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UNBC hoping to land top basketball prospect

by **JASON PETERS**
Citizen staff

Zane Robison told Anthony Lao not to come to Prince George unless he was serious about playing basketball for the UNBC Northern Timberwolves next season.

Lao, who led the triple-A high school provincial tournament in scoring this past season, is coming. Lao, a six-foot-three, 220-pound guard who ran the hardwood for Vancouver College in his Grade 12 year, will be in Prince George on the night of

June 12 to meet UNBC players and take some shots at the College of New Caledonia gym. Before he flies back home on the morning of June 13, he will tour the UNBC campus.

"He was my top prospect out of high school," said Robison, head coach of the Northern Timberwolves.

"He would step right in and be a factor in the games. He's a well-rounded player. He can score, he's a very good rebounder. He was fifth in rebounding (in the provincial tournament) and he's

a six-foot-three guard. He averaged 11.5 rebounds a game and that's amazing."

Lao, a first-team all-star at provincials who averaged 28.5 points per game, is a hot commodity among university and college recruiters. At least six schools — including CIS institutions Trinity Western University and the University of Brandon — are pursuing Lao and his talents. Robison himself has been "very serious" in trying to land Lao. Robison has been emphasizing to Lao all the positive aspects

about playing at UNBC.

"It's the university itself, the (basketball) program, the fans," Robison said. "I think we're getting a very good reputation around the league of how we treat our players, we treat them like gold."

"He's definitely narrowing it down to us and a couple other schools," Robison added.

Lao will be on the court at CNC beginning at 8 p.m.

Lamarche Memorial event this weekend

by **JASON PETERS**
Citizen staff

Sunflowers will be out in abundance at D.P. Todd this weekend.

The fields at the local secondary school will play host to the Michelle Lamarche Memorial soccer tournament Saturday and Sunday.

Lamarche, who played for Myatovic Construction in the Prince George Women's Soccer Association, succumbed to a brain tumour at the age of 31 four years ago.

She was married two weeks before she passed away and had sunflowers at her wedding.

"That's our theme, we have sunflower decorations and tattoos and sunflowers in our hair bands and bands that we wear around our socks," said Elisabeth Veeken, who played with Lamarche and is still a member of the Myatovic team. "We still sort of commemorate Michelle with little things like that."

The tournament, held every year since Lamarche's passing, is always an emotional one for Myatovic and PGWSA players. Lamarche's sister Karen travels each year from Kelowna to play with Myatovic in the tournament. Lamarche's parents, who still

reside in Prince George, are normally in attendance as well.

The tournament is a seven-a-side event and this year will feature at least 13 teams. For the tournament, fields will be smaller than regulation, as will the nets. Games will consist of two 25-minute halves. Two PGWSA competitive division teams — Cougar Allen and Myatovic — met in the championship game last year and Cougar Allen came out on top.

"Competitive teams aren't guaranteed a win," Veeken said. "It's a different style of soccer. With smaller fields rec teams can win so it's kind of neat."

Each year, proceeds from the Michelle Lamarche Memorial have gone toward construction costs of the new women's soccer fields. Veeken said each past tournament raised between \$2,000 and \$3,000 for the cause. This year, tournament revenue will again filter to the women's fields, expected to be completed in time for the 2004 season.

"We have 50/50 draws Saturday and Sunday," Veeken said of tournament revenue sources.

"We have a radar gun set up for the fastest shot contest. People pay \$2 and they get three shots. We've also gone around town and received a lot of donations from people. What we're doing is setting up a silent auction. We'll have two or three tables of silent auction items."

The first games on Saturday are scheduled for 9 a.m.



LAMARCHE

'Hawks can't contain Kal Tire

The Prince George Blackhawks just can't find a way to deflate Quesnel Kal Tire. The Blackhawks, a 14-and-under girls softball team, dropped the championship game of the Prince George Invitational peeewe tournament to the Quesnel club this past weekend. The score was 14-9 in favour of the Quesnel girls, who downed the Blackhawks 11-7 in a tournament final seven days earlier.

In the P.G. Invitational final, behind the strong pitching of Michaela Nicholson, the Blackhawks led 4-2 after three innings. As per tournament rules, however, Nicholson had to give way to a new chucker after three innings. Quesnel took advantage of the pitching change with 10 runs in the fourth inning and two more in the fifth.

The Blackhawks were second in their pool after round robin play and beat the host Kal Tire Devils 14-10 to reach the championship game.

Other members of the Blackhawks are Kailey Bone, Stacey Green, Lindsay Pazluk, Lexine Miller, Daphne Jensen, Katie Chappell, Joanne Crout, Alisha Nixon, Brittany Duncalf and Kayla Bourque.

Hardy nips Nemethy in Clan run

Rob Hardy could probably feel Brian Nemethy's breath on the back of his neck as he crossed the finish line.

Hardy and Nemethy were competing in the Prince George Roadrunners Gathering of the Clans race on Saturday. In the five-kilometre event, Hardy set his foot on the finish line in a time of 17 minutes 12 seconds, just four seconds ahead of Nemethy. The battle for third and fourth was just as close as Cory Watts (17:30) finished four ticks ahead of Angus McDonald.

Class winners included Kali Flick (junior development women), Nicholas Bartell (juvenile men), Jeanette Williams (juvenile women), Tim Rowe (masters men 2), Kathy Lewis (masters women 1), Barb Saunders (masters women 2) and Kerrie Roberts (open women). Hardy won for open men and Nemethy took the masters men 1 category.

