their athletic achievements.

Born in Maple Ridge, Stirling grew up in Ruskin and graduated from Garibaldi Secondary in 2007.

Competitive pole climbing began in logging camps in the late 1800s where loggers used to compete for bragging rights. Pole climbing and logging run in the Hart family – Stirling's father Greg and his grandfather Gord ran a logging company and later a log house building company. Stirling started pole climbing at the age of four, encouraged by his father Greg who had been competing in pole climbing for years.

While Stirling enjoyed playing basketball at Garibaldi Secondary and football – winning the provincials at the age of 13 - pole climbing was in his blood.

Stirling splits his time between doing exhibition logging shows at Grouse Mountain during the summer months and then travelling to New Zealand and Australia in the winter months to put on exhibition shows.

In 2010, Stirling won three world championships - the 80-foot, 90-foot and 100-foot records. He won the 100-foot championship in Longview, Wash. - he climbed the pole in 23.3 seconds beating the previous world record of 24.8 seconds that had held since 1988.

Two weeks later, Stirling won the 90-foot pole climbing championship at the Lumberjack World Championship in Hayward, Wisconsin. "You're not really anybody until you win there," Stirling said.

The 80-foot pole climbing championship in Squamish was an especially sweet victory for Stirling – he beat the world record of 17.84 seconds with a new time of 17.81 seconds. Not only was his father at the bottom of the pole waiting for him as he beat the record, the record he beat was of his long-time coach and mentor Wade Stewart.

Stirling has been training younger pole climbers to bring more interest to the sport. To compete in pole climbing, it helps if you're "a little bit crazy," Stirling said, and you can't be afraid of heights.

After racing to the top of a pole strapped on with a rope and with a spike on each shoe, the climber races to the bottom with mandatory touchdowns every 20 feet. This can take under five seconds, Stirling said, and is not for the faint of heart.

Stirling attributes his success in pole climbing to his extended family including his parents and grandparents

"I've been really lucky my family has been supportive," Stirling said. "I wouldn't be where I am today if they hadn't given me that little push."

Stirling Hart Dare to Dream

Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES



Brad Hunt was still a year away from preschool when he fell in love with professional hockey watching the Vancouver Canucks and New York Islanders with his dad.

"I didn't want to do anything else," he admitted, "and now my dream is getting closer," he added with excitement in his voice.

Brad attended Riverside Elementary School and then went on to attend Thomas Haney Secondary playing a number of sports, but his first love was hockey. He cites a number of influences on his development as a player, starting with his father.

"Dad played as a goalie and the experience he gained watching the game between the pipes has been valuable in helping me learn to be a smart player."

Brad is filled with gratitude for the tutelage of his first coach, Ralph Vos, who helped him learn important skills and the attitude required to play competitive hockey. Brad's coaches included Dave Griffiths and Mat Levan in Bantam AAA, Mike Browne for his Midget B2 year and the next year he became a part of the Midget AAA Ridge Meadows Rustlers, coached by Spencer Levan.

"Brad's strong play, leadership and work ethic were evident when our team won the Silver Medal in the BC Midget AAA Provincial finals in 2006," recalled coach Levan.

At 16, Brad moved up to the Junior ranks with the Ridge Meadows Flames. While still one of the youngest players on the team, he found his stride. He credits the influence of Bobby Vermette – a great coach and former GM of the Flames – in helping hone his aggressive but intelligent playing style. Brad was called up from the Flames to be part of the Burnaby Express run to winning the RBC Cup, presented annually to the National Tier 2 Junior A Champions.

In 2008 Brad was offered a scholarship to attend Bemidji State University in Minnesota. His freshman year was impressive. This small Midwestern university went all the way to the 2009 NCAA Frozen Four and Brad established himself as a leader on the team. His 32 points were fifth in the nation among rookies and ranked sixth for defenseman scoring. He was named as the College Hockey America Rookie of the Year, earned a spot on the CHA All-Rookie Team, was selected First Team All-CHA by the league's coaches and he garnered NCAA Midwest Region All-Tournament Team honors.

Brad's appearance in the NCCA Championship in 2009 put him in exclusive list of Ridge Meadows Minor Hockey alumni and Home Town Heroes that includes Brendan Morrison and Brandon Yip. When Brad was told of his selection as a Home Town Hero he said: "This is something I share with my family, my amazing coaches, my many teammates and this community that has been so supportive of minor hockey. I'm blown away."

This five-foot, nine-inch defenceman is known for his hard shot and bone-crushing checks. When asked for his inspiration to keep up all the practices and his studies Brad offered this quote: "My dad gave me some great advice. Whenever you show up at the rink you either go hard or go home."

Looks like Brad won't be 'home' for a long time.

Brad Hunt Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES



As a child, Sean McBeath saw the Home Town Hero posters on the wall of his school and the Leisure Centre, and he once told his father "I want to be on that wall someday."

2011 is his year to join those ranks. He's one of many athletic stars from Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows who have benefited from community sports and local coaches to go on to compete on the world stage.

Even though he's from the "small town" of Maple Ridge, the Home Town Hero program inspired Sean to realize that he could go far and be successful. "Your geography doesn't limit your success in life," the 22-year-old said.

Sean started playing soccer with Golden Ears United Soccer Club at a young age. In 1999, his mother signed him up for recreational paddling in anticipation of a family canoe trip. That is what got him on to the water in a serious way.

After juggling paddling and soccer - and spending some time on the ice with the Ridge Meadows Racers - Sean had to make a choice, and that choice turned out to be paddling with the Ridge Canoe and Kayak Club. Sean's first coach in paddling, Paul Lovatt, was "amazing" and his "crazy work ethic" inspired Sean to work harder and reach for greater heights.

While Paul was tough and sometimes a bit intimidating, he was someone Sean could confide in both on and off the water. "Even my school success, I like to think Paul is the reason I work so hard," Sean said. To succeed in paddling at a national and international level meant practicing six days a week in addition to running, weights, and strength training.

In 2003, he was a multiple medalist at the Western Canada Summer Games. As part of the junior national team, Sean won two bronzes and one silver medal at the Pan Am Championships in New Mexico in 2006. He was a bronze medalist at both the 2005 and 2009 Canada Summer Games.

As a dual Canadian-Japanese citizen, Sean won gold in the 1,000-metre, the 500-metre, and the 200-metre events, in the 2007 junior national team trials in Japan.

Sean attended Laity View Elementary and then Maple Ridge Secondary schools. Through Grades 10 to 12, Sean travelled a lot for his paddling and spent a few months at a time in Florida training, but the staff at school helped him make sure he didn't fall behind in his studies. "The overwhelming majority of all my teachers and principals and vice-principals were extremely supportive," he said.

