

Wheelchair Sports New Brunswick Report

WBC 2015 AGM

WSNB had a busy year for wheelchair basketball and not without some challenges. Highlighting this year's wheelchair basketball activities include the 2015 Canada Winter Games held in Prince George, BC, national attention given to 4 NB athletes invited to camps at the Academy in Toronto and recognition of a very dedicated volunteer, Sabrina Durepos.

The 2015 Canada Games was a priority for NB to develop athletes and grow the sport. Monthly training camps were held throughout the year and the participation as a team in the Maritime Wheelchair Basketball League was part of the preparation process towards the Canada Games. good for 6th place an improvement from 9th place in the 2011 Canada Games.

This past year NB had only two clubs participating in the MWBL. Elm City (Fredericton) had a team in the A and B Division and Saint John had a team in the B Division only since many of the Canada Games Team members were from the Saint John area. The NB Canada Games team played in the A Division finishing 2nd in the league finals.

As a result of Steve Bialowas attending a MWBL tournament, a few new players were identified as having Junior National Team (U23) potential and have attended camps at the Academy in Toronto. Alex Hayward, as of September 1, 2015, will be attending the Academy full time. Colin Higgins attended his first U30 camp and has been identified as a potential future prospect for the men's program.

Sabrina Durepos was recognized by Wheelchair Basketball Canada receiving the "Leadership Excellence Award" in April and by Coach New Brunswick with "Everyone Matters" coaching award in August. These awards recognize Sabrina's ongoing efforts to develop wheelchair basketball, particularly at the junior level, in NB. Sabrina, along with her husband Dave, have devoted countless hours promoting the sport through demonstrations in schools, communities and rehabilitation centers. They are great ambassadors for wheelchair basketball.

Constant recruitment efforts through school and community demonstrations, visits to rehabilitation centers and the partnership with ParaNB have not resulted in any significant numbers of athletes joining wheelchair basketball clubs. This seems to be a trend in NB and other Maritime provinces. The potential development of a mini program (3 X 3) this year will hopefully bring new players to the sport.

Wheelchair basketball in New Brunswick has had some great moments this past year. For instance there are some amazing things happening in Grande Digue, with the Bon départ Sports Plus : Passeport au parasport initiative. Thanks to one key individual, Rhéal Hébert and a great

team behind him, a 50km relay challenge raised \$62,000 and Sabrina Durepos was part of the festivities along with hockey great Marie Philip Poulin. As a result, 4 schools in the Grande Digue area will this year be offering parasport after school programming with their own equipment.

There are still many challenges that will have to be addressed in the coming year. These include club development, leadership development particularly at the local level and recruitment and retention of volunteers and participants. The need to recruit coaches willing to work with mini and junior athletes will ensure wheelchair basketball development in the Province.

Ongoing financial support from the Province of New Brunswick through its various programs has and will continue to help Wheelchair Sports NB grow in the future. We are in the process of purchasing 3 new chairs for basketball and 1 chair for wheelchair rugby thanks to a pilot project grant from the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture.

WSNB looks forward to our ongoing partnership with Athletics NB and Tennis NB, members of our Board, whose resources have increased public visibility of athletes with a disability through their athletes' success. We continue to strive to give individuals with a disability opportunities to participate in sport and recreation activities to the best of their abilities.

I would, like to express appreciation to the numerous volunteers, coaches, officials, sponsors, parents and athletes for their time and efforts given to the sport of wheelchair basketball. Without you we would not have the opportunity to celebrate our successes.

Respectfully submitted,

Barry Wishart, President

Wheelchair Sports New Brunswick