

THE FREE PRESS SPORTS

SECTION **B**

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The Thursday PLAYBOOK

► PG Karatekas solid gold

Eighteen Prince George karatekas came back from the Fall Provincial Karate Championships this past weekend in Kamloops with at least one chunk of medal hanging around their neck.

Cody Krause had the biggest haul for the Nechako Karate Club, claiming the gold in both kata (forms) and kumite (sparring) for 14 and 15-year-olds. Damian Pointer took the gold in 16 and 17-year-old kumite and silver in kata.

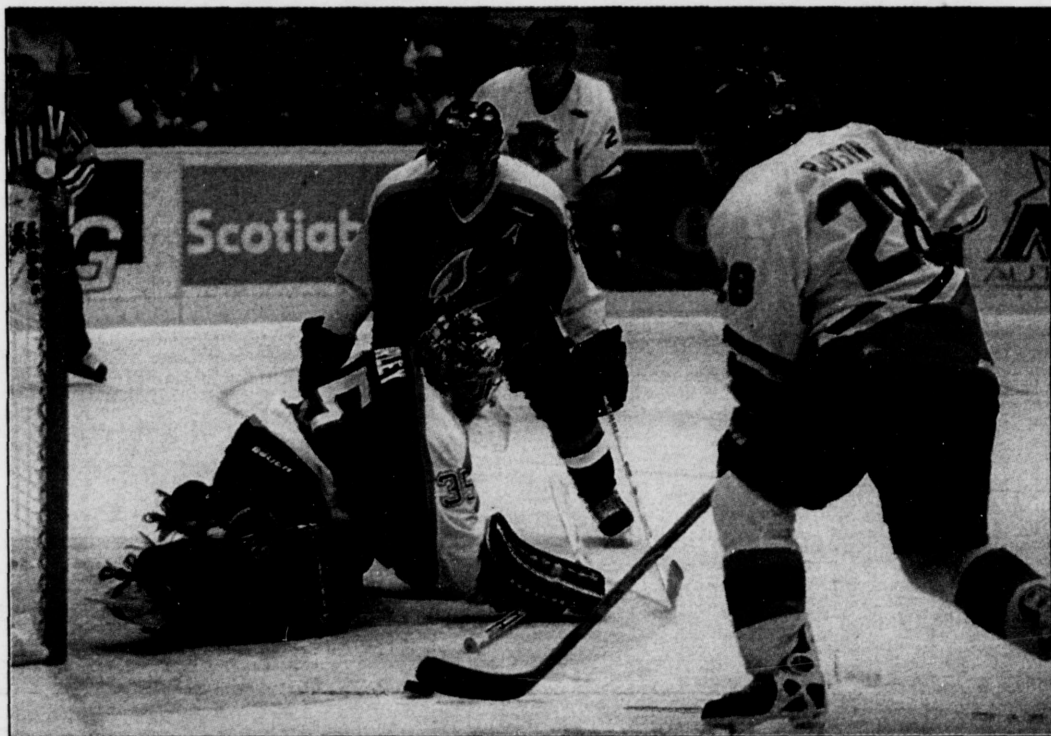
Kim Veller took gold in 14 and 15-year-old girl's kata and kumite for the PG Chito-Ryu Club while club sensei, Darren Harpe, took third in the men's black belt 75-kilogram kumite.

► Ball hockey rolls on

PG Masters Ball Hockey rolls into the Roll-A-Dome for its 12th season with a record 10 teams tonight. The league is running with two divisions for the first season - a 30+ division with six teams and a 40+ division with four. The first games of the season will pit the defending season champs First Litre Pub against Close Cut 30 at 7 and 8 p.m. tonight and defending playoff champions Oodles versus the Reds at 9 and 10 p.m. There are still openings in teams in both divisions. Anyone interested in joining can call Hartley Miller at 562-9149 or Al at 562-6181.

► Lacrosse players recognized

Nine young lacrosse players were honoured Monday at the annual PG Minor Lacrosse AGM. Michel Philip is the MVP of the Pee Wee division. Joel Goddard is Most Improved Player and Robbie Mason received the Team Player award. Sobnick Manhas is the MVP for the bantams, with Allen Sinclair Most Improved and Kiel Daveron getting the Team Player honour. Brandon Atherton is the MVP of the midgets, Derek Kueng is Most Improved Player and Russell Mills got the Team Player award. The lacrosse Boy of the Year was Graham Martin. His name will be put forward for the provincial lacrosse awards.



Newly-acquired forward Blake Robson did his best to make fans forget Willy Glover, scoring two goals in his first two games with the Cougars over the weekend. JOHN MCKENZIE/FREE PRESS

Thompson comes home

Cats new netminder builds up confidence with successful home weekend

You could see it right down the way he settled easily into the spot between the pipes — Billy Thompson had come home.

After being thrust into the starting spot for the Prince George Cougars with the abrupt departure of Marty Maurice, Thompson had struggled his first home games. He let in two goals in the space of four shots his first game as starter. He looked nervous, he looked uncomfortable, he looked just like you'd expect a backup goalie suddenly pushed into the key pressure spot in the game to look.

But that was then, and this is now.

Thompson skated onto the Multiplex ice Friday night with nine games as starter under his pads, five of them on the grueling eastern roadtrip. It was a crucible that Thompson emerged from stronger and more determined to earn the respect of Prince George fans and his own teammates.

"I feel a lot more confident now. Getting a little experience and playing some games helped. Every game I play I feel a bit more confident and better on the ice," says Thompson. "I was disappointed in the way the roadtrip went overall. But personally I was feeling good about the way I played the last couple of games."

Against Kamloops, Thompson was a goalie transformed. On a Blazer break-away in the last minute of the second period he was like mercury in the net, flowing in front of the first slapshot, then diving for the rebound save. But Thompson's biggest save of the weekend came with only six seconds left on the clock in the third period with the Blazers within a goal of taking it into OT. Thompson made a picture-perfect save against Blazer forward Gable Gross to carry the game.

"I've got the confidence now. Especially after getting a win and a tie

Please turn to Thompson, Page B2

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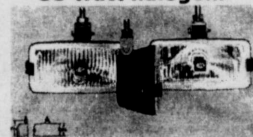
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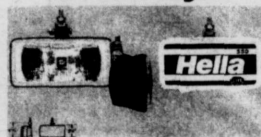
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