

# Memorable moments from the AWG Games

TERRY FARRELL – Commen-Terry

## The Arctic Winter Games are now a memory.

More than two years of preparation – and nearly as much anxiety – was put to the test March 6-13, as Grande Prairie hosted nearly 2,000 athletes from the "circumpolar North".

Let me say, way to go, Grande Prairie, for a job well done.

Was it perfect?

Not by any means.

Nothing ever is.

All we can ask for is that the Yukon Territories learn from the mistakes we made, so that their Games, in 2012, become the best ever.

## A LOOK BACK

In looking back, I have made a list of some of the best performances, from my perspective. Now, before you get all excited because you made the grade in my column, be forewarned: These awards are not official, and no one wins anything, so don't call, asking for your cash. And remember, these are strictly my opinion. I am entitled to it, no matter how wrong it is. Rather than sending me an e-mail, telling me how wrong I am, send in your own list of awards and we will gladly print them in the Letters to the Editor, if not the sports section.

Determining the winners of the different categories was a challenge.

I was not everywhere. But from what I saw, there were a few standouts.

## BEST TEAM PERFORMANCE

There were a few teams to consider for this award. The Yamal-Nenets junior biathlon team was almost perfect, winning 10 gold and two silver medals in the 13 events entered.

They would have likely earned 13 medals in 13 events, but for a disqualification in the girls' mass start event.

The Alaskan girls volleyball team got to the gold medal game without dropping a set.

They lost one set the entire week, to Team Alberta North in the championship match. The Alaskan girls won the tiebreaker for the gold, but we will get back to them a little later.

The Team Alberta North indoor soccer juvenile girls team ran the table during their round robin, out-scoring the opposition 40-7, but fell to Alaska in the gold medal game.

There was (at least) one team that was dominating from beginning to end, and for that reason, the Best Team Performance goes to the Alberta North girls hockey team. They were a perfect 6-0 and as near to perfect in every single game as one can imagine. They outscored their opposition by a 27-2 margin in their six victories. They had five shutouts. Only Alaska managed to score against Alberta, a 3-2 Alberta win to finish the round-robin.

Dominating, and well deserving of the DHT sports desk award. Congratulations on the acquisition of an invisible trophy.



The Alaskan girls volleyball team celebrates after the gold-medal-winning point. The girls dedicated the tournament to their coach, Liz Hooe, who could not make the trip due to ovarian cancer. Liz's daughter, Morgan, is the player on her knees on the right.

Terry Farrell

Letters to the Editor, if not the sports section.

## **BEST INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE, MALE**

How fitting is it that Team Alberta North's poster boy of success at the Arctic Winter Games was strutting his stuff on the ski hills?

With Grande Prairie's own World Cup national team member Ryan Blais as the Arctic Winter Games' sports ambassador, it could not have been scripted any better, than to have Corbin Lefebvre as the Best Individual Performance, Male.

Lefebvre swept the top of the podium in junior male freestyle, winning all four events: Moguls, Big Air, half pipe and slopestyle.

## **BEST INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE, FEMALE**

Sara Jacobsen of Greenland was simply overpowering in the juvenile girls badminton tournament.

She won all seven singles matches without dropping a single game.

No one came close to challenging her in her pool during round-robin play. She won all 10 games, by an average score of 21-7. Only three times in those 10 games did her opponent score 10 points. Her only real challenge of the entire tournament came in the gold medal match, against her doubles partner, Hedvig Broberg. Jacobsen won the gold in straight sets, 23-21, 21-17.

Jacobsen and Broberg were just as dominating in doubles, winning the gold medals without dropping a set, posting average wins of 21-8 in the 14 games played.

Broberg did earn a measure of revenge against Jacobsen in the finals of the mixed doubles event, when she and her partner, Nikki Mathiesen, beat Jacobsen and Niels Thorleifsen in three sets, but that was not an individual effort.

## **BEST PERFORMANCE BY A COACH**

This has to go to Alberta North girls basketball coach Lisa Deneault, for putting together a team at almost the last minute and not only achieving her goal of making the medal round (four of the five teams in the tournament made the medal round) but ultimately winning the gold.

Alberta finished with a 3-1 record in round-robin play, losing only to the Northwest Territories in a 63-62 thriller. The girls made up for that loss in the championship match, coming back from a 16-point deficit in the third quarter to beat that same NWT Squad, 75-66.

"The girls did a great job coming together," said Arctic Winter Games basketball co-ordinator Chris Bishop, who led the Alberta boys to a gold medal as well. "She (Lisa) did an amazing job. The stress levels she went through in trying to get them to be a group of one. She deserves to get that honour and it will be a good memory for her, after all the ups and downs that she had."



Photo by: Terry Farrell • 03/16/2010 11:54:15 AM

Coach Lisa Deneault reacts during action in the Arctic Winter Games girls basketball gold-medal match. Team Alberta North battled back from a 16-point third-quarter deficit to beat Northwest Territories 75-66.

## **MOST INSPIRATIONAL STORY**

The Alaskan girls volleyball team had a little added motivation to do well in these games.

Two months before coming to Alberta, the girls were advised that their coach, Liz Hooe, had ovarian cancer and would not be able to accompany the team to Alberta.

The girls took it upon themselves to dedicate their entire tournament to Hooe.

They made it through the round-robin a perfect 5-0, winning all five games in straight sets, by an average score of 25-13.

The only set they dropped all tournament was the second set of the gold-medal match against Team Alberta North. The Alaskans stormed back in the third set, taking seven of the first eight points and winning 15-9. The girls, including Liz's daughter Morgan Hooe, who is the team's setter, wore pink ribbons in their hair throughout the week and kept Liz updated throughout the tournament with texts, Twitters and telephone calls.

"She was the first person they called when they won," said Judy Knecht, who did a commendable job as Hooe's substitute coach for the Games. "They called her before we even left the gym floor."

## **FOR THOSE I MISSED...**

...I sincerely apologize.

There was only so much my recruit for the Games, Ivan Danielewicz, and I could do. Between the two of us, we logged 160 man hours in the seven days of the Games, and there were very few wasted moments in those hours logged.

There were sports that we missed outright, such as gymnastics and speed skating. There were others whose delegates felt did not receive the coverage they deserved. Had we been a team of five or six in the sports department, the coverage would have improved. Unfortunately that is a luxury that the sports department of a community newspaper will never experience.

Could we have done things any differently?

Absolutely.

Could we have done things any better?

Not a chance. Quite honestly, we rocked – worthy of at least an honorable mention in the Best Team Performance category.

Thanks Ivan.

Hey, sometimes you have to blow your own horn.