Upon graduation, Sean was offered scholarships to several universities, but decided to study at McGill in Montreal for two years, later

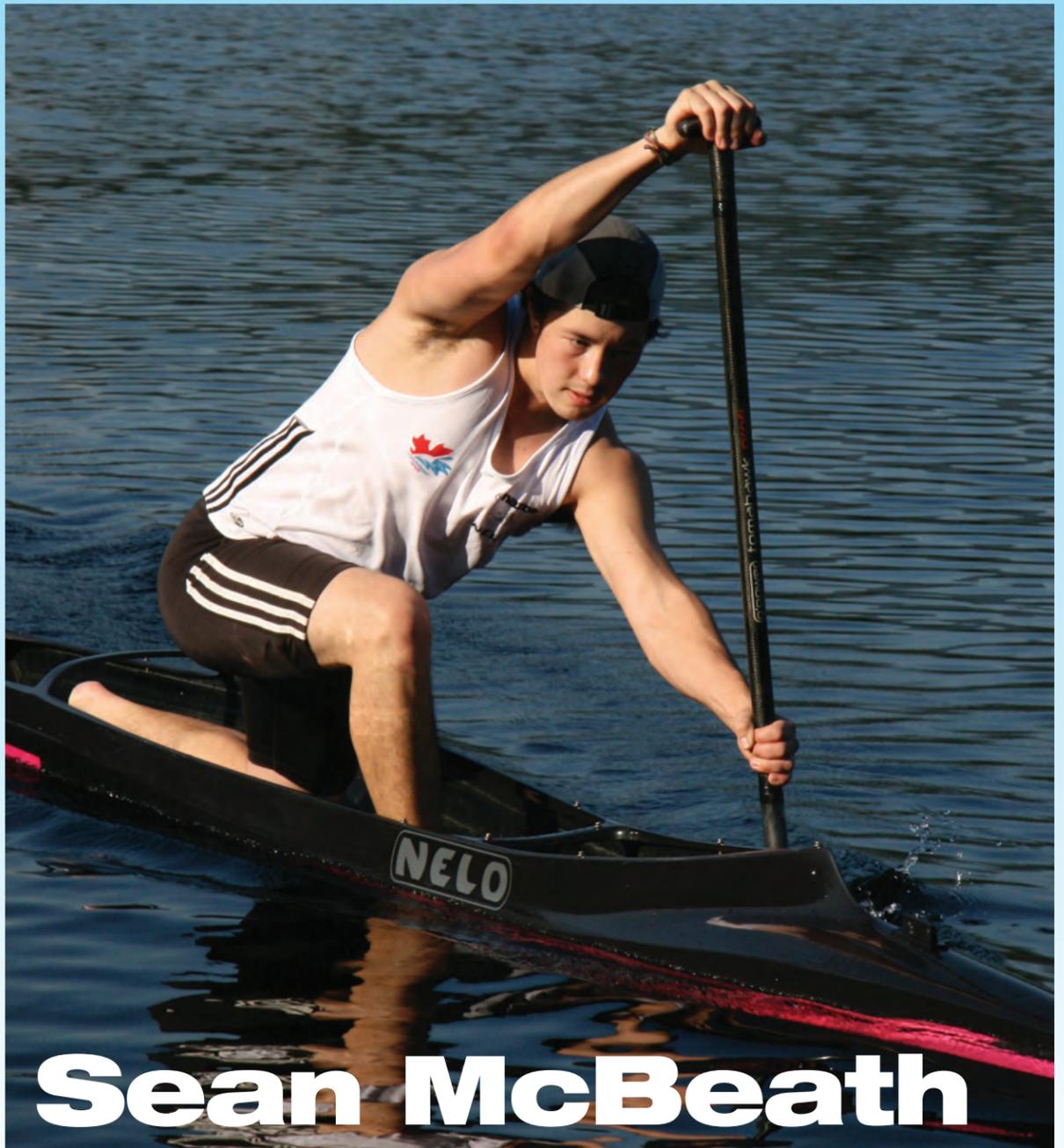
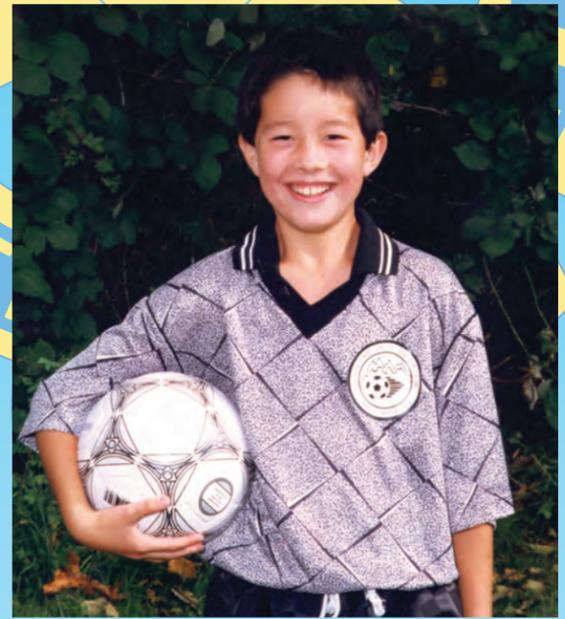
transferring to UBC where he is currently studying engineering and pre-medicine.

It wasn't enough for Sean to compete nationally and internationally in paddling - he also wanted to give back and has made it possible for people with disabilities to enjoy the sport that he loves.

In 2011, Sean founded Vancouver's first and only adaptive paddling program which allows teens and adults with multiple sclerosis, autism, down syndrome, spina bifida, and other disabilities to enjoy the sport that's given him so much enjoyment and opportunity over the years.

After successfully starting the Vancouver program, he was asked by Ridge Canoe and Kayak Club to start up and run their adaptive paddling.

"It's the least really that I can do," Sean said.

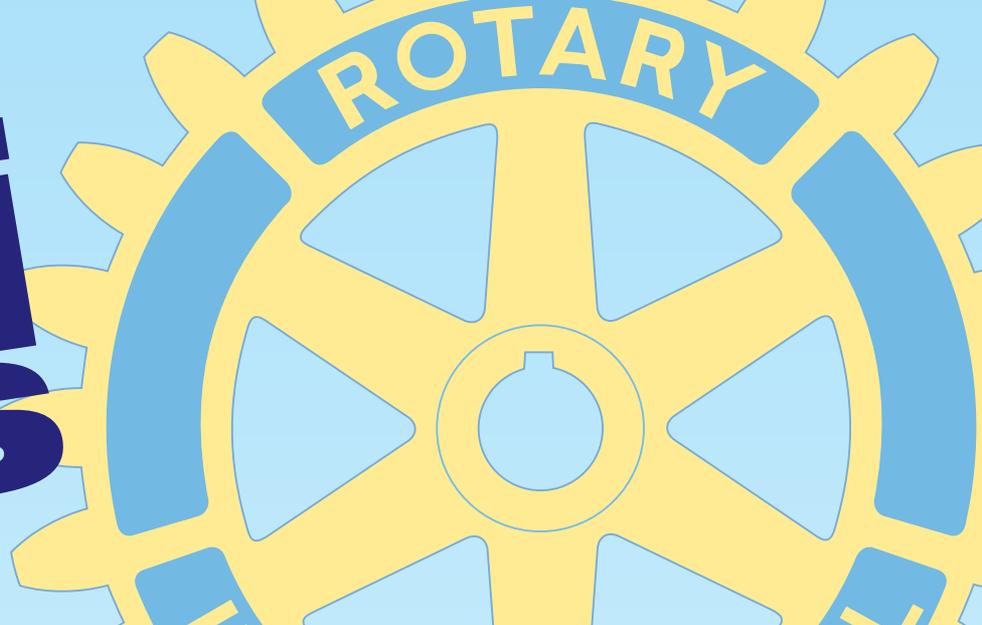


Sean McBeath

Dare To Dream



HOME TOWN HEROES



Nathan Stein

Paralympian Nathan Stein has a silver medal from the 2012 London Games that hangs around his neck near his 'No Surrender' tattoo that's inked over his heart. When the 20-year-old is questioning his strength or when things get tough, that tattoo reminds him of how far he has come in such a short time.

In 2003, when he was a student at Mount Crescent Elementary in Maple Ridge, Nathan was a budding star with both the Haney Neptunes Water Polo Club and Golden Ears United Soccer program. That is also when he found out he has osteochondritis dissecans. It is a condition where the bone at the bottom of the femur, the condyle, is underdeveloped and breaks away.

