

# Georgetown coaches pleased Thunder clears final hurdle

**EAMONN MAHER**  
Staff Writer

Having four players who competed in the recent 2006 Winter Olympics in Italy presented some challenges for the Georgetown-based coaching staff of the Brampton Thunder, but the team persevered and captured its first-ever National Women's Hockey Championship in Sydney, Nova Scotia recently.

Since its inception in 1998, the Thunder has been coached by Steve Bennett and his associate Tim Lariviere, with another Georgetown resident, Gary McFadyen, joining the staff five years ago. Brampton had two runner-up finishes and a bronze to show for its previous trips to the Esso Nationals before breaking through in 2006, defeating the Montreal Axion 2-1 in the final. It's the third year in a row that an Ontario team has claimed the national title.

"We'd knocked on the door a couple of times before so it's nice to get that monkey off our backs," said the 44-year-old Bennett, who works for the City of



**GARY McFADYEN**

Mississauga's Parks & Recreation department. "Consistently it's been a good team over the last few years and it was just a matter of time before we made that next step."

Canadian Olympic gold medallists Vicky Sunohara, Jayna Hefford and Gillian Ferrari— along with American Kathleen Kauth— played key roles

for the Thunder in winning the national championship, even though they didn't actually start playing for Brampton until late last month.

They'd been training with their respective national teams since last summer, leaving the Thunder somewhat short-staffed. The Thunder's 19-12-5-0 regular-season

mark was impressive considering the absences. The perennial powerhouse Toronto Beatrice Aeros, with its top players away at the Olympics as well, didn't even make the NWHL playoffs or nationals this season.

In an NWHL regular-season contest in Georgetown Jan. 13, Brampton iced just 10 skaters, yet still managed to beat the Oakville Ice 3-2.

"The girls hung tough," added Bennett, who is also the club's general manager. "There were some games where we only had

12 players and we had to rely on call-ups from university teams. But the one thing we tried to do from the start of the year was to have (the Olympic participants) spend training camp with us and visit four or five times through the season to keep in touch with their teammates, by e-mail or whatever. And when they did come back, they fit

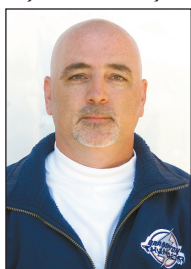
into the team nicely."

Bennett had been involved in coaching AAA minor hockey in his native Mississauga for a few years before taking on the Thunder position. McFadyen is currently an assistant coach with the North Halton Twisters' girls' midget B squad and was the third-round draft pick of the Toronto Maple Leafs in 1976, while Lariviere is a native of Granby, Que. who played football at Montreal's McGill University.

The season isn't over for the Thunder as the NWHL playoffs continue. Brampton eliminated Oakville in a best-of-3 semi-final series this past weekend, and will now face the Central Division champ Durham Lightning. From there, the survivor of that series will play either Montreal or Ottawa on April 15 for the league title.

(Eamonn Maher can be reached at emaher@independentfreepress.com)

—Photos courtesy I.D.E.A.S. Photography



**STEVE BENNETT**



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**By Mike Harris**

Now is the time to start practicing outdoors, weather permitting.

A couple of weeks ago, we had a putting tip, now this time I would like you to start working on your chipping.

The key to good chipping is very simple. Make good solid contact with the ball.

When solid contact is made, 99% of the time the chip is going to end up fairly close to the hole.

In order to make solid contact a couple of swing keys are necessary.

1. The chipping motion is very short, therefore there is no time for any weight transfer in the swing. Try putting a little more weight on your left side (for right-handed golfers) at address, and as you swing concentrate on staying steady throughout the motion. A 70%-30% weight distribution is about right.

2. As you swing ensure you accelerate the club through the impact zone, and do not be afraid of going down after the ball. If you have not shifted your weight you will not hit the ground behind the ball first, guaranteed.

3. Finally do not look up for at least 3 seconds after the ball has left your club. Try to guess whether you hit the ball too softly, too hard, or just about right. You will be surprised how accurate your guesses are based on the feel of solid contact with the ball!

**Golf Thought of the Week:** A ball you can see in the rough from 50 yards away is not yours!



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