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SPORTSBRIEF

► Cats Happy At Home

Following 13 games at home, the Prince George Cougars were glad to head out on the road. Now, they're glad to be back.

After registering two straight road wins over Spokane and Tri-City two weeks ago, the Cougars' road woes continued with three losses over the weekend. Add in a loss to Kamloops three days prior, and the Cougars are looking forward to breaking the spell on home ice on Friday when the Regina Pats visit the Coliseum.

The Regina game marks the beginning of a homestand, albeit a shorter stay in Prince George than the last time they played in front of their own fans. The Cougars host Swift Current on Saturday night, and then welcome Kamloops to B.C.'s Northern Capital on Tuesday in the first game of a back-to-back, home-and-home series.

This weekend will also mark the first time Cougar fans will get to look at goaltender David Trofimenkoff, who was acquired in a trade with Lethbridge on November 13. Trofimenkoff is expected to get the start against either Regina or Swift Current.

► Kings Getting Nervous

The Prince George Spruce Kings put their string of nine in a row on the line tonight when they play Williams Lake at KinOne. On Saturday night, the Kings catch the bus down to Williams Lake for a rematch.

The Kings then have five days off to prepare for a three-game northern road swing which will see them play Fort St. John once and Grande Prairie twice.

With an impressive mark of 21-3-2, the Kings have far-and-away the best record in the RMJHL, and have made themselves even stronger with the acquisition of Kitimat native Colin Campbell from Fernie.

The Spruce Kings, though, are starting to get a little nervous any time the Free Press publishes a story about them. Two weeks ago, a feature ran on high-scoring forward Curtis Cardinal, and a little more than a week later he returned to the Western Hockey League's Red Deer Rebels, the team he was holding out from. In the same issue, a note was made about the promise of 16-year-old rookie Mark Smith, a listed player of the WHL's Saskatoon Blades, who promptly returned to Kelowna complaining of homesickness.

No ill will is meant toward goaltender Jason Howse, who is profiled on Page B2 of this issue.

One last flight to glory

Brad Suey gives the World Cup another shot

By JIM SWANSON

Prince George Free Press

"I'm outta here."

Brad Suey boarded a plane this morning, his destination Geneva and the beginning of yet another World Cup ski season. The 30-year-old veteran aerial specialist managed to shun thoughts of retirement, vowing to leave the World Cup tour with a good taste in his mouth.

"You never say never, but I'm pretty sure this is going to be my last year," says Suey, who had major knee problems last year. When you're trying to land an intricate jump, one with a high degree of difficulty, wonky knees won't do.

"The last couple of years I've had a lot of problems with injuries, and I'm still trying to make a living as well as compete. I had a rough season last year with an injury at the start of the season in the first World Cup, so I had to fight with that all year and it was really tough."

Once Suey licked his wounds and felt that he could handle the rigors of competition again, he recalled the words of his coach, a former great on the World Cup freestyle scene. Yves Larocque encouraged Suey to focus on giving one more year to the World Cup.

"Over the summer I was thinking of retiring, not because of my age, but because I had such a bad season last year," says Suey, a two-time alternate for the Canadian Olympic team. "To go out like Lui Pasaglia did, that would be the way to go. After last season I told my coach and idol, Yves Larocque, that I thought I was done. He said, 'No you're not - one more (year). Take the summer off and come back and finish on a good note.'"

That's exactly what Suey decided after he finished the summer show circuit feeling as strong as ever. The fun was back, the aches all but gone, and the competitive fires still burned a white hot flame.

"I just want to go out and have fun again, like I used to," says Suey, who excitedly calls Tabor his home hill. "After having such a good summer, I didn't want to go out on such a sour note. There were a lot of goals that I hadn't reached yet that I wanted to before I finished. Last year I was always trying to play it safe out on the hill, but that wasn't working. That's one of the reasons I was thinking about retiring."



Suey: 'After having such a good summer, I didn't want to go out on such a sour note.' PHOTO CONTRIBUTED (INSET PHOTO BY ROB BIRON/FREE PRESS)

Suey looks forward to two things most on tour. First, he enjoys performing at the shows more than World Cup events. Second, the undisputed highlight of the tour comes at Blackcomb in early January, because of support he gets from friends and family.

"I get treated really well at the ski shows, that's my bread and butter, how I make a living," says the five-foot-eight, 160-pound Suey. "Competing for Canada does nothing but cost me money, and the shows are what pays for everything. I want to keep doing them for a few years after the competition is done. There

isn't the pressure of judging and trying to place, and you don't have to show your most difficult jumps. It's a different atmosphere - you have AC/DC blasting from the speakers, there's fireworks going off and there's a big crowd.

"But nothing beats Blackcomb. As Canadians, we get spoiled there. A lot of my friends come up from both Prince George and Vancouver, and my family is there. It means a lot to me for them all to be able to be there and support me, and just to see my friends makes it that more special."

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