It was operated on a dozen times before the Maple Ridge Secondary graduate was classified in 2009 as an Sb9, which means a swimmer has minimal weakness affecting his legs and some deformity in his feet or minor loss of a part of a limb.

By the end of that year, despite his ever-changing abilities, he was competing for his country at the International Paralympic Committee world championships in Rio de Janeiro and broke the record by three seconds in the 100-metre breaststroke.

Before joining Team Canada, he swam for the Haney Neptunes and Surrey Knights.

Today, this 6-foot-3-inch-tall athlete's journey is only on the starting blocks but he has already won the silver Paralympic hardware for 50-metre freestyle in 2012.

He also won the bronze medal at the 2011 Para Pan Pacific Championships. And, he holds records in the 50-metre freestyle, 50-metre butterfly,

and all breaststroke records.

For Nathan, the 2012 London Paralympics was an "amazing experience." "Every moment is just so surreal, from finishing my race and getting to step on the podium," Nathan explained.

"It is just extra incentive to try to get better, gives me more confidence in myself. It was my first Paralympics, and I can only get better," he added.



Dare To Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES

It's a certain type of athlete who survives in rugby – on the pitch, it's a physical battle, off the pitch, opponents will sit down together with no grudges.

This year's Home Town Hero Ron VandenBrink learned from an early age that he was the type of athlete who could handle the physicality of rugby but still just keep it on the pitch.

Ron was born in Maple Ridge in 1962 but grew up in Pitt Meadows, attending Meadowlands Elementary and Pitt Meadows Secondary.

As a basketball player in Grade 8 and 9, he discovered he was a physical player and was encouraged to find a more physical sport.

Ron started playing rugby in Grade 11, but in Grade 12 – under the direction of his coach Pat Derouin – he started to love the game.

"I think that's when the bug really bit me," he said.

Ron attributes his early start in rugby to Derouin who was willing to coach a group of guys who had never played.

"He was very passionate about the sport and very enthusiastic

– and he was very good at the fundamentals," Ron said.

In addition to playing in high school, he joined the Alouettes – the community rugby club.

And after graduating from Pitt Meadows Secondary, he was asked to try out for the Fraser Valley rep team.

In 1981, Ron took part in the Canada Summer Games in Thunder Bay, Ont., on the B.C. U19 team and was named top try scorer on the B.C. rugby team.

In September 1982, he went to Australia to play on the Sydney Welsh Rugby Club.

"That's when my game took another step forward," Ron said. "These guys were really serious about the game."

Back in Canada, Ron was part of the Canadian development team in 1986, and then was chosen to play on the Canadian national team, facing the U.S. in Tucson, Ariz. and receiving his first cap in November 1986.

The national team played in the World Cup in August 1987, co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand. While the Canadians only placed



Ron VandenBrink

14th out of 16 countries, for Ron, it was a step toward playing on the B.C. and Canadian national teams – which he did for the next five years.

Ron's last big competition was the 1991 World Cup, where Canada placed eighth, the highest ranking for his home country so far.

Competing – winning and losing – at such a high level taught Ron

perseverance, and how to deal with the highest of highs and lowest of lows.

"It helps you get your emotions in check," he said.

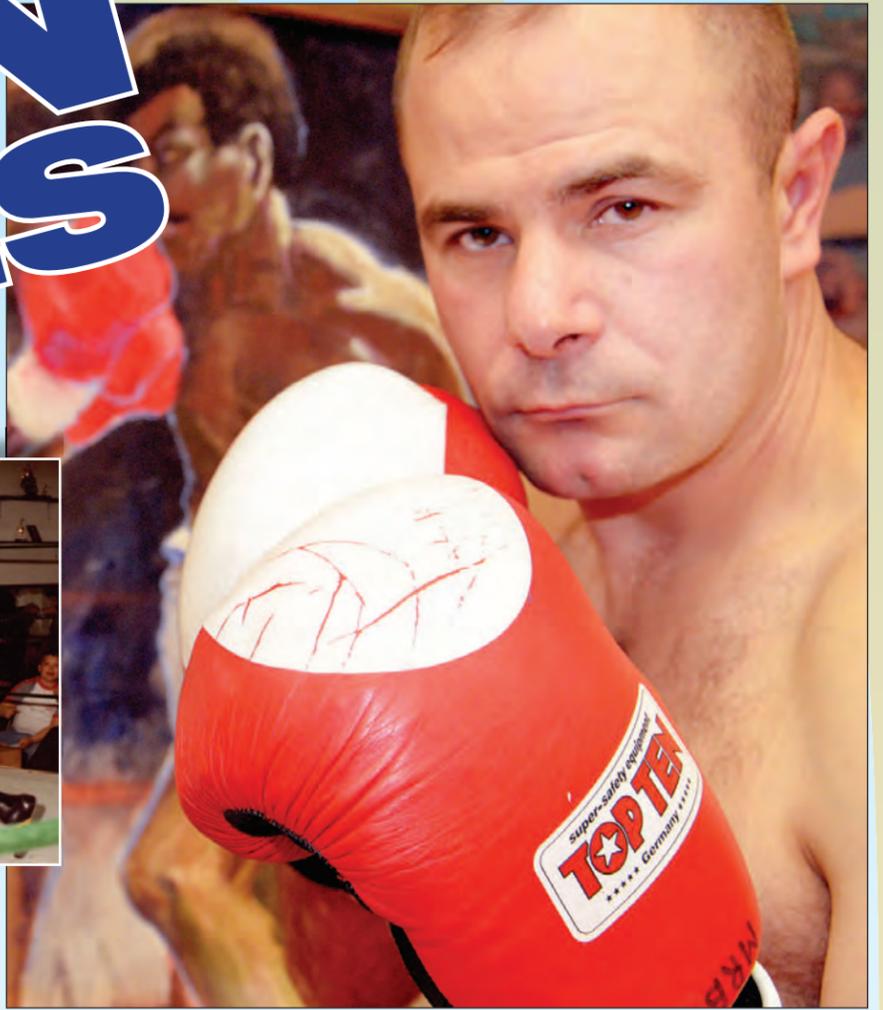
It also taught him how to deal with a tough situation in a hard game. It taught him reliance on teammates.

And, it taught him to "trust people – that they have your back."

Dare to Dream



HOME TOWN HEROES



Perseverance and dedication in the boxing ring took Maple Ridge's Rick Funk around the world, sometimes sparring with world-class opponents.

Rick, who attended Yennadon Elementary and Maple Ridge Secondary and graduated from Garibaldi Secondary, started boxing at the age of 12.

After a few street fights, he was encouraged to try out boxing to channel his fighting spirit.

The first time he was in the ring, he thought he was tough. But he quickly learned that boxing is more than fighting – it's an art and a skill.

Rick went on to win just about every boxing tournament and best boxer award across Western Canada as a junior.

Rick's boxing career came to a screeching halt, though, when his right hand was severely injured in a car accident. After a three-and-a-

half month stay in hospital, he was ready to fight again – despite the advice of his doctors.

"This is my chance to prove to everyone I was right," he said.

After his accident, he won the Junior B.C. Golden Gloves and a silver medal in nationals in 1987. In 1988, he won the U19 provincial championships and got a silver in the U19 nationals.

In both 1987 and 1988, he received the Jimmy Symes Top Boxer of B.C. award.

In 1989, boxing took him abroad. He competed for Team Canada in the U19 "A" team in San Juan, Puerto Rico, continuing on to box in the Dominican Republic and Italy, where he won a contested bout.

