

## Island Speed Skaters Grab Medals in Saint John

*January 16, 2014, Charlottetown* – P.E.I.'s short-track speed skaters raced into 2014 in winning fashion at the Atlantic circuit's first meet of the New Year. Eighteen Island skaters traveled to Harbour Station in Saint John, N.B. to compete at the Charles Gorman Memorial Speed Skating Championships, where they captured seven medals, including three gold.

Carly Connell made a spectacular return to competition after a summer injury and months of rehab, breaking a P.E.I. record and claiming Division 1 gold as the top female skater in the meet. Connell broke 50 seconds for the first time, setting a new P.E.I. benchmark for Junior women with a time of 49.683 seconds in the 500 metre distance. With her weekend times, Charlottetown skater handily met the qualification standards for the Canadian Age Class Short Track Championships, set for March 14-16 in Prince George, B.C.

Other P.E.I. skaters nabbing gold medals were Mia Stewart of Stratford in Division 8 and Rob Binns in the Masters division. Stewart overcame a fall in her 200m sprint with a pair of wins in other distances to earn the title, while Binns notched new personal bests and provincial Masters (40+) records in his four events.

Alex Rogers claimed P.E.I.'s lone silver medal in Division 11, for his third medal in four events this season. Earning bronze medals for the Island contingent were Jared Vriends of Pleasant Grove in Division 1, Korrina LeClair in a very fast Division 5 and Thomas McQuaid in Division 6. Vriends' podium finish marked his first as a Division 1 competitor and included a convincing win in his 3000m points race to cap the competition.

P.E.I. coach Sarah Taylor said she was ecstatic with the team's performance. "There were so many highlights throughout the whole team," said Taylor. "Our skaters recorded a huge number of significant personal best times and showed some great technical and tactical skating, not to mention some amazing grit when it was needed. The results should give all of them a great boost of confidence."

Other skaters competing for P.E.I. in Saint John were Zach Moran, Michael Rogers, Brandon Richard, Andrew McQuaid, Peter McQuaid, Miriam Burnett, Andrew Binns, Kyle Connell, Kristen Binns, Ben Keizer and Karla Lynn McCallum.

Over 150 skaters from 8 clubs competed in the event, which attracted skaters from all three Maritime Provinces to Harbour Station. Aidan Cyr of Halifax won his first Division 1 gold, as the top overall male skater at the meet.

P.E.I. skaters are now looking ahead to the next short track event in Hampton, New Brunswick and the Atlantic Long Track Championships in Halifax at the end of January.

*Photo caption: P.E.I.'s Carly Connell (left) holds her ground ahead of Zach Groom of New Brunswick at the recent Charles Gorman Memorial Speed Skating Championships in Saint John. Connell's gold medal was one of seven podium finishes by Island skaters at the meet. Photo courtesy of Kevin Scott.*

