

Sports Scene

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World Class Coaching at Judo Camp

Story by Shelley Luedtke
Photos by Sheri Lovrod

The town of Outlook was home to more than 100 athletes, coaches, trainers and volunteers August 9-15 when Judo Saskatchewan held their summer training camp on the LCBI campus.

The camp attracted athletes from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Territories and the United States who ranged in age from 8-24. They came for the professional training by world class coaches, as well as a week-long opportunity to meet other judokas (people who practice Judo) from different parts of the country and be inspired by

this camp happen. Lynn Schaan, whose daughter is a judoka, credits the sport with an increase in confidence and sense of individuality in her teenage daughter and says it is so much more than a sport. "Judo teaches you to respect your parents, love yourself, believe in yourself, be a good person, be kind to all those around you and show respect. These are really respectful young people." She is thrilled to see the excitement and enthusiasm of all the athletes and says, "I've been involved in every sport and I've never seen a sport that fulfills the needs of a human being like Judo can."

As the athletes work

western world people need to see progress so it was broken down into different colored belts to provide more immediate rewards."

Ibanez is just one of six coaches at this camp, all of whom bring an impressive competitive resume. There is Fatira Merah, a former French National team member and two-time British Open champion who is now the Judo Alberta high performance coach, and Trevor McAlpine, 9-time Canadian champion and 6-time Pan Am Games medallist, and others with a long list of national and international competitive experience. Particularly exciting at this camp was

to moving to Saskatchewan he was living and working in Montreal, a city known as the Judo hub of the world, as manager of Canada's Olympic and National team. Although there were great opportunities for him in Montreal including coaching at the 2004 Olympics and manager/coach/team leader at the 2008 Games in Beijing, Ewan made the decision to move to Saskatchewan to enjoy a different quality of life with his wife and two young children. "I love Montreal," he explained, "but it's not really what I wanted for my kids and for my family. I wanted to surround them with good people and that was very important to us so when this job opportunity in coaching came up here I decided that I wanted to pursue it and help athletes and young individuals become better people and we decided Saskatchewan could be a good fit."

It was stated at different times throughout the week what a gift Ewan Beaton was to Judo SK and to the young people of this province who are pursuing this sport since he brings such a wealth of knowledge and experience. As an Olympian, 5-time Canadian champion, Pan Am champion and Dutch Open champion he is able to inspire kids with what is possible with hard work and dedication. His passion for the

sport and for the kids he coaches is evident and although he saw world class potential in some of the athletes at the

gram of excellence, not just on the mats, but in life. We're in the job of building people."

At the Friday night



World class coaches put judokas to the test.



More than 100 athletes from five provinces and territories took part in the Judo SK training camp.

the stories and experiences of Canadian and world champions. Lynn Schaan, Chair of Sports for All with Judo SK is the camp coordinator and she says the camp offers a wide variety of information and experiences for participants. In addition to mat training there is nutritional training, sports science training, weight training, mental training and other activities such as swimming and an afternoon outdoor carnival.

Judo is the second most popular sport in the world (second only to soccer) and is tremendously popular in Europe where competitions for even young kids can draw thousands of competitors. It is a sport that is seeing growth in this province and across Canada and that is exciting to the coaches and volunteers who work hard to make

on their Judo technique, the coaches are right on the mats alongside them, including 60 year old Ralph Ibanez who has participated in and coached Judo for more than 40 years. Born in Chile, where his Judo career began as a high school athlete, Ibanez came to Canada in 1977 and continued practicing and coaching. He attributes his physical fitness to the sport he loves and says, "yes, it's a physically demanding and strenuous sport but it's a sport you can do for life."

Judo is the first of the martial arts that came to the west and was the first to introduce the colored belt system, employed in a similar manner by several of the other martial arts. Ibanez, himself a black belt explains, "In Japan you go from a white to a black belt but in the

presence of Ewan Beaton, world class athlete and Olympian (1992 Games in Barcelona and 1996 Games in Atlanta) who has been the high performance coach and director of development with Judo SK for the past nine months. Prior



A beautiful summer day set the stage for a wonderful outdoor carnival on the LCBI campus during Judo camp.

camp, his interest is in developing young judokas be the best people they can be. "I have a couple of goals here," he said. "With the younger athletes you just want them to have fun and enjoy it so they'll keep doing it. With the older ones, there's a group of athletes here who can be Olympic team members and be world class athletes. In the end it's their choice and we're going to try and give them every avenue and opportunity to live that dream."

The coaches at this camp are here to do more than develop the technical skills of the athletes. Beaton remarked, "We are committed to a pro-

gram of excellence, not just on the mats, but in life. We're in the job of building people." awards banquet it was evident how pleased all the athletes, coaches and volunteers were with how the week had gone. Coordinator Lynn Schaan was so appreciative of the staff and facilities at LCBI, and the hospitality of the whole community of Outlook. "I can't say enough about the community. It's been excellent. This facility is so great because we're on our own but we have access to everything in the community and that's been great." The businesses in Outlook got to know Schaan and the other Judo SK members quite well since they purchased food, prizes, flowers and so much more all locally. "They know who we are and they've been more than accommodating," she remarked. With two professional cooks putting together very specific meals for these athletes during the camp, they have appreciated the help they received from Outlook businesses in organizing tremendous amounts of groceries!

Thanks to the success of this summer camp, Judo SK has already booked LCBI for their 2010 camp which will run August 8-14. For more information visit their website at www.judosask.ca.