Despite his hand giving him prob-

lems, Rick still went on to compete in the U19 world junior championships, reaching the quarter-finals and obtaining fourth in the world ranking.

Finally in 1989, despite pressure to go professional, he hung up his gloves for good.

Rick is grateful to his three coaches for helping him in the ring – each one contributing in a different way: Wally Hill, Glyn Jones, and John Skanks.

John was an "amazing technical coach," who taught Rick the finer aspects of boxing, making him into a finished, polished fighter, which gave him that edge to win.

"It's so important to believe in yourself – to have perseverance and dedication," Rick said.

Being in the boxing ring taught Rick that to be the best, you have to earn it.

"Hard work overcomes talent every day of the week," Rick said.

Rick Funk

Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES

Victor Bartley forged a hockey path from a backyard rink in Ontario to Ridge Meadows Minor Hockey to the National Hockey League.

His journey has led him to Music City USA, where he is a second-year defenceman with the NHL's Nashville Predators.

He played his first NHL game with the Nashville Predators during their 6-0 victory over the Edmonton Oilers in March 2013.

The details of his first shift were a blur to Victor, who said, "All I could recall, when it was over, is that I thought to myself, 'You belong here'."

Born Feb. 17, 1988 in Ottawa, Victor moved to Maple Ridge when he was five years old.

Back in Ontario, his parents kept a backyard rink for their young kids to hone their hockey skills.

In Maple Ridge, Victor began playing organized hockey at the tyke level.

From that point, Victor played all of his minor hockey with the Ridge Meadows Minor Hockey Association, from atom A1 through to bantam.

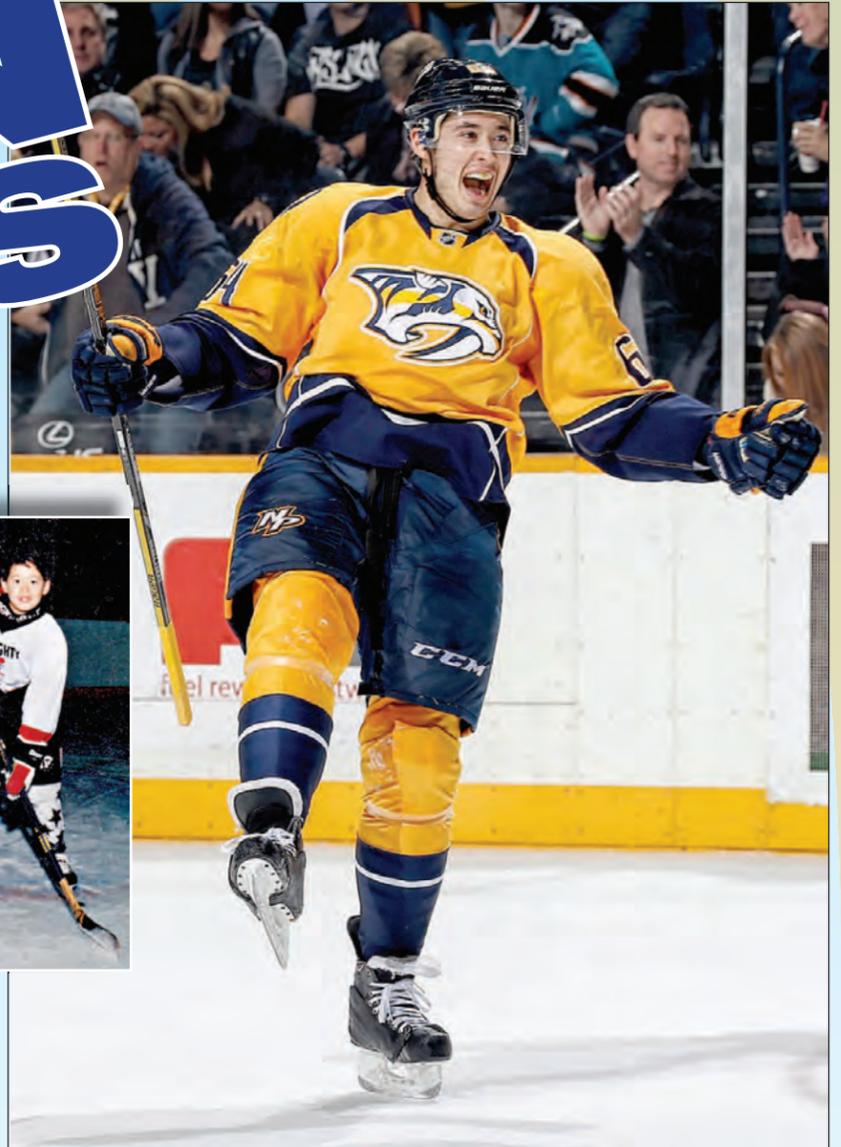
A highlight from his minor hockey days was his bantam AAA team making it into the "Final Four" and taking on the Burnaby Winter Club.

"I still think back to that memory all the time and remember how no one thought we could get there, but we all came together and made it happen," Victor recalled.

Away from the rink, Victor attended Eric Langton Elementary in French immersion, continuing on to Thomas Haney Secondary, maintaining a B average.

Victor was a multi-sport athlete, and played football and soccer up to the age of 14, at which point he had to make a decision on which activity to stick with.

He chose hockey because, he



Victor Bartley

said, "that's what I knew I was born to do and I couldn't have been happier with my choice."

At 15, Victor started playing at the junior B level with the Delta Ice Hawks before graduating to the Western Hockey League.

Growing up playing hockey in Maple Ridge, Victor had strong role models to follow, including Georgio

Nicolato, Greg Bodnarchuk, and Steve Hunt.

But Victor's biggest influence was, and still is, his parents.

"They always saw the little things in my game that would make me a better player," Victor said.

He added with a chuckle, "My mom still tries to tell me how to play."

Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES

Larissa Franklin

Though she started playing softball at age five, and has followed her passion through to her final season at Western Kentucky University (WKU) where she is today, Maple Ridge athlete Larissa Franklin said that growing up, she never really looked up to one particular person as her role model.

"I looked up to everyone on the entire Canadian National Team," she clarified.

It was only when Franklin became a member of the national team for the first time that she found a role model in the form of centre fielder Caitlin Lever.

"I had a similar playing style as her so I really wanted to take all of her knowledge in before she retired," Franklin explained.

Franklin's first international experience came as a member of the junior women's national team in 2011, when Canada finished fifth at the ISF Junior Women's World Championship in Cape Town, South Africa.

She joined the senior women's national team in 2013, competing in the US World Cup of Softball VIII, the Canadian Open Fastpitch international championship and the VIII Pan American championship in Puerto Rico, where Team Canada won the silver medal.

In 2014, she started nine games for Team Canada at the ISF Women's World Championship in Haarlem, Netherlands, finishing second on the team with a .409 batting average.

In 2015, she has again been selected to play with Team Canada in the Pan Am games for

the summer.

Franklin was born on March 26, 1993, and attended Yennadon Elementary and Maple Ridge Secondary.

She played with the Ridge Meadows Minor Softball Association until Grade 11, before she switched to the White Rock association in Grade 12.

But it wasn't the only sport occupying Franklin's spare time.

"I actually figure skated until about Grade 11 too," she said. "I was more into that then I was softball."

Originally, Franklin thought she would pursue a professional career on the ice, but "there's not as many opportunities in skating, so I looked more into softball," she explained.

That choice took her south of the border for post-secondary education: first to Indiana University – Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) and then to Western Kentucky University.

"I transferred because my coach left after my second year."

Franklin followed.

"It's a good opportunity and a good school," she said, noting that though WKU is similar to IPFW in terms of play schedules and whatnot, the facilities at WKU are "a little better."

