

Economist & Sun/Sun-Tribune

DIVERSIONS

In search of Olympic sports

Pentathlon, archery, table tennis played in York Region

BY ROGER VARLEY
Staff Writer

Much was made of the underfunding of Canadian athletes during the Athens Olympics, but little was said about the difficulty of even becoming involved in some of the lesser-known sports.

Team handball, track cycling, table tennis, water polo and the modern pentathlon, to name a few, are not events often seen on TV sportscasts or mentioned in the sports pages.

So how does a resident of York Region whose interest might have been piqued by the Games get started in one of these sports? The answer is, one deserves a gold medal for even tracking some of them down.

For example, how does one become a track cyclist when there are no tracks in Ontario?

"It's a big issue with us," said Steve Merker of Richmond Hill, executive director of the Ontario Cycling Association. "It's a joke. Lori-Ann Muenzer, who won gold in the women's sprint, is from Toronto but she doesn't live here anymore."

Mr. Merker said the lack of facilities in her own back yard led the cyclist to move to Alberta. He noted the recent Ontario provincial track cycling championships had to be held at a velodrome in Detroit.

"We followed the garbage trucks down the highway," he said with grim humour.

The lack of facilities is eliminating "a ton" of potential Lori-Ann Muenzers, he said.

"It comes down to dollars," Mr. Merker said, adding the chances of seeing a track cycling velodrome in the Toronto area anytime soon are slim.

If track cycling is not an option, there's always the trampoline. At least we have the Richmond Hill Skyriders, the home club of Canadian men's trampoline champion Mathieu Turgeon of Unionville and Karen

Cockburn, the current women's world champion and winner of a silver medal in Athens.

A surprise of sorts is the Pause Awhile equestrian centre in Whitchurch-Stouffville, where students can learn the intricacies of the modern pentathlon, which sees competitors involved in shooting, fencing, swimming, show jumping and running.

Coached by Bonnie Burlton, a member of the national modern pentathlon team, the program started about two years ago with 15 youngsters who rode at the centre, did their swimming and running in Stouffville, fencing at Variety Village in Toronto and, because they were too young to attend a Scarborough gun club, practised with air guns in family basements.

"But now it's a very, very small club," said Cheryl Eeuwes of Pause Awhile, noting the training and the travel required has reduced the number of children in the program to about four. Nevertheless, 12-year-old Heather Lee of Unionville placed second in her age class at the nationals this summer.

How about team handball? Good luck. Searching the Internet reveals there is something called Team Handball Ontario, but there appears to be no way of reaching them. The only mention of the organization is a contact number, but that is not in service. The Canadian Team Handball Federation website shows there are provincial organizations in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia but no

WANNA PLAY?

Some sports club contacts in York Region:
Table tennis: Newmarket Table Tennis Club, 256 Rogers Rd., 905-895-2461
Modern pentathlon: Pause Awhile Equestrian Centre, 13243 McCowan Rd., 905-640-7232
Trampoline: Richmond Hill Skyriders, 9094 Leslie St., 905-731-0005
Fencing: Newmarket Fencing Club, 356 Roywood Ct., 905-954-1850
Archery: York County Bowmen, 15887 McCowan Road, 905-642-0695



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/MIKE BARRETT

Cyclists can take to the roads of York Region, but not an indoor facility.

presence of any kind in Ontario. It's tough to find a water polo club in York Region, so unless you arrange for a group to come over to play in the family pool you will have to travel father afield.

NOT PING-PONG

Table tennis — don't call it ping-pong in front of the purists — is a little more accessible with the Newmarket Table Tennis Club operating out of Rogers Public School and anyone wanting to try their hand at fencing can put themselves in the capable hands of Michael McDonnell, who runs classes at St. Nicholas Catholic School in Newmarket.

Mr. McDonnell has made appearances in World Cup com-

petition and was formerly head fencing coach at the Royal Military College in Kingston, where he was twice named Ontario university coach of the year.

One of the lesser-known sports that is gaining in popularity is archery, but even that has its drawbacks.

The York County Bowmen, who operate a club in the Vivian Forest east of Newmarket, offer an introductory archery course which is held on Saturday mornings and lasts six weeks. But the Bowmen have announced the club's fall 2004 course is full, due to popular demand. The next course doesn't begin until the spring.



CHRISTINE SPENCE-MAJARAH

ON CRAFTS

Peanut butter makes recipe

Chocolate alone is delightful. Peanut butter on its own is decadent and good enough to eat by the spoonful. But, combine the two in one candy and you have something truly divine. Since the 1920s, when they were sold for a penny apiece, peanut butter cups have been popular.

Eighty years later, it remains one of the most popular treats sold in Canada.

Now with this easy recipe, you can make your own. You'll need to purchase some mini-candy cup liners. These can usually be purchased wherever candy-making supplies are found. In a pinch, you could use small cupcake liners.

Makes 30 mini peanut butter cups

2 cups (500 ml) milk chocolate chips

2 tablespoons (30 ml) shortening

1/2 cup (125 ml) butter

1/2 cup (125 ml) peanut butter

1 cup (250 ml) confectioners sugar

2/3 cup (150 ml) graham cracker crumbs

In a small saucepan combine chocolate chips and shortening. Cook over low heat until melted and smooth, stirring occasionally. With a small, clean paintbrush, coat the inside of 30 mini cups. This is a fun job for the kids once you show them how it's done. Use about one teaspoon of chocolate for each cup and coat until it's smooth and even and about 1/8 inch thick. Refrigerate the chocolate shells until ready to fill with peanut butter filling. In a medium saucepan, combine butter and peanut butter. Cook over medium heat until melted, stirring occasionally. Remove mixture from heat. Add the confectioners sugar and graham cracker crumbs and stir well to combine.

Press about 1/2 tablespoon of filling into each chocolate cup shell. Spoon approximately 1/2 teaspoon of chocolate mixture on top of each peanut butter cup and spread until completely coating the filling.

Refrigerate until firm and enjoy.

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