

Confidence slipping away

'Curse' of the Cougars continues this season

Something evil lurks in the dressing room of the Prince George Cougars.

It's an invisible monster that silently drains the confidence of the players, allowing them to lose game after game after game as they struggle to the end of their seventh consecutive losing season in the Western Hockey League.

The team has tried to shake the demon by moving; they've played in three different rinks the last three seasons. They've changed coaches and players. They've done everything they can to kill the monster, yet it still lives.

"You would almost think it's a curse," says defenceman/forward Trevor Shoaf about the Cats' losing fortunes. "Everybody says it's a bad coach or bad management but I don't think so. I don't think you can say one thing and point to it."

Coach Dale Marquette took over from the fired Doug Hobson on November 4. He can't explain the team's troubles, either.

While he says the team might not have been in top condition at the beginning of the season, he doesn't want to use that, or a rash of injuries this year to key players like Ronald Petrovicky and Jarrett Smith, as an excuse.

It's simply a losing atti-



Cougar defenceman Dennis Mullen battles with Spokane Chief Jay Bertsch during Wednesday's 3-2 loss at the Multiplex. CHRIS SIMNETT/FREE PRESS

tude that's hard to shake.

"We've never really got rolling this year," says fourth-year Cougar Clayton Catellier. "I don't know what it is, whether it's stability or what. When I was younger I was just happy to be in the league. Now I care about winning and I hope the other guys care too. I get so sick of losing. I'm as frustrated as I've ever been these last two seasons."

Catellier says the Cougars' fortunes come down to luck as much as anything else.

"It's just bad luck. Last year could have been a lot different but we had a lot of injuries," he says. "I think it's in the back of people's minds that we are a losing team. We've just got to get a few wins in a row and get that winning feeling."

The Cats' couldn't get the feeling this week against the West Division-leading Spokane Chiefs.

Spokane came to town and beat the Cougars 6-1 on

Tuesday and 4-2 on Wednesday.

Jeff Church's first ever WHL goal was all the offense the Cats could muster on Tuesday in a lacklustre effort, but they picked it up on Wednesday.

After an even first period, the Chiefs took control of the second frame and took a 3-0 lead.

The Cougars came back in the third with two quick goals from Chris Low and Dennis Mullen, but Dmitri

Leonov put the game away with a late-second empty-netter.

"What seems to hurt us is after we get down by one goal," says Marquette. "If we get the first goal, that's the key thing."

The Cougars played last night in Seattle and take on the Portland Winterhawks tonight in Portland.

They play in Tri-City on Tuesday and travel to Spokane for a re-match with the Chiefs on Wednesday.

Skiers going for top

Thirteen local FIS skiers are on Vancouver Island competing in the Nabob Cup Finals at Mt. Washington.

The series final consists of two giant slalom and two slalom races.

Ten other members of the Prince George Alpine Ski Team are in Vernon for the Midland Walwyn J2 Provincial Championships (13-14-year-olds).

The race series consists of one super giant slalom, two giant slaloms and two slalom races. The five-day series is a qualifier for Canadian and Western Canadian Championships.

Kim Webber and Jeremy Bekken have a good chance of making the Nationals, but they will have to ski very fast to get there.



WHAT?	T-Ball & Baseball Registration	
WHEN?	Thursday March 7	1:00pm - 9:00pm
	Friday March 8	1:00pm - 9:00pm
	Saturday March 9	9:00am - 6:00pm
WHERE?	Nechako Little League Office 6449 Hart Highway in Birchwood Mall Next door to Country Cleaners	
WHO?	Boys and Girls who will be 6 to 12 years old as of July 31, 1996 For players living north of the Nechako River including: PG Pulp Mill Road, Edgewood, North Meadows, North Nechako, Hart Highway, Foothills, Chief Lake, Nukko Lake, Bear Lake, Salmon Valley and Shady Valley	
COST?	\$50.00 per player or \$90.00 per family	

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Announcement

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For all of you who know Bill, please call him or drop in and see him at:

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