

Sports

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On Deck

**Westview girls
2nd at tourney**
The Westview Secondary School Junior Girls basketball team earned a second-place finish in an eight-team tournament at Burnaby Mountain Secondary this past weekend. Westview received excellent guard play, strong interior defense from their posts and the bench delivered some timely baskets. Katie Pesut was named to the tournament all-star team because of her scoring and defensive play in the post. Despite not having a team last year, the Wildcats have made huge strides both as individuals and as a team this season. They are currently 4-3 in league play and are hopeful that they will qualify for the playoffs.

**Gymnast flips
onto podium**
In the provincial 5 tyro, Maple Ridge's Shayla Ogloff was third on vault, second on uneven bars and third on floor at the Flip City Invitational held in Abbotsford this past weekend. Ogloff trains at Twisters Gymnasts in Abbotsford which hosted the tournament. This event was the first competition for the season, and one of the trials for nationals.

**Lacrosse players
honoured**
The 2010 Maple Leaf Awards was held on Jan. 23 in support of youth and collegiate field lacrosse in British Columbia. The Ridge Meadows Midget U16 Tier I and PeeWee U12 Tier II were recognized as provincial champions. In addition, Maple Ridge's Andrew Gresham from the U13 Burnaby Mountain Selects team was honoured for being chosen the offensive MVP at the Adrenaline Challenge in San Diego.

Winter Skate
The Maple Ridge Figure Skating Club will host the 2010 B.C. Coast Winterskate and Starskate qualifying event this weekend at Planet Ice.

Pitt Air Force is ready to take off

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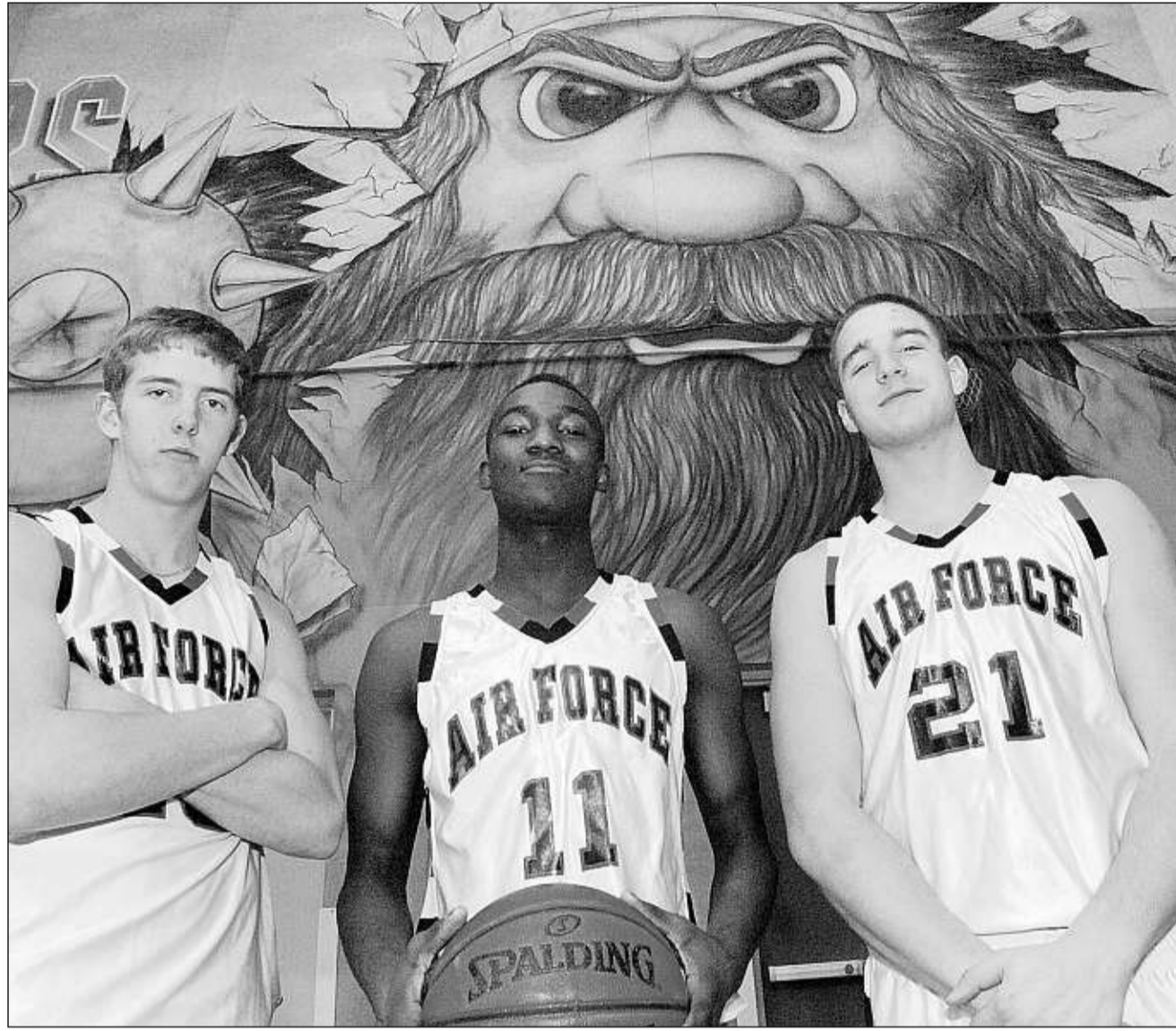
After being grounded by injuries, the Pitt Meadows Marauders Air Force has taken flight this winter. Rewind to last season: Pitt Meadows Secondary's senior boys basketball team didn't enter the B.C. High School Boys Basketball Association's top 10 'AAA' rankings.

