

North Peace Gymnastics Association balanced to begin another season

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*For the Fort St. John
Community Arts Council*

The word gymnastics derives from the Greek word *gymnastike* meaning 'fond of athletic exercises' (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gymnastics>). Ancient Greek cities had *gymnasiums* for running, jumping, and wrestling. Modern gymnastics really began to evolve in the 1700 and 1800s. During this time, only boys and men partici-

pated whereas more recently a greater number of females than males participate. Men's gymnastics have been included in the Olympic Games since 1896 and Women's gymnastics since 1928.

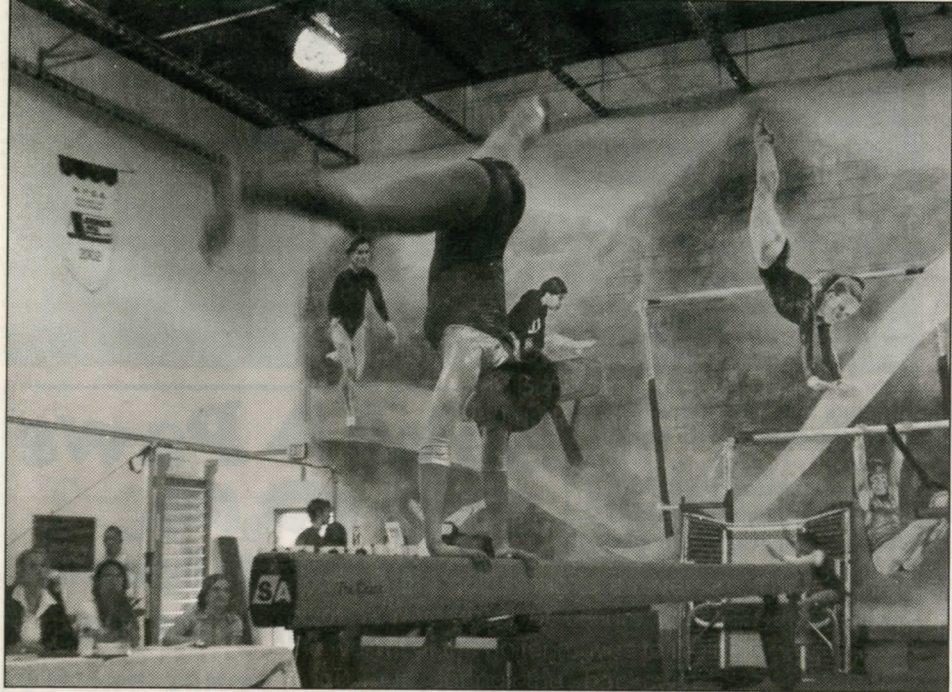
The North Peace Gymnastics Association (NPGA) was formed in 1976 and has operated continuously since then. The club was located previously in schools and then in a warehouse in the Prospect Park district before moving into its current location at the North Peace Arena in 2001. A bigger facility with permanent seating remains a long-term goal of the club.

Gymnastics straddles between a sport and a dance form, requiring strength, balance, flexibility, poise, grace, timing, musicality, creativity, and, of course, steady nerves. Reflecting its dual nature, NPGA belongs to both the arts council and the sports council in Fort St John. NPGA is also a member of True Sport (<http://www.truesportpur.ca>), a foundation that promotes principles of participation, fair play, activity, respect, and giving back and KidSport (<http://www.kidsportcanada.ca>), an organization that provides support to children who are not able to participate in organized sport for financial reasons.

Over 500 athletes ranging in age from 2 years to adult were enrolled in various recreational and competitive programs offered by NPGA last season. The athletes attended numerous competitions throughout the province and one in Alberta and hosted the annual Doetzel Invitational in May.

NPGA athletes are particularly recognized for their choreography on floor and beam, thanks to their head coach Leanne Couch, assistant coach Erin Hipkiss, and dance coach Kathy Stadnyk. The coaching staff is rounded out by: Kim Hartford, Jason Wilson, Leah Yee and several athletes who are coaches in training.

A full list of programs is posted on the NPGA web site: www.npga.ca or drop by the office and ask Carol Lyons or JayLee Cochet for more information.



North Peace gymnasts impress at local meet

KELLY LAPOINTE
STAFF WRITER

The North Peace Gymnastics Association members leapt and tumbled their way to various medals and awards at the Doetzel Invitational in Fort St. John last weekend.

The local gymnasts hosted clubs from Prince George, Peace River and Grande Prairie in one of their final competitions of the season.

Fort St. John's Jeryn Mackey took first overall in Provincial Level 3, beating fellow North Peace gymnast Brianna Owen by 0.100 of a point.

Mackey said it felt good to win first all around and that she was proud of her routine on bars, which she also won.

"It's the first time I've gotten 12, all year."

Gymnasts competed in floor, beam, bars and vault in front of a hometown crowd of supporters.

"It's nice sometimes competing at home because then you know everyone, it's not as scary," said Mackey.

North Peace gymnast Kassidy Roblin was first overall in Provincial Level 2 Argo/Tyro combined.