Franklin is the lone Canadian on her team, and described living in the southern U.S. as "very different."

However, Franklin is by no means seen as an



outsider.

"The people here are good," she elaborated. "And I have my team, so they're kind of forced to accept me."

Franklin is currently pursuing her undergrad in psychological sciences, with a minor in health and nutrition.

"It's interesting" she said.

Once she finishes things up at WKU, Franklin said she plans on "maybe going to Washington" to pursue her masters and do some coaching.

"I'm thinking a masters in sports psychology," she added.

As for the season at hand, the Maple Ridge born-and-raised woman said her team looks good, and she continues to pursue her chosen passion.

"I wasn't really forced into playing or anything; it was always my choice," Franklin explained.

"I guess it helped that I did well with the sport, so I could really enjoy it."

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times

HOMETOWN HEROES

The CFL of the 1950s and '60s, was "a little more legendary and folksy than it is today," remarked Ross Clarkson.

The 63-year-old Maple Ridge native, who is currently a contract English professor at the University of Ottawa, grew up in that era, before spending seven years in the league – where he played for the BC Lions, the now-defunct Ottawa Rough Riders, and the Hamilton Tigercats.

For Clarkson, the opportunity to play in the national league was a combination of timing, skill, and luck.

"When I was hitting about nine or 10 years old [and a student at Glenwood Elementary], they started the minor football bantam, peewee leagues in Maple Ridge," he recalled.

"Then, as I got to be in bantam [with the Maple Ridge Rams], they started the football program at Maple Ridge High."

During this time, he said, there "was a real transition that happened from football being a game, to it being sort of an American-style bootcamp."

Essentially, what this meant was that during tryouts, practices, and training, players were put through more difficult physical regiments "than you have ever experienced in your life... to the point that either

you cross the threshold, or just decide the game isn't for you."

By the time he was in Grade 12, Simon Fraser University (SFU) – which was still a relatively new institution – had started offering football scholarships to high school students.

"I was kind of lucky as a football player," Clarkson said.

"I got a scholarship from Maple Ridge High to go play for SFU, so I just kind of hit it at the right time."

And a knack for the game ran in his family.

"My uncle was actually a player in the CFL, too. He was a running back for Edmonton, who got traded to Calgary," Clarkson explained.

But he was never forced to choose the same path, in fact, quite the opposite.

"In those days, parents didn't really push their kids like they do today," he elaborated.

In fact, football wasn't even Clarkson's first choice.

"I actually liked basketball more and to me, it was more fun," he admitted. "But football is what I was good at."

He had talent on the court, too.

"When I went to SFU, they said I could play basketball too, just not



Ross Clarkson

on the scholarship, but it was a little much to do both."

Clarkson played in the CFL from 1973 to 1980, catching a total of 158 passes for 2,402 yards and 12 receiving touchdowns.

His foray into teaching, began in his mid-40s.

He made the decision to go back to school, after spending some time working in the reforestation business in B.C.

"When my [football] career ended, it kind of caught up with me, and I wasn't all that skilled in the '9 to 5 – so to speak," he said.

"The great thing about football is it really does make you mentally

tougher, which I really appreciate."

That mental toughness "helped me make the decision to go back to school."

Clarkson returned to the classroom, worked his way to a PhD and master's degree in English, "and got it about eight or nine years ago."

He recently found an old photo of himself in football gear.

"I look about 10 or 11," he said. Reflecting on where he's come from since that photo was taken, and the path of his career and life thus far, Clarkson was succinct: "It's all worked out pretty good for me."

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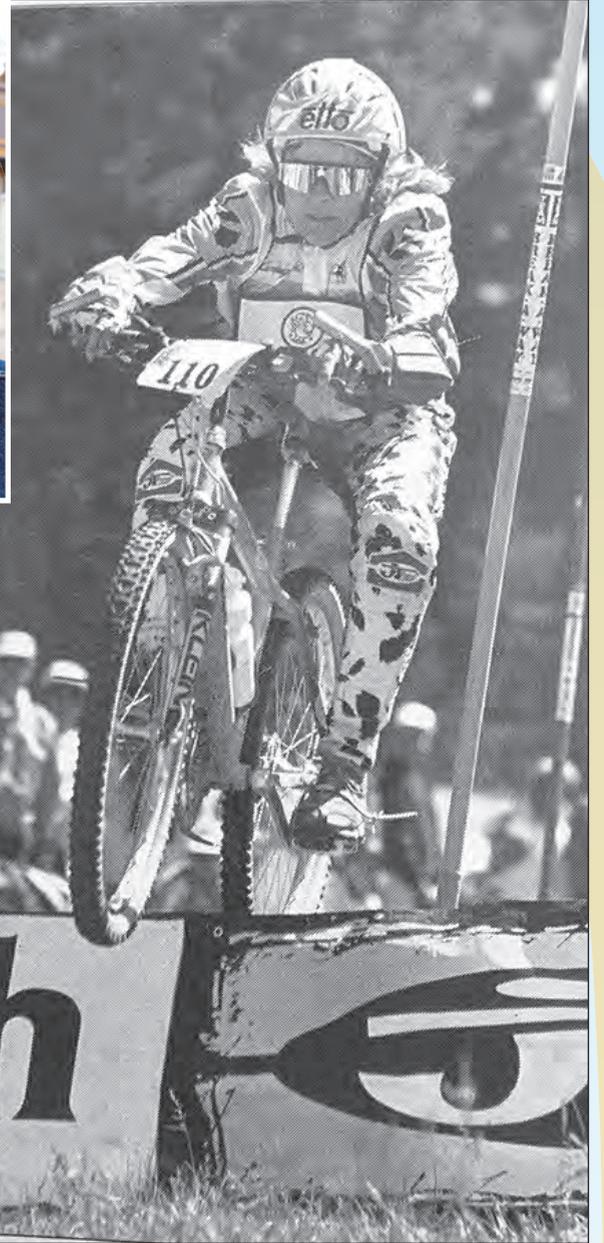


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HOMETOWN HEROES



Cindy Devine

Cindy Devine became a world mountain biking champion by accident. But her love of the outdoors is no mistake.

In high school, Cindy preferred team sports, basketball and volleyball, in particular.

A similar group of girls at Garibaldi secondary in the 1970s played both sports.

"Basketball and volleyball pretty much had the same team members for me and these girls and our coach, Mr. Rodgman, were a family," Cindy said.

In high school, Cindy took part in track and field, cross country running, lacrosse, field hockey, rugby, basketball, volleyball and tennis.

In track, she did running events and hurdles. She liked running trails, but preferred team sports.

"I loved team sports, the connection with partners, the flow of the game, the load of responsibility on the group as a whole, the concept and joy of teamwork."

She had no interest in individual competitive sport, yet.

By 1984, Cindy had found cycling and was touring the Hawaiian Islands, Fuji, Cook Islands and New Zealand.

Living in New Zealand in summer 1986, someone showed her a mountain bike. She discovered off-road, single-track riding, in nature, with no cars.

"Riding beside Lake Wakatipu on an old wagon road was heaven for me and I was sold on cycling on dirt."

She returned to Canada in 1987.

While back in B.C., she visited Whistler, and started mountain biking. She rode most every day that summer, and went to races on weekends, to watch her friends.

Then they signed her up for some beginner races, which she won. Then she won more. She got bumped up to the sport division.

She won a B.C. championship in 1988, at age 28.

That same year, her second in competitive racing, she earned bronze in both the downhill and dual slalom events at Mammoth Lakes, Calif., which at that time was the most thriving mountain bike scene in the world.

