



multiculturalism

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Successful Kick Off

The sunback spikes, roll spikes, digs and dinks of Sepak Takraw drew a huge audience to the Canadian Open Championships in Regina this summer.

The Asian game of kick volleyball became an incredibly popular feature of Regina's Buffalo Days, drawing about 3,000 spectators to the Aug. 2-6 demonstrations and competition.

This is one sport with a huge kick.

Played on a doubles badminton court, the goal is to hit a hand-woven ball over a five-foot-high net without using hands or arms.

A three-person team of players, called a regu, is allowed to hit the ball three times before it must cross the net. However, unlike volleyball, the same player can repeatedly hit the ball using inside kicks, outside kicks, front foot kicks, knee bumps or even headers.

The skills are acrobatic.

A sunback spike is when a player jumps with his or her back to the net and kicks the ball over the same shoulder as the kicking foot.

A roll spike, the most dramatic and famous move, is when a player jumps with his or her back to the net and kicks the ball over the opposite shoulder from the kicking foot with a flip like motion.

A dig involves fielding a hard hit ball to regain control. A dink is a soft hit ball, usually a serve or spike.

Organized by ASEC International (Asian Sport, Education and Culture), the championship drew 39 athletes from across Canada

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ACROBATIC
ATHLETE - A
Sepak Takraw player
kicks the ball at the
Canadian Open
Championships in
Regina. Photo by:
Mitch Johnston

Successful Kick Off



ACTION-PACKED GAME - Sepak Takraw is an exciting game to play and watch. This photo was taken at the Canadian Open in Regina. Photo by: Mitch Johnston.

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and the United States. With the support of 46 dedicated volunteers and 27 sponsors, including the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan, the event was a huge success.

The Regina B team was awarded the silver medal after losing the championship match to Winnipeg. Saskatoon took bronze in the men's division. Players from these teams will be selected to represent Canada in the World Sepak Takraw Championships in Asia. In the youth division, Winnipeg won gold, BC took silver and the Regina women's team bronze.

The sport originated about 500 years ago, providing Southeast Asian villagers with fun, recreation and a sense of community. The game was played in a circle and focused on trying to keep the ball in the air as long as possible.

In the mid-1930's, nets were introduced and volleyball-type rules developed. Formal rules were established in 1960. The name was created in 1965 by combining Sepak, the word used in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia meaning kick, and Takraw, the word used in Thailand and Laos meaning woven ball. Sepak Takraw is the national sport of Malaysia.

The game was introduced to Canada in the 1970's following the immigration of thousands of Laotian refugees. In 1988, then-teacher Rick Engel introduced Sepak Takraw at White City School, just outside Regina.

As executive director of ASEC International, Engel continues to promote the sport throughout Saskatchewan schools. The game has proven very popular, combining skills of soccer, the most played organized sport in Canada, with footbag, a trendy technique also known as Hackey Sack. There is also an economic advantage as the only equipment needed is running shoes and a ball. Another plus is that only three players are required for a team.


Engel, who is president of the Sepak Takraw Association of Canada and chair of the Canadian Open Championships, said there was only one disappointment during the tournament. The Philippine players were not able to get visas to attend the open. Apart from this problem, the event increased awareness of a great sport while challenging excellent players.

"Takraw is a unique sport/recreational activity that anyone can learn to play and have fun with, even at a beginner level," Engel said. "The game becomes extremely exhilarating to play and to watch as the level of skill progresses."

Drop in and league programs are offered in Regina for all ability levels. Drop in times at the YMCA gym are Sundays from 5:30 - 7:30 pm and Mondays from 7:30 - 9:30 pm.

For more information, call (306) 584-8778 or email asec@ywca.regina.sk.ca. The web site is www.asecint.org






is published at the beginning of each month by
the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (MCoS),
369 Park St., Regina, SK, S4N 5B2.
Editor: Heather Robison

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Submissions should be received
at least one week before the issue is published.

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