

# THE FREE PRESS SPORTS

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## SPORTSBRIEF

### ► Big event for track club

The Prince George Track and Field Club has been awarded the 1998 Legion National Track and Field Camp.

The annual event, sponsored by the Dominion Command of the Royal Canadian Legion, is held in August.

It consists of an eight-day program involving the national track and field championships for ages 13-17 and several days of intense clinics for up to 450 elite athletes from all 10 provinces and two territories.

All of the athletes and 50 or so support staff will be housed at the University of Northern B.C. while the two-day national championship meet will be held at Massey Place Stadium. The clinics will be held at the stadium and adjacent school gyms, the Family Y, municipal swimming pools and a number of other facilities.

### ► 24 hours of golf

Get ready for 24 hours of golf.

Par-T-Golf is hosting a charity golf event on February 23-24 with all proceeds going to the Prince George Regional Hospital Foundation.

Tee-times are available around the clock and registration is \$40 per person and \$15 for an extra banquet guest.

There will also be putting and long drive contests and prizes for making a hole-in-one.

Register at Par-T-Golf or call Craig at 561-5009.

### ► Kings battle 'Stangs

The Prince George Spruce Kings take on the Williams Lake Mustangs tonight in a rare Sunday afternoon RMJHL tilt.

The Kings and the 'Stangs played last night in Williams Lake and are going in opposite directions. Williams Lake are mired at the bottom of the Peace Cariboo Division while the Kings are riding high at the top of the Division.

### ► Tumbler in RMJHL

The Tumbler Ridge Icemen will start play in the Rocky Mountain Junior Hockey League next season. League commissioner Bronco Horvath confirmed Tumbler's entry on Thursday. The team will join the Castlebar Rebels as expansion cousins next season.

### ► Cats on the road

The Prince George Cougars get back in action this Wednesday when they travel to Spokane to take on the high-flying Chiefs. Things don't get any easier the next night when the Cougars are in Kennewick to battle the Tri-City Americans. They finish off the road trip on Saturday in Seattle against the Thunderbirds.



Johnson: 'I think we can do it. We have a strong team, quick players, a good post and good shooters. I think we can take 'em.' CHRIS SIMNETT/FREE PRESS

## Star in her own right

*Rachel Johnson follows in sister's footsteps to help Condorettes*

**R**achel Johnson is only 15, but she is one of the experienced, go-to players on the Duchess Park Condorettes Senior girls basketball team.

Johnson, who is in Grade 10, played with the senior team last year as a Grade 9, but only saw limited action.

This year is different. The younger sister of last year's standout guard Natasha Johnson is now a star in her own right.

She's learned a lot from her older sister and cites Natasha, a freshman starter with San Jose State University, as her biggest basketball influence.

"I listen to her a lot," says the younger Johnson. "She's really positive. She always tells me I can do it."

Al Erricson coached Natasha for the three years she played senior ball at Duchess and is an assistant to Dave Holmes this year. He says the similarities between the two smooth dribbling sisters are uncanny.

"They both possess strong fundamentals," Erricson says. "Rachel has strong shooting form, as Natasha does."

Erricson says Rachel still has to develop some of the aggressiveness that made Natasha

a great player at last year's provincials, but already is quicker than her older sister.

"I think Natasha's quickness was deceptive," he says. "She was quicker than she looked but Rachel is very fast. At this point Natasha was more of a competitor than Rachel. Rachel is happy go lucky. While Natasha plays to compete, Rachel plays to play."

Sitting on the bench last year might have thrown some doubt in Rachel's mind about whether or not she could play at the senior level, but this year has erased all of those thoughts.

A starter in Holmes' backcourt, Johnson complements Elisha Williams, arguably the best point guard in the province.

Holmes says the emergence of Johnson as a scorer during the Kelly Road tournament has opened things up for Williams to play a more diverse game.

"This was a big weekend for Rachel," says Holmes. "It's tough to say what her main role is because she's becoming more interchangeable with Elisha. We've been encouraging her to become more of a scorer and finally she's been doing it."

Johnson started this season as a defen-

sive specialist and she still plays that role. But out of defence comes offence and Johnson is starting to pick it up at the business end of the court.

"My defence is pretty strong," she says. "You get a nice feeling when you stop people. My shot is coming along. I just have to work on getting the ball in the hoop when it really counts."

Holmes counts on Johnson to take care of the ball when she has to and to drive the lane she gets the chance. That frees things up for Williams to play her game and not worry about doing everything.

"We mix up Rachel and Elisha," says Holmes. "I always make sure one of them is out there to take care of the ball. Rachel was with the senior team last year so she's seen what it takes to be successful."

Rachel thinks the Condorettes have what it takes to repeat as provincial champs. Despite only having nine players, Johnson says the team has a good mix of experienced veterans who have been there before.

"I think we can do it," she says. "We have a strong team, quick players, a good post and good shooters. I think we can take 'em."