

Summer Games '90

Women's soccer promoted

by KYLE STOREY
Citizen Staff

The men and women of the Prince George soccer community believe they have something to prove.

The men will be looking to recapture the mystique that took them to the zone's last gold medal eight years ago.

The women will be out to prove they can compete with the rest of the province.

"We have a new league and we want people in this city to know there are women who play soccer. Not everybody's involved in ball," said women's league president Patty Smith.

This zone will have two representatives in women's soccer as Zone 4 (Fraser-Delta) will not be sending an entry.

Smith was reluctant to predict a medal finish for this zone, preferring to emphasize the opportunity it gives the women to promote their sport.

"Of course we're really excited about making the Games, especially in the year when they're here. We have a new league that's only been playing

under a constitution for two years, so it's great to qualify for the Games."

That qualification was automatic, partly because of the rules of the B.C. Soccer Association.

To be eligible to compete in the Games, teams must be affiliated with the BCSA. To be eligible to register, teams must play in a league with at least four teams.

"I think these rules are unfair to a lot of teams in the North. There are a lot of small communities that don't have enough players to register four teams. Quesnel didn't have enough players, so some of them have been travelling here all year just so they can play in the Games," said Smith.

Smith said she was unsure what teams would be favored entering the Games, but had heard rumors Vancouver and Victoria are the teams to beat.

In men's soccer, this zone last won a gold in the 1982 Games.

Labatt's-Honda North won the right to represent Zone 8 by going undefeated at the recent qualifying tournament.

Labatt's also won bronze and silver

medals in the two Games previous to the gold, but hadn't qualified since until this year.

"The goal for this year was to qualify for the Summer Games," said coach Gaetano Mauro. "We really wanted to play in these Games because they're here. It puts a little more pressure on us, but it's nice to have a local team involved since the all the games (men and women) will be at Rotary field."

Mauro said part of the attraction of playing in the Games was seeing the crowds expected to attend the matches.

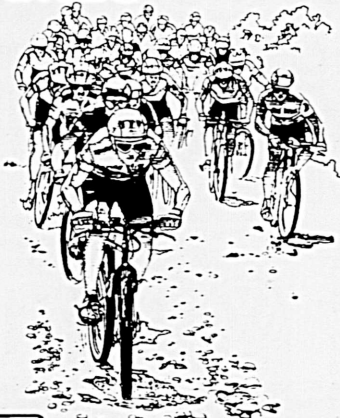
"You get a lot of people out who normally wouldn't come to see soccer. Because it's the Games they'll come out and maybe we can win a few new fans."

While the idea of playing at home appeals to the players, it may prove to be a drawback as well.

"The pressure might be a (negative) factor. This team has never played under these circumstances. As much as it's nice to play at home, and sleep in your own bed, the expectations (of the fans) will be higher."



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