The following year, she won gold in downhill and bronze in slalom at the unofficial world mountain bike championships.

The world championships became an official UCI sanctioned race in 1990. Cindy won the downhill event, becoming the first female world champion in mountain biking.

By 1992, she had captured one gold and two bronze in downhill at the worlds, as well as three Kamikaze Downhill titles, three Canadian

downhill national titles and won the "Desert to Sea" 150 mile race, from Palm Springs to San Diego.

All that in three years.

She raced for eight years in all, while working enough as a physical therapist to keep her license.

Cindy retired from racing in 1994 as five-time undefeated Canadian national downhill champion. In 2003, she was inducted into the World Mountain Bike Hall of Fame.

She continues to stay involved in mountain biking as an instructor during the summer months.

She still rides, on- and off-road, as well as wind and kite surfs, in Oregon or Texas, and enjoys a "true" Kootenay winter in Rossland, alpine skiing and slack hill touring off Red Resort, or skate skiing on the nordic trails.

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THE NEWS

HOMETOWN HEROES

Monika Eggens

Pitt Meadows water polo player Monika Eggens will soon be competing at the pinnacle of her sport – the Olympic Games.

Monika has been a member of the Canadian national women's water polo team for the past decade. They qualified for the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics after winning silver at the Pan American Games in Peru in the summer, 2019.

It will be her first Games, after two narrow misses.

"We missed out of qualifying for the last two Olympics by one goal," she said. "So to qualify was definitely very exciting."

Monika, 28, has been living in Montreal and training with the national team. She first wore the Maple Leaf with in 2007 at the FINA World Junior Championships, and has been a senior national team mainstay since 2009.

She is the third oldest player on the team, right in the middle of a player's water polo prime, and her veteran savvy shows.

"You definitely get better as you get older. The game slows down for you," she said.

Monika and her older sister Carmen were both on the national team in 2009. Now retired from swimming and working as a Vancouver police officer, Carmen was a great player in her own right.

Swimming is in their genes. Their mother Cathy Eggens and aunt Gerri Willms competed as swimmers internationally. Theirs was one of the founding families of the Haney Neptunes swim club. The women played water polo at a time when the sport was not well organized, but they would drive to Simon Fraser University for scrimmages, and were still competing internationally at the masters level in recent years. Their love of the pool was passed on.

"I'm pretty sure I could swim before I could walk," said Monika. Her childhood was spent at the pools in Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge, either practicing, playing or watching her sister. After entering the sport at the age of six, Monika grew into a dominant player with the Pacific Storm club team, and was the most valuable player at the Canadian under-18 nationals in 2007.

After graduating from Pitt Meadows secondary French immersion program in 2008, she went on to an athletic scholarship in a tropical paradise. In her four seasons at the University of Hawaii, Monika was a scoring machine. She became the school's all-time leading scorer with 252 goals in 115 games. She also set single season records with 101 goals as a senior – it was a high mark for both the UH Rainbows and in the conference.

Monika earned a kinesiology degree, and then went on to play professionally in Europe, with stops in Greece, Italy and Spain. Professional water polo in Europe draws full crowds, has fans who follow the teams and is played in an exciting atmosphere.

Monika is training twice a day with the national team, working hard and focussed on the Olympics.

"Our goal is to medal at the Olympics, and I think we have a good shot at it."

As decorated as she has been as an athlete, Monika appreciates being named a Hometown Hero.

Her locker at PMSS was near the gymnasium, and on the walls were posters of the many Hometown Heroes.

"There were a lot of amazing athletes," she remembers. "Then I remember when my sister got it, and it was pretty cool." "It's a big honour."

Monika Eggens
Div. 0



Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES



Tyler O'Neill

Tyler O'Neill is known as much for his muscles as hitting home runs. When the St. Louis Cardinals rookie outfielder hit his first major league walk-off homer in September, 2018, a no-doubter to left field, his teammates mobbed him at home plate, doused him with buckets of ice water and ripped his shirt off. Tyler arrived with the Cardinals the season before in a trade with the Seattle Mariners, the team that drafted him in the third round in 2013, along with a well-earned reputation for crushing baseballs and the nickname 'Popeye.' Despite a 5'11", 210-pound frame, Tyler, 23, has been recorded squatting as much as 585 pounds. But his greatest strength as a ballplayer is not his muscles; it's his mind.

"My mental approach is my greatest strength," he said. "At the end of the day, it's your mind that pushes your body – giving you the control to excel and push forward through barriers and adversities."

The latter, his determination and work ethic, are traits he learned from his parents, Terry and Marilyn. "They taught me to have a strong head on my shoulders and to work hard. This led me to trust my ability and have confidence in myself on the field," said Tyler, the 2018 Hometown Hero. Tyler grew up in Maple Ridge attending Webster's Corners elementary, then Garibaldi secondary. He played minor hockey in Ridge Meadows until age 15. He was a centre and loved the game. He also played soccer and at age 10 started playing in the mosquito division with the Ridge Meadows Minor Baseball Association. He played all over the infield in his early years, and his team won a provincial championship in mosquito. He played peewee through bantam in Ridge, then junior ball with the Langley Blaze, for which he was a catcher.

His power really started to develop in Grade 10, when he joined the Blaze of the Premier Baseball League. It was also around then that Tyler started seriously lifting weights. He learned how to lift from his dad, a former 'Mr. Canada,' the nation's best bodybuilder, in 1975. Lifting weights helped build strength to hit the ball hard, he said and "It taught me how to care for my body."

During grades 11 and 12 Tyler played in several U.S. showcase tournaments, in front of college and Division 1 schools, as well as professional scouts. He also played for Team B.C. and junior Team Canada. He won silver with team B.C. in 2011. After being drafted, he suited up for Canada at the Pan American Games, earning a gold medal.

After two successful seasons in the minors where he hit 32 then 24 home runs, Tyler, was traded to the St. Louis Cardinals. With 19 homers at the AAA level when traded, he hit 12 more with his new team, the Memphis Redbirds, with whom he won the Pacific Coast League championship. "The minor leagues are truly a grind," Tyler said, adding he had to make changes.

His first MLB game was April 19 in Chicago and he hit his first major league homer on May 19. Before his walk-off in September, Tyler hammered a ball 457 feet – third longest by a Cardinals player that season.

Tyler has always hit for power and to do that, he sticks to his training and preventative maintenance programs throughout the year. Having his mind in the right headspace prior to a workout is also essential for him, as is eating clean – home-cooked meals based around proteins.



"The challenge is worth the reward. You just have to be willing to work for it."

Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES



Brian Malfesi

Sprint kayaker Brian Malfesi, is a former Olympian with his sights set on the next Summer Games in Paris, is fiercely proud of his roots, and is an easy choice as a Hometown Hero.

Malfesi raced in K-2 (doubles kayak) with Vincent Jourdenais at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, and while that's a huge accomplishment in his journey as an athlete, it's not the end. The 28-year-old won the 2022 national team trails in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia in May of 2022, in the single kayak 1,000m event, and that qualified him to compete in World Cup events in the Czech Republic and Poland. His goal is to keep working toward the next Olympics. "I want to continue until Paris in 2024," he said. "That's the ultimate goal."

At 28, he's right in his prime for a paddler, and still will be during the games. The sport has recently seen Olympic Champions as old as 36 and as young as 22, he said.

Malfesi was born and raised in Maple Ridge, and his family home was just a short walk to Whonnock Lake. His brother Michael got into paddling sports, and he followed in his wake. They both attended Whonnock Elementary and Garibaldi Senior Secondary. Brian loved the sport for its social dynamic – where all the team members are rooting for each other. "It's a really close community – like a family almost", he said.



