

# SPORTS

## Yukoners have bolstered their teams

It's time for Whitehorse *Coach's Corner* with Joe Martin, coach and general manager of the Creston Valley Thunder Cats of the Kootenay International Junior Hockey League.

Half the season in the Kootenay International Junior Hockey League (KIJHL) and the British Columbia Hockey League (BCHL) have been put to rest, and it is safe to say Yukoners have been instrumental in helping their respective teams.

Alex McDougall and Andrew Pettitt of Whitehorse play for the Powell River Kings of the BCHL who are in first place by seven points in the Mainland Division.

Whitehorse's Kane Dawe, Robbie Stuckey, Joe Densmore, and Evan Campbell of Haines Junction play for the Creston Valley Thunder Cats of the KIJHL and that team is leading the Eddie Mountain Division, but by a slimmer margin. In points, they are tied for first, but have three games in hand.

Joe Martin, Creston coach and general manager, has this to report:

"I can honestly say that without these players our team would not be in this position, and the same goes for Powell River. I talk with their coaches on a weekly basis and they are so happy with the two they got," said Martin.

"Both of their guys (Pettitt and McDougall, both ex-Creston Thunder Cats) started off slow, in fact they didn't even commit to Alex until October.

"He was our player in Creston until then, but in camp he played reasonably well, they wanted to see more and the more they saw the more they liked. I would love to have Alex



**KANE DAWE**

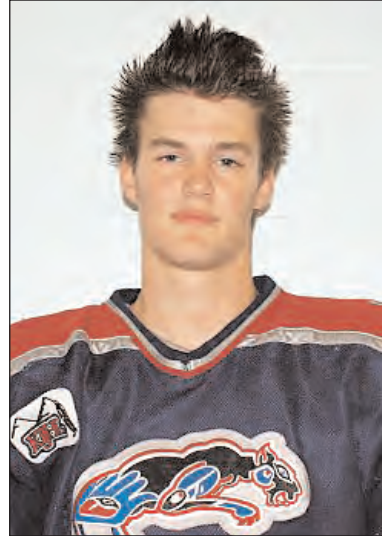
here in Creston, he has a skill set that is hard to find, but I know Alex wanted to stay in Powell River.

"Pettitt on the other hand started off slow because of a shoulder injury and playing on the third and fourth lines some nights," Martin added.

"But after Drew was given some time, he showcased his talent. In November he played really well and was rewarded with power plays helping his individual statistics."

According to Martin, Pettitt is in tough competition to receive top line ice time because his team has some of the best BCHLers in the league. This goes a long way to explaining why Powell River is in first and also why five forwards have received NCAA scholarships for the upcoming season.

Moving on to talk on Thunder Cat players, Martin had this to say.



**ROBBIE STUCKEY**

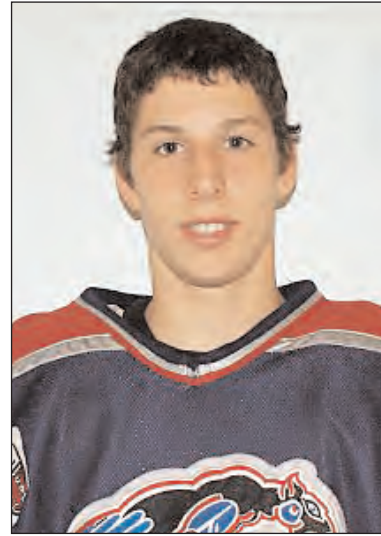
"Without our guys, I would have huge holes to fill. I committed to Rob, Kane and Joe early in the summer because I know what they bring every night. You can't say that about every player in this league," Martin said, adding that Stuckey's performance came as a bit of a surprise.

"I knew he would be killing penalties for us, I knew he would work hard but what I didn't know is that in his first year of junior hockey Rob would be a leader," said Martin.

After assistant captain Travis Ludwar went down with a leg injury, coaching staff decided to promote Stuckey as an interim replacement.

"He always puts the team first, and that is a big reason he is affiliated with the Quesnel Millionaires of the BCHL," Martin said.

Coach Martin on Kane Dawe: "He's our leading rookie scorer



**JOE DENSMORE**

with 25 points in 33 games. He is another player who kills penalties for us, he actually kills them with Rob. Kane fits in well with our other guys, he brings speed, intensity and excitement to the rink. Other teams hate him, and that's why we love him."

Coach Martin on Joe Densmore:

"Joe is a highly skilled player, who is adjusting to junior hockey and lately has been playing extremely well. At the end of a hockey year Joe will always get his points, but what we are teaching him here in Creston is more of the little things like blocking shots, winning face-offs, defensive zone coverage and being intense.

"Joe has been playing this way for over a month now and since then he has changed drastically. His hockey potential is limitless and even if he doesn't rip up the scoring in the KIJHL he is a player who



**EVAN CAMPBELL**

should get recognized.

