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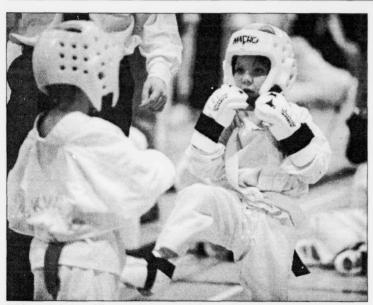
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White belt Ashley Mizner prepares to deliver a devastating kick during sparring at the taekwon-do provincials Saturday. JOHN MCKENZIE/FREE PRESS

Martial masters

TaeKwon-Do rookie double gold in provincials

Stepping onto the mat for the gold medal match at the taekwon-do provincials invoked a strong sense of deja-vu for Ryan Rahier. The yellow-belt from PG's Free dom TaeKwon-Do was standing across from fellow Freedom martial artist Calvin Duncan, his challenger for the gold after both he and Rahier had defeated opponents from clubs outside of Prince George. But along with the deja-vu came a sense of relief.

"You go in there thinking I've done this enough times, who's going to pull it off this time. 'says Rahier. "It's nice. You know either way it turns out either you're happy for him or you're happy for yourself."

Rahier, who defeated Duncan for the gold and also won gold in the men's yellow-belt patterns competition, was feeling pretty happy for himself after the Saturday provincials. The 21-year-old has only been training in taekwon-do for six months. This weekend's double-gold wasn't just his first provincial martial arts gold medal, but also his first taekwon-do tournament ever.

But Rahier is no stranger to competition. He's competed at the provincial level in Olympic-style weightlifting and archery.

"I can go into a competition like this and be a bit more relaxed," says Rahier. "And a bit more ready for the stress of competing.

By comparison, 23-yearold Karli Southgate was definitely feeling a little bit of stress. The two-year member of the PG club set her sights high from the start of the tournament as the only competitor to enter herself into two divisions. The ambitious red belt entered the ladies black belt sparring, one of the earliest matches of the tourney

"It was very challenging," she says. "But I wanted to prove to myself I had the ability.

Any doubts she might have had about those abilities were swept aside as she took silver in division after a loss to Kootenay martial artist Gina Patton and a win over PG black belt Jessie Thompson.

"She had a lot more experience and that was intimi-dating to me," says Southgate, adding that she plans on testing for her own black belt this summer. "Winning the silver boosts my confidence and makes me feel proud for all the time I've put in training.

After taking silver in the morning Southgate was up against her own colour of belt in competition later that day. She defeated Houston martial artist Nicole Tate in the final of that division for a gold and also won bronze in the forms. But even after her silver performance in black belt earlier that day, the red belt competition was no cakewalk.

"Black belt sparring is a lot different than red belt. They wait and have more strategy to their fighting. Red belts have more contact and that's a little intimidat-

In total 50 medals were won by the 35 members of the host Freedom TaeKwon-Do school. There were a total of 183 competitors from across British Columbia

Lumber Kings set to defend crown

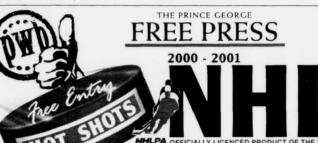
It may seem a strange connection, but the success of the Merritt Centennials will make a sweep of this weekend's 17th Annual All Native Hockey Tournament even easier for the defending champs.

The Prince George Lumber Kings are the provincial power in native hockey teams, with 14 championship titles in the 17-year history of Canada's largest all-native tournament. Last season they met with Ashcroft in the gold-medal

"Ashcroft was big last year but their big guys are still playing junior hockey," says Lumber Kings manager Len Potskin

Merritt Centennials captain Ryan Minnabarriet, from Ashcroft, usually joins his local all-native team in the spring, bringing with him reinforcements from the Cents. But this year Merritt is deep in the midst of a sucplayoff run, meaning Minnabarriet and co. are otherwise engaged. The Lumber Kings have also drafted local BCHL talent in the past, with former Spruce King Brent Williams and Spruce King alumnus Mike Lalonde both on the team's roster last season. But now that Lalonde and Williams both have scholarships they've opted out of playing in the tourney.

In the five years Potskin's been manager the Kings have never lost the tournament.



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