And he took off. In 2009, at the age of 15, he qualified for the Canada Games Team in the under-19 age category. He made his international debut at the 2010 Pan American Championships, winning a pair of bronze medals from the junior K-2 and K-4 1000m races.

He wore the Maple Leaf gain the following year, at the ICF World Junior Championships, making the B final in both the K-4 1000m and K-2 200m.

Malfesi represented B.C. at the 2013 Canada Games, winning three medals including gold in the K-1 1000m.



Then on to the U23 World Championships. In 2015, he made the senior national team and his best result of the year came in the K-2 1000m with Andrew Jessop as they finished fifth at the final event of the year in Copenhagen, Denmark. In 2018 he won K-1 1000m silver back in senior competition in 2018, winning K-1 1000m silver at the Pan Am Championships. In 2019 he returned to the World Cup circuit where he would qualify for Canada at Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Due to the pandemic, the 2020 games were postponed to July/August 2021 and he & his partner Vincent Jourdenais were B finalists in the K-2 1000m.

What makes a good paddler he says is "not just the ability to work really hard, but also focus on the technical things." "As a westerner, he's a rare bird in the sport of canoe & kayak racing, as most national team members are from Eastern Canada. "Paddling is dominated by the eastern provinces. I'm pretty proud of being from here, and helping to grow the sport in the West," he said. "B.C. is my home, and Maple Ridge will always been my home."

He's the pride of the Ridge Canoe and Kayak Club, which is sending more paddlers on to national and even international competition. "We're a small club, but we produce a lot of good athletes," said Malfesi. And he still loves Whonnock Lake, where he grew up, and has still been training there twice daily as recently as this fall. "It's amazing – it's honestly one of the best places I paddle."

Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES



Jaycee Affeldt

Jaycee Affeldt was a star ball player in the NCAA, represented her country on the world stage, and is Maple Ridge's 2022 Hometown Hero. Affeldt got her start in Maple Ridge minor softball, and also played with the Fraser Valley Fusion and Surrey Storm.



Both an elite pitcher and hitter, she was with the under-16 national team at the World Cup in Prague, Czech Republic, helping Canada to a fourth-place finish.

In 2011, Affeldt travelled with the junior national team to the World Championships in Cape Town, South Africa, where the Canadians finished fifth. But her best memories on the ball diamond are with the Troy University Trojans in Alabama, where she spent four years as a player from 2012 to 2015, playing in the NCAA First Division. While at Troy, Affeldt made 130 appearances in the circle with 74 starts, 32 complete games, five shutouts and five saves. Through 539.2 innings, she threw 442 career strikeouts. Affeldt was named the 2015 Sun Belt Conference Pitcher of the Year finishing her senior season with a 2.65 ERA. She also earned First Team All-Sun Belt honors in 2015.

The Garibaldi secondary grad was also named to the CoSIDA Academic All-District Team as well as the NFCA South All-Region team for her performance during her senior season. Affeldt graduated from Troy in 2015 with a degree in broadcast journalism.

She started every game, either pitching or playing first base. "It was the best experience of my life," she said of playing at Troy. "It taught me so much about myself, and how to hold myself to a high standard."

She said the lessons she learned playing NCAA ball are still with her in her personal life. When her playing career was done, Affeldt followed it with another four seasons of coaching. She volunteered at Troy as an assistant coach for a year in 2016, then went to University of Alabama in Huntsville as a pitching coach in 2017. She helped lead the Chargers to a Division II NCAA Tournament appearance in 2017, and her pitchers won honours.

"Our program is not only getting one of the top up-and coming pitching coaches in country, but also a great person who loves Troy University and Troy softball," said head coach Beth Mullins when she returned. Affeldt worked with pitchers in the 2018 and 2019 seasons, and graduated with a Masters in Business Administration in May of 2019.

Now she's coaching back home. Affeldt returned to her hometown Maple Ridge in 2019. She is coaching local athletes and players across the region and is in the process of charting a new course in the field of sports psychology. Affeldt is working toward being a registered clinical counsellor, and working with athletes is a dream come true.

She missed Maple Ridge, and was humbled to get the Hometown Hero award. "It was the biggest honour to compete for Canada on the International stage, and I am overjoyed to be able to work with and pass on the knowledge I gained from my experience to the up and coming athletes from Maple Ridge! "I'm so honoured and so grateful," Affeldt said. "Maple Ridge has always been my home. I moved away for 10 years, but I've always been so proud of my hometown. When I played in other associations, I never let my teammates forget I'm from Maple Ridge. "I feel so blessed to be a Maple Ridge Hometown Hero."



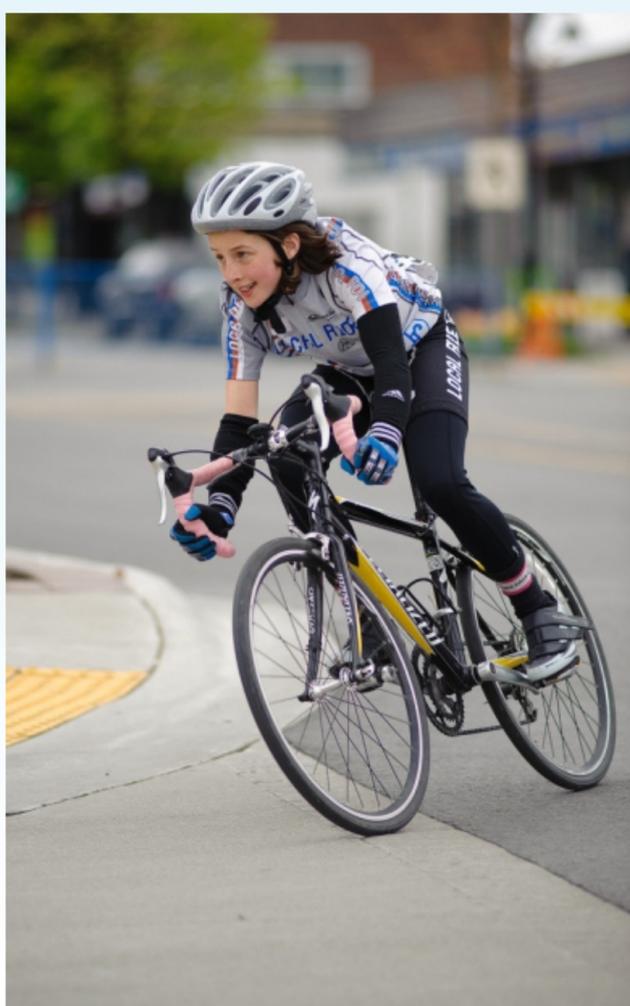
Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES

INTERNATIONAL

Maggie Coles-Lyster



Maple Ridge's Maggie Coles-Lyster is a professional cyclist and member of Team Canada. Coles-Lyster races in both track and road cycling. She's travelled all over the world to compete, but when you speak with Coles-Lyster, you meet a young woman who loves her hometown of Maple Ridge and is genuinely honoured to be a Hometown Hero.

In August of 2017, Coles-Lyster became a world champion for the first time, winning the junior points race at the world track championships in Italy. She had won silver in the omnium just the day before, and the win made her Canada's first-ever junior world champion in track cycling. The teen's win was likely no surprise to people who saw her ripping around the dikes and roads of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows in races put on by her father and coach Barry Lyster. He owned Local Ride Racing, and has been putting on well-run local cycling races for many years.

She attended Laityview and Maple Ridge Secondary French Immersion, loved horseback riding and cross country. "I was born into cycling," summarizes Maggie.

