

Sports

Wrestling

Girls take frustrations to the mats

In a sport dominated by men, some female members of the MRSS wrestling team are showing their fighting strength.

by Amy Judd

ajudd@mrtimes.com

In a room with no windows, in what was once Mount Crescent Elementary, the MRSS wrestling team practise hard for their upcoming competitions.

Coach Bill McCrae fires off instructions to the group, while teaching them new moves and how to safely take down their opponent.

With the B.C. High School Wrestling Championships in Abbotsford later this week, the group has been racking up the wins, with many coming from the small number of girls on the team.

Candice Owen, 16, Clarissa Morgan, 14, and Payten Smith, 14, all enjoy the intensity of the sport and see it as a way to take out their frustrations.

"It requires mental strength and physical strength," said Owen, who used to figure skate, but quit last year.

Morgan, who also practises ballet, said her competitive side thrives on the thrill of the wrestling competitions.

"I love to get gold," she said. "But if I don't, it's OK."

Smith has been a strong contender in every meet so far this year, and as a Grade 9 student, she has many years of wrestling at the school ahead of her.

"I really like the sound of the ref hitting the mat," she said smiling, as that often means she has won the match.

"It's not just something anyone can do," she said, and although the girls enjoy the same activities others their age do, there is no mistaking that they are tough.

"By the second round, you're just like, done," said Owen. "It's really a lot of mental stuff."

Smith, who attended a wrestling camp just before Christmas, said she learned a valuable lesson about competing.

"You've got to keep trying. When you're down to your last breath, you've got to keep trying."

The girls attribute their technique to McCrae, who has been coaching at the school for 21 years.



Clarissa Morgan observed Payten Smith and Candice Owen as they practised in preparation for the B.C. High School Wrestling Championships.



Candice Owen (left) and Payten Smith faced each other in a practice before heading to Abbotsford.

"He pushes you so hard," Morgan said, "and makes you so much better."

It is also important in this sport to maintain a certain weight to compete in a weight class.

Owen and Morgan compete in

the 57 kg class, while Smith is often in the 80 kg + class.

The girls on the team stick together, especially at competitions when they say girls on other teams can be unfriendly.

"I always look at the other girls

and judge myself," said Owen. "I can never make friends."

Smith knows many in her weight class, but agreed with Owen, saying the boys tend to be supportive of those on other teams after a match, but it never seems that way for the girls.

"They are so catty," said Morgan.

Even when members of the other team and the coaches try to intimidate them, the girls manage to keep a level head.

"If they feel they have to intimidate you then it's hard to be scared of them," said Morgan.

Smith has won gold medals at the Port Alberni Invitational, and the Upper Fraser Novice games, as well as three major tournaments at Simon Fraser University's War on the Floor.

Morgan also won gold at the Upper Fraser Novice games and the Miri Piri invite in Abbotsford, took silver in the Upper Fraser Valley championships, placed third in Port Alberni, and came sixth at War on the Floor.

Owen has won gold at the Miri Piri invite, and the Upper Fraser Valley Championships.

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editorial@mrtimes.com

On Deck

Winter wins

Some local residents are getting their names thrust into the national spotlight this week, with strong showings at the Canada Winter Games.

Erin Beckett of Maple Ridge, along with her partner, Kathleen Auton of Ladner, took silver last week for air pistol-women's team.

Ridge Meadows Racer Michelle MacKay, along with teammates Courtney Shmyr, Jamie Macdonald, and Jesse Keca, took silver in the women's 3,000-metre short-track speedskating relay.

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Scott Weighton

Maple Ridge resident Mateo Le Van

Awards night

Two local residents were honoured for their lacrosse skills at the Maple Leaf Awards dinner.

Maple Ridge student Mateo Le Van was named team MVP for the Burnaby Mountain Selets (BMS), elite touring teams, for the 2010 fall season in the U12 category.

Pitt Meadows Secondary student Riley Glemnitz was named to the 2010 Mountain All-Stars for the Adrenaline Challenge held in San Diego, among others.

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Spring skating

The Maple Ridge Figure Skating Club is now accepting online registrations for its 2011 spring CanSkate sessions.

These CanSkate programs are designed for beginners of all ages, and everyone is welcome to sign up and learn how to skate.

For more information about the programs available visit the website at www.mapleridgeskating.com.

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