

Island Speed Skaters Victorious in New Brunswick

February 13, 2014, Charlottetown – While their Olympic heroes began hitting the ice in Sochi, P.E.I.'s short-track speed skaters were busy racking up their own podium performances at a recent meet in Dieppe, N.B.. The Island contingent of 31 skaters nabbed 13 medals, including two gold, seven silver and four bronze. The 13 podium finishes were enough for the P.E.I. team to edge their rivals from strong Fredericton, Saint John and host Dieppe clubs and to repeat as the top medal winners at the event. Hosted by the Codiac Cyclones speed skating club, the meet attracted a strong field of 144 skaters from nine clubs across the Maritimes.

Winning gold for Prince Edward Island were Kristen Binns in Division 4 and Keanna Ryan in Division 10. Ryan's gold came as she swept her races in her off-Island competitive debut, while it was the third medal of the season for Binns, of Stratford.

Grabbing silver medals for P.E.I. were Peter McQuaid in Division 2, Thomas McQuaid in Division 4, Mathew Kozma in Division 5, Mia Stewart in Division 5, Addison Bruce in Division 7 and brothers Liam and Zachary Chatfield in Divisions 9 and 10, respectively. Peter McQuaid set new personal best times against an older group of skaters enroute to his silver, while his younger sibling Thomas earned his second medal of the season after posting three personal bests. For Kozma and Bruce, the silver medals duplicated their results on the same Olympic-sized ice a year ago, while Stewart added to her two gold medals from earlier in the season. Liam and Zachary Chatfield recorded back-to-back medal finishes after earning medals at a previous meet in January as well.

Rounding out P.E.I.'s medal haul with bronze were Carly Connell (Division 2) Miriam Burnett (Division 3), William Lyons of Rock Barra (Division 5) and Karla McCallum (Division 6). Connell managed her medal on substitute blades, after one of her own blades was cracked just hours before the meet. Burnett, Lyons and McCallum each earned their medals on the strength of multiple personal best performances.

Jared Vriends narrowly edged team-mate Michael Rogers as the top P.E.I. skater at the event, after an exciting final points race for both skaters. The pair finished 6th and 7th, while fellow Islander Zach Moran was 10th in the very competitive Division 1. Moran set new personal bests in each distance, including his first sub-50 second 500 metre race. Vriends, coming off his strong showings at the Atlantic Long Track Championships, improved on his best short-track times to meet the qualifying standards for the Canadian Age Class Short Track Championships, being held next month in Prince George, B.C..

"This was quite a memorable meet," said Island coach Phil Byrne. "From our rookies right up to our veteran leaders, the team had a great vibe around it the whole weekend and it showed in the results. There were so many great races, fast times and 'wow' moments in terms of technical mastery and confidence building among our skaters – it was fun to watch and be a part of the team."

Other skaters competing for P.E.I. were Brandon Richard, Rob Binns, Andrew McQuaid, Korrina LeClair, Andrew Binns, Samuel Ryan, Kyle Connell, Ben Keizer, Simon Hale, Carter Bruce, Isabel Wagner, Matthew McKenna, Alex Rogers and Jane Bruce. Rob Binns improved on his P.E.I. record times for Masters (40+) in the 500 metre, 1000m and 1500m distances while competing in Division 2.



Photo caption: P.E.I.'s Peter McQuaid (second from left) jockeys for position with a trio of New Brunswick skaters in a recent race. McQuaid's silver medal was one of thirteen medals won by Island skaters at a recent meet in Dieppe, N.B.. Photo courtesy of Kevin Scott.