Her father was her coach from early days, but not a taskmaster. Maggie had a desire to win that was all her own. "He never pushed me, and so I just had fun with it," she said. "I'm an extremely competitive person, and it's a perfect outlet for me."

She's now a member of the DNA Pro Cycling Team, and based in Salt Lake City, Utah. She got a satisfying win at the Joe Marten Stage Race in Fayetteville, as she won a dramatic finishing sprint against an archrival. "To get a win at that level was super exciting for me," she said.



Long-term, she is working toward qualifying for the 2024 Paris Olympics. Coles-Lyster has raced in the up-and-coming UCI Track Champions League, and expects to be involved in the invite only event again this year. It brings together the top 18 male and female endurance riders and sprint riders.

It was a new racing series that debuted in 2021-2022 as a partnership between Discovery Sport Events and the UCI (Union Cycliste Internationale). The Champions League bills itself as re-imagining what track cycling can be, featuring the best riders, with high stakes and a huge audience. The circuit features simple racing formats. There were races in England, Spain and Lithuania, with an event in Israel being cancelled.

"That was so exciting," said Coles-Lyster of the races, which drew crowds of up to 6,000 to the indoor tracks to watch. She won the first-ever final in Mallorca, Spain, and finished the series fourth overall, based on points awarded for results in four races.

This year she came away from her first Commonwealth Games with a bronze medal. She also snagged a 4th place in another event called the Points Race and a 5th place in the Road Race.

"I definitely enjoy coming back home. My family is still in Maple Ridge, my grandparents, and I love doing some nice, long rides," she said. "I have the Golden Ears Mountains tattooed on my ribcage. I wanted to take them with me." For all her trophies and awards, Coles-Lyster is proud to be named a Hometown Hero in Maple Ridge. "It means a lot. I remember going to the Leisure Centre, and looking up at the Hometown Heroes and wondering if I would be successful enough to be nominated as a Hometown Hero."

Dare to Dream



HOMETOWN HEROES



Sara Hopkins

When Sara Hopkins was 13, she and a group of friends took a course to learn how to kayak at the Ridge Canoe and Kayak Club on Whonnock Lake. "I became obsessed, while my friends all moved on with their lives," she said. "I have a competitive spirit, and when I do something, I want to be the best at it." Hopkins also had a coach with the local club who inspired her and convinced her she could be a special athlete. "He singled me out, and said, "You could go somewhere." He was absolutely right – Hopkins would go on to be a compete with the Canadian Women's Sprint Kayak Team from 2002 to 2005, winning gold medals in international competition along the way.



Her father Gerry was "health nut," who set up a home gym at their place in Stave Falls and had his family pumping iron. "I had unusual upper body strength," she said, noting that she was once able to bench press a whopping 265 pounds.

"I wasn't one of those people who always had the goal of being on the national team," she said. "What kept me in sport was the camaraderie, and the routine." It wasn't easy. All the best paddlers were in Eastern Canada, and a kid from B.C. faced challenges.

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ded high school at Garibaldi Senior Secondary, had a good career as a junior, and then went to university. She stopped and had some fun. Then she watched the Sydney Olympics and the desire to compete came back. "I just felt I'm wasting" she said. "I clawed my way back into shape and made al team."

Hopkins raced internationally as both an individual, in pairs and in a four-person crew. "My fondest memories are working in a crew boat", she said. "It's a great feeling when it all comes together."

In 2002 she competed at the World Canoe and Kayak Championship in Spain, for her first international race. "That was great experience for me," she said. That same year, she competed at the World University Championships in Italy. The port city of Bari hosted the event, and she remembers it for being on a wild ocean course, where one four-person kayak was swamped and sank. Then 2003 brought the World Cup event in Poznan, Poland, where she won a gold medal with her longtime doubles partner Karen Furneaux. "What I remember most from that race is putting everything together perfectly in that moment, and having someone to celebrate with."



Hopkins should have competed in the 2004 Olympics. She was part of a Canadian K4 team that qualified for the Games, but even though she had raced with the qualifying team, another woman competed at the Athens 2004 Games in her place. Hopkins was an alternate.

She couldn't help but feel it was unfair, and that experience made her get into sports administration, to try and create more transparency and fairness in sport.

Hopkins is now a director with Canoe and Kayak B.C. But she is grateful the opportunities she had as an athlete. "I was very privileged to be able to pursue sport."

Along the way she got a teaching degree, then became a lawyer, working in Northern B.C. "I miss competing, and I miss that feeling where your boat just flies – I can't get that feeling now," she said with a laugh.

Hopkins said she was surprised to learn she had been chosen as one of Maple Ridge's Hometown Heroes. "It's a huge honour," she said. "When I started paddling, I didn't have any grand designs or big plans."

Dare to Dream



HOME TOWN HEROES



Payten Smith



One of Canada's best, Payten Smith had her sights set on wrestling in the Olympics before her career was cut short by a devastating injury.

Smith was as natural a wrestling talent as the elite Maple Ridge Secondary program has ever seen. Smith was inspired by her father, William Smith, who was also known as "The Hangman" and "Laser Jack Smith" in his professional wrestling days.

But the younger Smith went into the ring for her first tournament as a girl with only her singlet and determination. She was just a Grade 8, but she won her age group, the Grade 9-10 age group, and then the senior class as well. She surprised herself as she beat a lot of older, more experienced athletes, creating one of the greatest memories from a standout career.

She took silver at the provincial championships that year and again in Grade 9, and then reigned as the BC Champion in her heavyweight class for Grades 10, 11 and 12. The dominant Smith went whole seasons where nobody could score a point against her.

In her Grade 12 year, 2014, she won two gold medals at the national championships, in both freestyle and Greco-Roman competition. In freestyle – the wrestling style used in high schools and universities, she won all four of her matches by pin, without a point being scored against her. She had also won a freestyle national championship the year prior. Also in 2014 she was a Canada Summer Games gold medallist, and her accomplishments saw Sport BC name her the BC Female High School Athlete of the Year. "That was a pretty special moment," she said.

The next year at Simon Fraser University she was the BC Juvenile Female Wrestler of the Year, and in 2015 was a Women's Collegiate Wrestling Association (WCWA) bronze medalist, with All-American Status which she kept throughout her collegiate career. She also took silver at the Junior Pan American Games held in Cuba.

2016 saw Smith win WCWA silver, and at the Canada Cup seniors division she took second place. In 2017 she kept improving and got WCWA gold. But then Smith was hounded by a devastating injury that forced her out of the sport. She was thrown at the Commonwealth Games and landed on her head. "I couldn't move for a couple of minutes, and it was pretty scary," Payten said.

The resulting injury left her with instability in her neck, and there was a danger that a whiplash type injury could damage her spinal cord. She had to quit. "It was really cruddy, but it led me to shifting focus, and looking at other opportunities," said Smith. "I was pretty devastated. I remember calling my dad, crying."

When she encounters obstacles, Smith switches focus to what she can do, rather than what she can't.

Smith began volunteering, helping with youth wrestling. She also threw herself into her schooling, and volunteering at SFU's Centre for Forensic Research, where she came up with CSI Fridays to get kids interested in STEM (science, technology, engineering & mathematics).

In 2023, she is working for the BC Wrestling Association as the office administrator. She is also finishing her master's degree in criminology.

Smith said she remembers seeing Hometown Heroes banners at Maple Ridge Leisure Centre, and at her elementary school. They include Hall of Fame baseball player Larry Walker, Boston Bruins great Cam Neely and race car driver Greg Moore. "I look at the names, and I'm honoured to be on that roster," said Smith.



Dare to Dream