"In fact he already has, playing in the 2008/2009 KIJHL Top Prospects game in Chase, B.C. This game is solely for young players who get to showcase their talent to a group of scouts of NCAA, BCHL, AJHL, Canadian University and WHL."

Coach Martin on Evan Campbell: "A trade with Nelson Leafs in September brought in the last Yukoner, Evan Campbell.

"I was very happy when Nelson called with a trade offer. Evan brings so much to the rink every night, he has so much passion for the game that it rubs off on others.

"Last season, he was great with the Nelson Leafs and when we played them he was so hard to contain. He has got great speed, good hands and he knows what it takes to win every night."

## Helmet rules must be debated, team president says after hockey player dies

By TAMSYN BURGMANN

THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO — The death of a 21-year-old hockey player who died three weeks after hitting his unprotected head on the ice during a fight has renewed calls for tougher rules governing the use of helmets.

Don Sanderson, a rookie defenceman with the senior AAA Whitby Dunlops of the Ontario Hockey Association, died shortly after 1 a.m. today at Hamilton General Hospital.

Sanderson, a native of Port Perry, Ont., was tussling with Brantford Blast forward Corey Fulton during the third period of a Dec. 12 game at the Brantford Civic Centre when his helmet came off.

Towards the end of the fight, both players fell over, causing Sanderson to strike his bare head on the ice. He was out cold for about 30 seconds before he briefly regained consciousness. The York University student eventually fell into a coma and was on life support until his death.

Dunlops president Steve Cardwell said the fight wasn't particularly vicious.

"It didn't look like it was as bad

as obviously this has turned out to be," Cardwell said.

"At the time it looked like so many other fights that anybody connected with hockey would have watched over the last number of years."

Cardwell praised Sanderson as a fierce competitor and a valuable player with a big heart. While he said his main concern is helping the family cope, he believes there needs to be closer look at the broader circumstances of Sanderson's death.

"Any time a tragedy like this happens — and it could have been prevented by a number of rule changes, or the way helmets are made, or the way that they work — that debate needs to happen," he said.

"Because if you lose just one life and you don't learn from it, then we're all making a big mistake."

While league rules state that helmets must be worn and secured, "each player has a personal choice how he wears it," Cardwell said.

While he's seen players occasionally forced to tighten their helmet chin straps, team captain Peter MacKellar said he doesn't think it's something that's been enforced strictly.

Following the fatal incident, however, he's wondering whether the rules should be revisited.

"I got into a fight one or two games later and my helmet came off and all of a sudden you're thinking about Don and you're thinking, 'Jeez this could happen right now,'" he said.

"But I've seen so many helmets come off and I've seen people hit their heads on the ice before and, you know, (there were) no real complications." Sanderson had several on-ice scuffles this season; in 11 games with the Dunlops, he racked up four fighting majors.

MacKellar, who called the incident "a freak accident," said the team will be dedicating the rest of the season to Sanderson.

"We'll just have to ... work just as hard as he did, because he really worked so hard this year and I was just so impressed with his work ethic and just his loyalty to his team," he said.

"If we can rally for him and play for him — play in his honour — I think that'd be a nice touch."

There was no immediate word on funeral arrangements.

## Ski club trail lights project completed

Thanks to the generous support of government, corporate and individual sponsors, the trail lights are now operational at the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club.

"The lights are on and we want everybody to come and help us celebrate," said club manager Mike Gladish.

With the completion of this project, lighted skiing is now possible over a five-kilometre section of the Mount McIntyre ski trails.

The club had plenty of support from the community, with funding provided by Lotteries Yukon, the territorial Community Development Fund and ski club members.

Corporate support was provided by FSC Architects, Yukon Electrical Co. Ltd., Yukon Energy and Arcrite Northern, the major contractor on the project.

"Again, it was the contribution of the local community that made this project a success," said Tom Ulyett, the ski club's president.

"The Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club appreciates the support from all project sponsors."

The trail lights, a fixture on the Whitehorse winter landscape for 35 years, required a major upgrade.

Some old light fixtures and equip-

ment were re-used, while other materials were recycled from the Carcross Road and other Yukon projects.

To improve the system's efficiency, the circuits were redesigned and controls relocated to an easily-managed, central location.

A sensor was also added so the lights can be turned off automatically when the temperature is colder than -30 C, as it has been in recent days.

The total length of lit trails is made up of a three-kilometre loop to the south of Mt. Mac and a two-kilometre loop to the north.

The two loops plus the ski stadium are now interconnected and controlled with one unit located in the Wax Room.

To help celebrate the lights project, there will be a Poker Rally and a ski at 7 p.m. Jan. 7.

The rally will start at the Wax Room and there will be one hour to complete the course.

Details about the poker rally will be posted in the Wax Room and on the website.

All other skiers are invited to participate in the celebration by skiing the new "north" loop or the complete system.

Hot chocolate will be served from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the Wax Room.