

Gord Currie

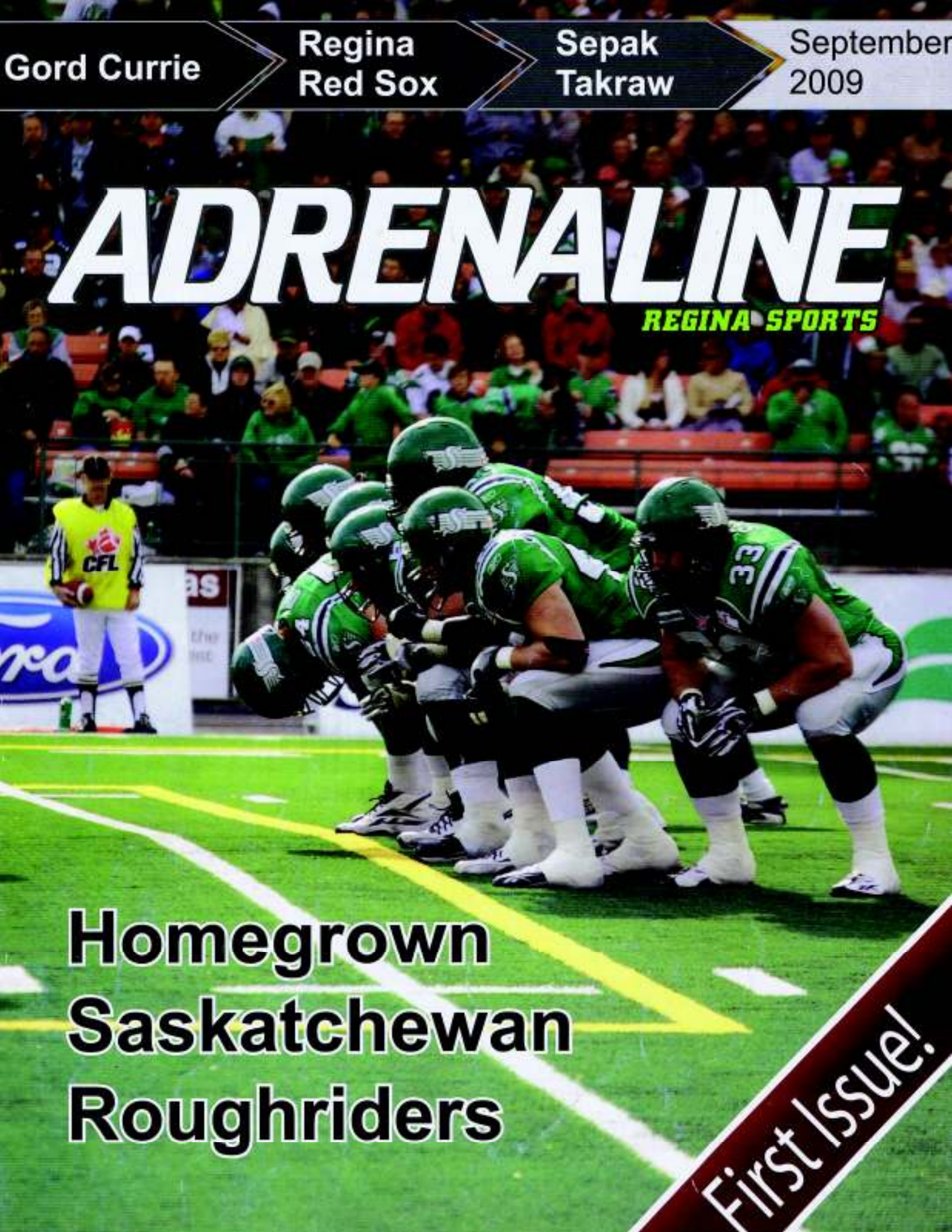
Regina
Red Sox

Sepak
Takraw

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ADRENALINE

REGINA SPORTS



Homegrown
Saskatchewan
Roughriders

First Issue!

September

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The University of Regina Cougars are a huge part of our city's sporting community. This month we got to know Randi Schmeichel, a four-year Cougar who has kicked back after injury.



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The Saskatchewan Roughriders are a vital part of Regina's identity, and no one knows that better than those who grew up here and now play for the team.



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Sepak Takraw

The sport from Asia is growing faster in Regina than anywhere else in North America. Kicks, flips, and bodies flying through the air can be found throughout the city.



