

Alive and kicking

Women's soccer keeps on growing

In Europe and South America, the popularity of soccer whips fans into a fevered pitch unrivaled in any other sport. Given the steadily rising interest in soccer in Prince George, it may not be too long before packs of rowdy soccer fans start showing up at fields around the city. But there's a very good chance it isn't men's teams they'll be cheering for.

The Prince George Women's soccer league has been steamrolling forward, increasing in size and scope with every year. And there's no sign of a slow down.

"Soccer's relatively easy to get into even for someone who doesn't have much experience.

When I first started I'd never even kicked a soccer ball," admits Twylla Fraser, secretary of the Prince George Women's Soccer Association executive committee, when explaining just why soccer continues to attract new players.

"We have eight teams this year, which is one more than last year. We've nearly doubled in size in the last four years - especially in the recreational division. Soccer, in general, is growing quite quickly, both in men's and women's leagues."

Growing so fast, in fact, that the PGWSA is looking to end their nomadic existence and settle down on a soccer field or two of their own.

"We have a five year plan to find our own permanent home for Prince George women's soccer," says Fraser. The PGWSA is planning to approach city council with a plan to build two fields on vacant land adjacent to the men's soccer fields on 15th avenue.

The fields will cost approximately \$250,000 each, a tab that the PGWSA is hoping the city will kick in for part of. "We're hoping to get a third of it from the city, a third in grants and the other third we'll fundraise for," says Fraser.

One of the major fundraisers for women's soccer is the annual Michelle Lamarche Swift memorial tournament, named in honour of a PG player who died from cancer two years ago. Other fund raising would be in the form of corporate sponsorship.

As for grants, Fraser says that the PGWSA is currently looking into what grants would be available to them.

It was problems with scheduling fields that led to the strange paradox of the women's ice breaker tournament being held nearly two weeks into the regular season play this year.

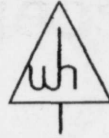
"We had a little bit of scheduling difficulty with the fields. And last year when we actually had the ice breaker before the season, it snowed."

The women's ice breaker tournament runs until 3:30 p.m. today at the Ron Brent school fields. Regular season play resumes Monday at 6 p.m. on the Ron Brent and Youth 8 fields. The Michelle Lamarche Swift memorial tournament runs June 10 and 11.

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Twylla Fraser



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