

Sports & Recreation

The best of the
worst of 2016

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Teens win
badminton medals

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Table tennis tours North Slave



photos courtesy of Thorsten Gohl

Tyrone Fatte balances the ball on his paddle during Table Tennis North's North Slave Youth Tour in Lutsel K'e last month.

Table Tennis North hits Lutsel K'e and Whati as part of youth tour

by James McCarthy
Northern News Services
NWT

Thorsten Gohl is becoming one of the busiest sporting personalities in the NWT.

The executive director of Table Tennis North was back on the road again as part of the organization's North Slave Youth Tour, which hit Lutsel K'e and Whati just before Christmas.

The tour was given a helping hand by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) as Collinda Blondin, MACA's regional co-ordinator for sport, recreation and youth for the North Slave, accompanied Gohl on his travels.

MACA's involvement happened when Gohl first approached the department with the idea of taking table tennis into small communities. MACA liked the idea and provided funding to make it happen.

"Small communities love to have this type of programming," said Gohl. "I suggested to them a youth tour would be great and Collinda loved the idea."

Follow the bouncing ball

The tour saw two days of action in Lutsel K'e with two evening sessions for the community and a full day of play for students at Lutsel K'e Dene School, followed by one day with the community in Whati.

Gohl said the students in

Lutsel K'e already had a grasp of the sport but it was all about getting back to the basics.

"We don't do table tennis play right from the start," he said. "We do little bouncing games for the first hour or so, where the kids bounce the ball off of their racket. When they drop the ball, they have to sit down."

The game evolved a bit with Gohl challenging to students to do a plank while balancing the ball, which is tough enough, but Gohl said there's always one person who can pull it off.

"Everyone sees that and they want to do it again," he said.

For the younger students, the balls are replaced with balloons to give them enough time to get set to hit the balloon in the air, he added.

"It makes it easier for them and they don't have the pressure of trying to hit a small ball," he said.

Just to give the students a bit of a show, Gohl brought out his behind-the-back serve, which is always a hit when they see it for the first time.

"They're amazed and they want to see it again," he said. "But all of the activities they do shows them that table tennis is more of a sport than they thought it was at first."

While most of those who took part were beginners, there were some who showed flashes of knowledge of how to play. Gohl said that hap-

pens every time he goes into a community.

Things were a bit different in Whati as Mezi Community School had already left for Christmas break. The gymnasium was opened so the community could come and take part.

"The recreation people in Whati were really great," said

Gohl. "They put up the tables for us and it was really good of them to do that."

For Blondin though, it was all about the kids. "I enjoy seeing an interest build in the kids ... and I love how table tennis can play a part of that," said Blondin. "So great to have another way of reaching the kids."



Curtis Lockhart tries to hit two balls at once.

SPORTS Check

with James McCarthy

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Brier playdowns ready to go

Four teams will take the plunge to try and qualify for the Tim Hortons Brier in March.

Three teams from Yellowknife, skipped by Jamie Koe, Steve Moss and Greg Skauge respectively, and a team from Fort Smith will battle it out at the NWT Brier playdowns from Jan. 19 to 22 for the right to wear the NWT's colours at the Canadian men's curling championship in March in Calgary. Whoever wins will qualify for the main draw of the Brier and skip the pre-qualification round, thanks to Koe finishing ninth at last year's Brier.

The NWT Scotties Tournament of Hearts playdowns won't happen at all as just one team registered to play. Because no other team signed up to play, the team skipped by Yellowknife's Kerry Galusha won by default and will advance directly to the Canadian women's curling championship in St. Catharines, Ont., next month, where she will start in the pre-qualification round.

Battle of the paddles

Deh Gah Got'ie Koe/Fort Providence

Table tennis is the name of the game in Fort Providence as the 2017 NWT Table Tennis Championships will take place from Jan. 27 to 29.

There will be action in the U13, U15 and U18 age categories with boys and girls singles in all categories and doubles in the U18 category. An open singles and doubles division is also planned and each athlete can take part in two singles and doubles events each.

The registration deadline is Jan. 20

No go for the referees

Thebacha/Fort Smith

The NWT Soccer Association was all set to host a district referees clinic in Fort Smith from Jan. 6 to 8.

Problem was no one showed up. Lyric Sandhals, the association's executive director, said the clinic had to be cancelled on Jan. 5 due to a lack of registrations.

There's no word on when a make-up date will take place.