Fast forward to this year: the Air Force has risen to No. 4 behind No. 1 Yale, No. 2 White Rock Christian, and No. 3 Vancouver College. A major blow for last year's Air Force came when one of their team leaders, forward Michael Lewandowski, missed the entire season with a knee injury.

In the final 15 minutes of the final session of the final day of his participation with Basketball B.C.'s Centre For Performance training group on the eve of the 2008/09 campaign, the 6'7" 220-pound senior suffered a torn ACL in his left knee after an awkward landing off a slam dunk.

A misdiagnosis of the injury meant Lewandowski missed his entire Grade 11 year, and on the eve of the current season, he was shelved again after spraining the MCL and tearing the meniscus in the same knee during a club game.

These days, a healthy and re-energized Lewandowski, in his Grade 12 year, has helped the Air Force reach a new stratosphere. "We started the year with lots of injuries, then, around Christmas, we've managed to have all our players healthy for the games and that's made a huge difference," said the Air Force's veteran head coach Rich



Pitt Meadows Marauders Air Force members, left to right, Spencer Evans, Malcolm Williams and Mike Lewandowski have their sights set on the 'AAA' boys provincial championships being held March 16-20 at the PNE Agrodome.

Goulet, in his 31st year guiding senior boys hoops teams at Pitt Meadows Secondary.

A healthy Air Force crew is flying of late. The team has only lost once in the last six weeks. Prior to that, they were losing an average of a game a week. Their confidence at a whole new level, the Air Force has a lofty goal of contending for the B.C. 'AAA' boys title.

"We're just as capable of winning the provincial championship this year as anyone in the province," Goulet said. "Being ranked No. 4 means you are only a basket or two away from your opposition, but lots of us are saving our best for the end."

The Air Force's recipe for success starts off with the usual ingredients, with maturity topping the checklist. "We've got mostly Grade

12s. The majority of the kids who log the most playing time [are in Grade 12]," Goulet said, "so experience is one of [the keys to success]."

Goulet added that toughness on the defensive end of the court has also been a difference-maker.

"We limit other people's offences," Goulet said. "Most often they score fewer points against us than they do against anyone else." Familiarity also helps. Some of the players have known each other, and have played basketball together, since elementary school.

Grade 12 guard Spencer Evans said team unity away from the gym translates into on-court results. Evans has known some of his teammates since "Junior Grizzlies" in Grade 2, he said.

"The team gets along very well off the court," he said. "We're all friends, we all hang

out, we all get together and have fun, and it helps a lot on the court. We know each other very well, our advantages and disadvantages, so we all try to help each other out."

Lewandowski noted that the Air Force players who competed for Pitt Meadows in the B.C. junior finals two years ago have carried their confidence to the senior ranks.

"They have that sort of winning attitude and tough mentality that they bring to this team," Lewandowski said. "I've always had that and I've had that hunger since I was injured for the last year. The combination works very well together."

Guard Malcolm Williams, the Air Force's lone Grade 11 starter, isn't surprised by the team's ascension up the ranks.

"We have a lot of talent on

the team and we have a lot of good players," said Williams.

The Air Force's ultimate goal can't get much loftier than a provincial championship, which they hope to compete for at the PNE Agrodome come mid-March. The Air Force wants to be one of the teams to beat, if they get through their Fraser Valley playoffs and thus qualify for the 20-team 2010 Telus 'AAA' Tournament, being held March 16-20 at the Agrodome.

"Our goal is to win the provincials," Evans said, bluntly.

The injury bug bit the Air Force again this week. Williams turned his ankle in Pitt Meadows' win over Samuel Roberts Technical School Tuesday night, and will likely be out of action for two to four weeks.

- With files from the Vancouver Province

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