"It was hard, but it was fun," she said of the competition, adding that the beam was her best event "because I stuck my whole beam routine."

North Peace Gymnastics coach Leanne Couch was pleased with the performances

she did see, though she was busy making sure everything ran smoothly.

"I think they all had very good successes, I saw no tears, they all walked away with some pretty big accomplishments."

Awards were handed out to gymnasts at the top of each event for Provincial Level 1 and Provincial Level 2/3.

Stephanie Forster from the Prince George Gymnastics Club swept the trophies, winning Best Vault, Best Bars, Best Beam and Best Floor for Level 1.

Forster competed in the Argo/Tyro combined category and said she never won that many trophies before.

"It's really cool," she said, adding that she was proud because she landed her back walkover during her beam routine.

Her coach, Jennifer Fendelet, said she was impressed with Forster.

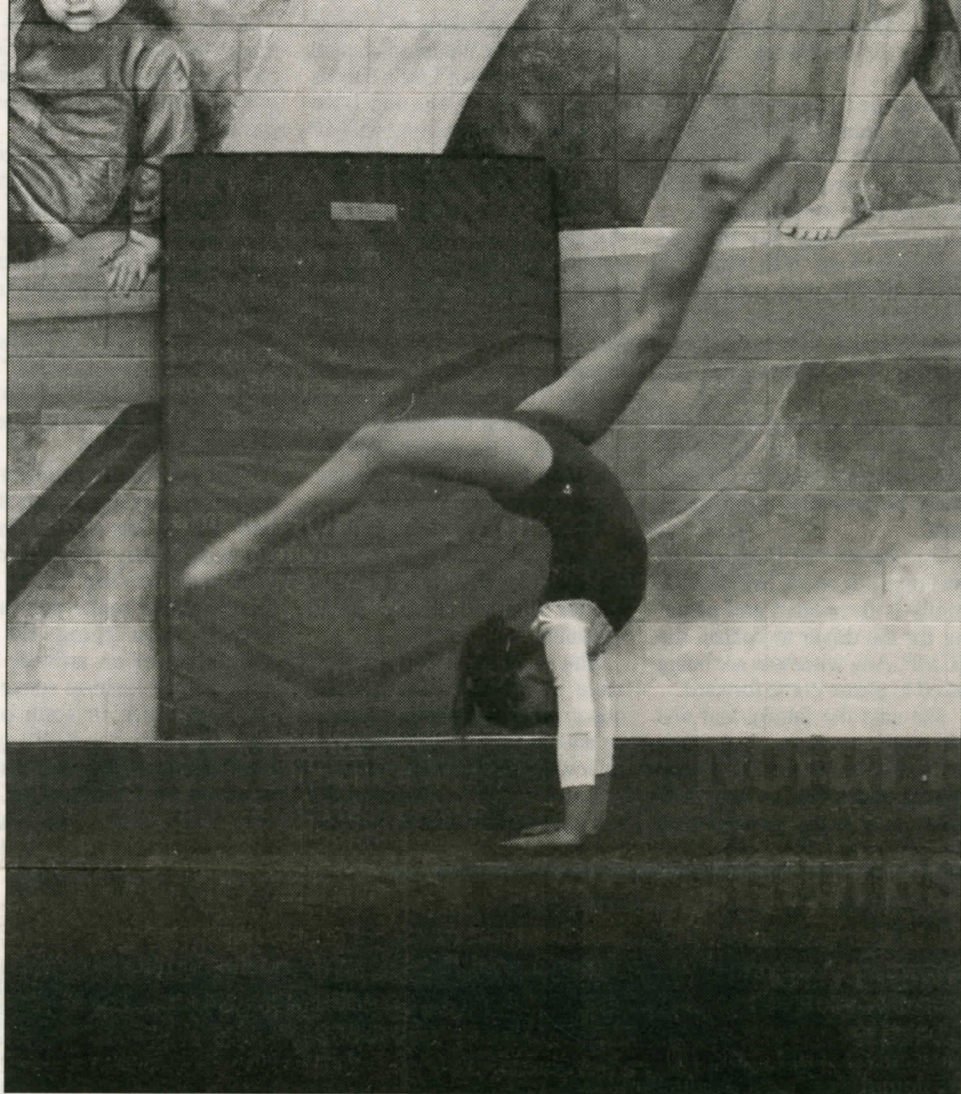
"She was super tight in her performance and her presentation stood out for me...all around today she was super tight," she said.

"She stuck her beam routine and cleaned house, I think."

All of the Prince George girls did well in the various events, said Fendelet.

"They performed really well and (were) totally confident."

Owen won Best Vault for the Provincial Level 2/3 with Heather Smith of Fort St. John winning Best Bars, Daisy Petrucci winning Best Beam and Mackey winning Best Floor.



(Top Left) Jeryn Mackey performs a graceful beam routine at the 2010 Doetzel Invitational at the North Peace Gymnastics Association last weekend. (Top Right) Abby Robinson shows off her strength in her floor routine in Level 1 Argo/Tyro combined. (Below) Daisy Petrucci does a handstand during her beam bars routine. (Kelly Lapointe Photos)