The next race for the Prince George Roadrunners is the Family Y Marathon on Sunday. The race will not just feature a full marathon of 42km. It will also offer distances of five, 10 and 21km, as well as a 10km walk. The race begins at 7 a.m. outside of the Family Y. Participants must pre-register. For information, contact Tanis Wey at the Family Y, 562-9341.

Prince George drivers at the front of the pack in Quesnel race weekend

The word 'dominant' does not adequately describe the performance of Prince George drivers at last weekend's Central Interior Karting Series races in Quesnel.

The second race of the nine-race CIKS series was held on Saturday and the third was held Sunday. Both days, Spruce Capital pilots swept the

podium in three different classes.

On Saturday, Logan Jewell, Devin Sketchley and Dustin Sketchley finished first through third respectively in the junior 2 class. The next day, the order of finish was Dustin Sketchley, Devin Sketchley, followed by Jewell.

In the four stroke super heavy category on Sat-

urday, Blake Goldie, Scott Goldie and Dallas Goldie finished one-two-three. In Sunday racing, Blake Goldie and Scott Goldie were first and second again, with Cal Johnson third.

Finally, in the bikes class, Don McLennan, Paul Dunn and Siebe Kamstra were the first three men under the checkered flag on Saturday. On Sunday,

Dave Martins finished ahead of McLennan and Ken Panrucker. Other local first-place finishers during Saturday races included Karson Jewell (junior 1), Jerry McLeod (four stroke heavy) and Jason Conn (125cc shifter). On Sunday, other Prince George winners included Blake Goldie (four stroke heavy) and Adam Gibson (5.5 Honda).

Top Canadian baseball players and their Prince George connections

When asked for her favourite recollection of Adam Loewen, Linda Whitely tells one of those cute kid stories — the kind that is destined for an open mike session at Loewen's wedding.

It happened a few weeks after Loewen, the Surrey lefthander who made Canadian baseball history on Tuesday when he was taken fourth overall by the Baltimore Orioles (see page 11), was in Prince George, helping Kennedy-Surrey to the Canadian Little League championship title at Joe Martin Field.

Kennedy-Surrey was at that Little League mecca in Williamsport, Pa., hurling in the Little League World Series against Saudi Arabia. Even at that age, the now-six-foot-six, 220-pound man-child was towering over teammates and opponents alike, including Joey, the pint-sized catcher for Kennedy-Surrey.

With a Saudi runner on third base, Joey blocked an off-target offering from Loewen, keeping the runner 60 feet short of paydirt. Without caring what was going on around him, Loewen sprinted to the plate and gave little Joey a hug.

The crowd of more than 40,000 let out a collective, "awwwwww."



LINEUP CARD

by **Jim Swanson**

"They should use that as a commercial for Little League baseball," said Whitely.

People here will remember Loewen and Anthony Miller, a right-hander who now pitches collegiately in New Mexico, leading Kennedy-Surrey to the national title, including a win over Hyde Park (Toronto) in the final. Since 1995 and their stop at Joe Martin Field, both have become pro prospects.

Whitely is just one of many in Prince George who closely followed Tuesday's major league draft, curious about the fate of the two Vancouverite pitchers who went in the top 10, a first for Canadian baseball.

(But Whitely did follow the draft closer than

most, tapping into live Internet feeds and calling friends around the continent after each notable selection. To hundreds of baseball players in this town, she's known as the baseball mom/encyclopedia, the chauffeur on long trips, a never-ending source of colourful jokes, or simply Big Red.)

Jeff Francis, another lefty hurler, went ninth overall, chosen by Colorado. Francis's catcher at the University of British Columbia was Chad Tuck, a Prince George product. In fact, Tuck caught both Francis and Loewen last year while B.C. was winning the Canada Games gold. Whitely's sons, Cav and Conor, played with Francis at UBC last year.

Tuck is listed as a potential selection, but a cold season at the plate — though certainly not behind it, where he can play defence with the best of them — might put the pressure on the catcher for his senior year at UBC.

The local ties to the MLB draft certainly don't stop with Loewen, or friends of Tuck and the Whitely boys. The latter three have had two UBC roommates drafted in the last two years — outfielder Derran Watts (12th round, New York Mets, 2001) and Jeff Brewer (14th round, Mets, 2002).

Grays pitcher Dan Westle had two of his college teammates from Idaho-based Ricks College chosen — Troy Cate, a left-hander (sixth round, Seattle Mariners), and Matt Lindstrom, a right-hander (10th round, Mets).

And this is after just one day of the two-day draft fest. Twenty-two rounds are complete, another 38 are still to come today.

It's a strange Prince George phenomenon that as many — in some years, actually more — local baseball players advance beyond minor programs in Prince George than their hockey counterparts. Add in drafted pitchers Ryan Lupul and Simon Stoner, and college players ranging from infielders Derek Hyland, Dustin Bissonnette and Perry Scott to hurlers Terry Bonnar and Adam Walton, and more players are finding success in college ball than are skaters in the major junior and junior A ranks.

With scouts now fully aware that Canadian kids can hold their own with anyone, it might not be long before Prince George puts a player on the precipice of the major leagues. This city's own version of Loewen or Francis.



Citizen photo by Dave Milne

THAT'S USING YOUR HEAD — Kevin Fowlie of CIF/Summit Insurance goes high against Avtar Bhatti of Croatia II to get a head on a ball during a Tuesday night contest in the North Cariboo Senior Soccer League. Bhatti and his teammates won the game by a 3-1 score.