Sepak Takraw Kicks Up Profile in Saskatchewan



Saskatchewan parks have been filled with flips, kicks, and blocks this summer as sepak takraw was played throughout the city.

The emerging sport – also known as kick volleyball – continues to grow in Saskatchewan. The two major events this summer, provincials on Canada Day and nationals on the August long weekend, brought out many spectators and new people to try out the sport.

“They’re pretty amazed,” said Rick Engel, the pioneer of organizing the sport in North America. “Some of the common words we hear are ‘amazing,’ ‘incredible,’ ‘awesome,’ or ‘sick’ – there’s many adjectives and we hear them all. It’s fun to watch.”

Whether they’re at a national

competition or in the Oasis (a former church) on a Tuesday night, it’s easy to see the enjoyment players get out of sepak takraw. The advanced players fly through the air as they flip and spike; learning players break into smiles as they enter the gym, and rally back and forth.

Engel discovered sepak takraw during his two years of teaching English in China.

“One summer I was travelling and came across the sport in Thailand and Malaysia,” said Engel. “That’s where I first saw it and I just thought this is an amazing sport and we could do this in Canada.”

Engel came home with the sport on his mind and through teaching ESL at

the Open Door Society, he discovered sepak takraw was being played in the Laotian community in Regina.

He began learning the game from them, and has since become the author of a manual on the sport that instructors and teachers throughout the country and around the world use to teach sepak takraw. Through Asian Sport Education and Culture International (ASEC), he helped introduce the activity to schools.

Sepak takraw has incorporated a national and now provincial sport governing body, and continues to attract players from beginners to competitive.

“It’s like volleyball but you’re not using your hands, which makes it very

entertaining because there's a whole new dimension involved," said Engel. "It's entertaining to see the control that experienced players have. We have all the plays as well – short sets, fast spikes, high sets, big air spikes."

The sport is being integrated into physical education classes to develop foot-eye coordination.

Win San moved to Canada from Thailand two and a half years ago. He had never played sepak takraw before, but had watched it being played in his own country, and was excited to try playing in Regina. Others are now picking up the sport, often learning about it from friends.

"Many people, like my brothers, now are learning to play sepak takraw," he said. "This is my favourite game to play."



Regina has become the hub of sepak takraw throughout the entire Pan American region. Two women from Brazil recently immigrated to Canada, and came to Regina for sepak takraw.

Caelan Reilly was at Mosaic one year when a sepak takraw demonstration caught his eye, as he had played soccer, volleyball, badminton and baseball before.

"It seemed like the combination of all the sports I had played in one game," he said. He soon found out more about the sport and began playing at a nearby school. He now practices regularly and plays with Engel and San on the national team. He's also had the opportunity to travel to Thailand, Laos, Malaysia, China, and New York to go to compete in international tournaments and

participate in training camps and demonstrations.

"The people here are really friendly, which is always motivation to come back," he said. "And there's nothing better than doing a nice, hard spike over the net, and the player on the other side will go up for a block and you hear an 'ouch' on the other side."

The next step, for Engel, is to create a sepak takraw league, similar to other high school sports. Nine or ten is the age Engel recommends kids can start learning the sport.

Sepak Takraw Saskatchewan runs programs all year. This summer, drop-in sessions ran all week, where everyone from highly skilled national team members to beginners came out to practice, either indoors at the Oasis behind Sepak Takraw Saskatchewan's office, or outdoors at Victoria Park, in front of the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, or in Candy Cane Park. Those walking by for a nightly stroll? They're invited to join right in the fun if they wish.

"As long as you can kick as high as your knee, you can play speak takraw," said Engel.

To learn more about sepak takraw, see www.takrawcanada.com or call (306) 584-8778.

How to play Sepak Takraw

Sepak takraw is similar to volleyball, soccer, badminton, and hackey sack. A badminton court and net is used. Three players per side serve, set, spike, and use similar strategies to volleyball – except they can't use their hands – instead they use their feet and head, similar to soccer.

One player pitches to another on the team, who kicks the ball over the net for the serve. Either team can score at any time. The ball must stay in bounds and can't hit the floor. The team that wins the best of three sets wins the match. The first two sets are played up to 21, with each team winning by 2 points up to 25. The third set is played up to 15 points.

The best way to kick is using the instep – the flat part of the foot – and kicking the ball from a low position, up and over the net. Once the basic skills have been mastered, players can move on and advance their skill set.