



DANA GRAHAM photo

German curler Moritz Unterstab throws a rock while Ingmar Fritz sweeps during training in Richmond for the World Junior Curling Championships being held in Kelowna.

## Juniors set to sweep their way to gold medal

By Amber Turnau

The Canadian junior men's and women's curling teams arrived in Kelowna on Thursday to compete in the World Junior Curling Championships. The teams have victory in their sights. With 10 teams in each division, the Canadians will have to fight for the gold medal.

The Canadian junior women, coached by Paul Power, will defend their title as last year's junior champions.

Warren Hansen, spokesman for the Canadian Curling Association, said he expects the women to do very well, if not win the tournament.

Hansen said the men's team, coached by Lorne Hamblin, has also been very successful this year. Hamblin's two sons, David and Kevin, are on the team. They are so equally matched, they both received the Joan Mead Legacy Award at this year's Karcher Juniors national tournament.

Keith Wendorf, the coach of both German teams, conducted a training camp in Richmond last week. He said he expects tough competition from Canada.

"Canada is always really, really good," Wendorf said. "That's the team we expect to make the semi-finals for sure."

Although Wendorf lives abroad he is Canadian, and is familiar with the Canadian Curling Association. He said competition for a spot on the German team is not as tough as in Canada. Wendorf said while Germany only has 200 curlers in the country, Canada has more than 1.5 million.

The men's team from Manitoba and the women's team from Prince Edward Island were required to win the Karcher Juniors in order to proceed to the world championships.

Wendorf said the championships are the first international competition to have both men and women competing side by side. Orthodox tournaments only have five sheets of ice and separate their matches by gender. However, there are 10 sheets of ice in Kelowna which allow for more competition at one time.

He said the teams will have to concentrate even more on their matches so they don't get distracted by what's happening on the ice beside them.

The World Junior Curling Championship runs March 23 to March 31. Wendorf said the German team is looking forward to competing in Kelowna this year because Canadian-run curling tournaments are always world-class.

## Thai athletes tour B.C., test their sport in a colder climate

By Rosalind Duane

Fans cheer as players set, spike and block with stunning flexibility and co-ordination. No, this is not volleyball. This is sepak takraw, also known as kick volleyball. In this sport athletes must kick, knee, shoulder or head a small hand-woven ball over a five-foot high net. No hands allowed.

For two weeks a takraw team from Udon Thani University in Thailand is touring British Columbia to play in a series of exhibition matches.

Last night they came to Langara to play a demonstration game against the Canadian national team.

"It's harder than it looks," said Travis Lethire, 15, a player on the Canadian Junior national team. "The Thai team is way better."

Rick Blacklaws, an anthropology instructor at Langara College, co-ordinated the match here. His son, Brydon, plays for the Canadian national team and is considered one of the best servers in the game outside of Asia.

Blacklaws said he would like

more Canadians to try takraw.

"It's a particularly good game for schools looking for inexpensive sports," he said. "It's just a matter of introducing it. We have the nets, and kids like kicking balls."

Rat Sapraiwan, 19, is a server on the Thai team. He has been playing for six years.

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**Rick Blacklaws**

"This game is very fun," said Sapraiwan, speaking through the team interpreter. "Anybody can play if they have free time."

This is the first time any of the players have been to Canada, and the first time any of them have seen snow. "It's very exciting," said Sapraiwan.

Takraw has been a popular sport in Malaysia since the mid-1940s and has grown in popu-

larity since. It is a recognized sport by the Canadian Olympic Association, and the International Sepak Takraw Federation is working to bring the sport to the Olympics.

Rick Engel is the coach of the Canadian national takraw team. "When I first started playing I couldn't hit the ball," he said. "It took me that whole winter just to learn to kick the ball three times in a row with control."

Engel said a lot of soccer players enjoy takraw because the playing skills are similar but more "refined".

"A good player has to be able to really have confidence anywhere on the court, and be able to receive hard serves," he added. Engel said it is the challenge of the game that has kept him playing takraw.

"It's almost an art form," he said. "If you watch these guys in between those aggressive hits, if you're not relaxed you don't have control."

Engel agreed that takraw is a great game for Canadians to get hooked on. "I'm challenging youth across Canada to pick up the reins," he said. "I can't do this forever."



ROSALIND DUANE photo

Thai takraw players from Udon Thani University in Thailand play a game at Langara against the Canadian takraw team.