

# BEST SPORTS STORY

There were some very strong entries in this category. In sports writing, a journalist should always look for an opportunity to transcend sports into human interest, creating a compelling piece that would keep a non-sports enthusiast hooked and interested. There should also be a level of depth in writing that goes beyond the standard sports clichés, tapping into the passion of the subject or the moment, and creating an emotional connection with the reader. Three stories stood out, and all were worthy of being first place winners. There were also strong entries turned in by the Nation, the Nunatsiq News, the Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph and The Equity.



(Front row, left to right) Ahanna, Sarah, Sarah, Anna-Claire, Roxanne. (Top row, left to right): Manjit Singh and Lorraine Singh. Catherine, Diandra, Kelsy, Mikaela, Madeline, Talia Coach Right Richard Nadler and Assistant Coach in back Andrew Hadjidakis.

## The Hulks sport turbans in support of penalized Sikh soccer players in Quebec

Teenage girls and their parents score big with their protest at practice on eve of ban being lifted

James Parry

Your Local Journal

As a child growing up, long-time St. Lazare resident Richard Nadler was no stranger to bullying. Kids in school and on the street would fight with him and call him all sorts of names. Simply because he was Jewish.

Explained Nadler, in an interview with *Your Local Journal* this week, "I was treated as an unequal member of my own community. Being Jewish is not as evident as a Sikh or someone with a head dress, but still it was difficult. And I can only imagine what it is like for children who are visibly different."

Fast forward. Now, the father of four children of his own, in addition to his

full-time commitment representing four Canadian lighting manufacturers, he has been voluntarily coaching soccer teams for the past 13 years. And since mid-May this year, with the all-girls team from St. Lazare, Hudson and Rigaud - The Hulks - a proud member of the St. Lazare Hudson Soccer Association.

So when his team took to the field for their regular practice at St. Thomas Park last Friday evening - just hours before the Quebec Soccer Federation ended its internationally criticized ban on turbans - he felt obliged to make his personal feelings known. The girls - aged 13 to 14 - were right behind him. And so it was that, with the approval of their parents, they put on orange

turbans in protest of the ban which would have seen youngsters wearing them for religious reasons prevented from competing in inter-provincial and national championships.

"I had actually contacted the Sikh community a week ago, trying to set up

when he first proposed the protest, Nadler smiled. "I believe I caught most of the parents off guard," he said. "This is not the typical question a soccer coach asks the parents. They ask, 'Will your child will be there tonight', or 'Are you bringing the popsicles?'

"The girls demonstrated a true understanding of what it meant to support a religion and a cause that, once they were allowed to express their will."

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## JAMES PARRY

Your Local Journal

James Parry exemplifies what community sports journalism is all about in this piece. He tells a story of a coach and a group of kids who take a moral stand, using their team to create a bond and make a statement. The story not only transcends sports into human interest, but it also creates an emotional connection with the reader.

## TREVOR GREENWAY

The Low Down to Hull & Back News

In his profile of a young gymnastic phenom, Trevor Greenway includes all of the elements in a good sports feature or profile. The passion of her coach provides an underlying level of depth to the story.

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The Low Down to Hull & Back News

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## Ten-year-old phenom turning and twisting heads

By Trevor Greenway

It's another Monday in January, and Sophie Shaver is headed straight for her usual afternoon schoolwork. But there are no desks, chairs or books and the usual math equations scrawled across the chalkboard in this classroom.

They've been replaced by floor-to-ceiling windows that sprinkle light across the many bars, mats and springboards spread out across the vast open gym at the Centre Sportif in Gatineau. It's in this class where Shaver is starting to earn straight A's.

The 10-year-old gymnastics phenom from Chelsea won five-out-of-five gold medals at a regional tournament this past weekend to earn a spot on the Outaouais team at the Quebec Games this spring.

"It's fun," says Shaver modestly before reaching for a hand-



SPINNING SUCCESS: Sophie Shaver perfects a spin routine at the Centre Sportif in Gatineau. The ten-year-old gymnast has been turning heads on the mat since she was just a toddler.

Trevor Greenway photo

Fallon, who has been Shaver's coach since she was six, said an important element that has helped his charge succeed is the support she has at home from her ex-ski racing parents, Tara and Scott Shaver.

And perhaps just as impressive as how many times Sophie Shaver can flip through the air is the amount of driving her mother does during any given week. Besides Sophie, there are three siblings, Jack, Riley and Tegan who also play either hockey and compete in gymnastics, or both.

"I make this drive about 2,000 times a year," says Tara Shaver.

During the few hours she spent with this Low Down staffer, she had picked up her oldest son, Jack, from hockey, grabbed Sophie from Chelsea Elementary, dropped her daughter off at the gym and later took Jack to see a physiotherapist. It's just par for the course in the Shaver household; they're lucky to wedge in a sit-down dinner with the whole family once a week.

"We're busy, but we love it. We love sports," said Shaver.

The kids seem to love it, too. Anyone can ask Sophie Shaver about twirling through the air at the Olympic Games and they'll come anyone convinced that she's determined to do what it takes.

After sticking some good landings at the Elite Canada competition, Shaver could find herself competing in front of a home crowd in Ottawa this May at the national championships.



Shaver with her five recent gold medals. Photo courtesy Tara Shaver keep feeding the fire," says Fallon. "I would rather have a kid with a good attitude than skill, but Sophie has both."

development. She spends 25 hours a week practising and even more time competing on weekends. She leaves Chelsea Elementary School in the afternoons to focus on the gymnastics, and the school has arranged her academic schedule to make it all work.

And, believe it or not, Shaver also plays competitive hockey on the Atom B Des Collines hockey team. She's one of the only girls on the squad and recently earned promotion to one of the top centre roles. She's a kid who excels at nearly everything she tries.

"She has a spark and we just

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## NUNAVUT

## Rankin's Roger Tagoona fights his way into pro contract

Nunavut player lands single "A" deal with Dayton Demonz

DAVID MURPHY

Roger Tagoona says that if he works hard and plays well, he may get a chance to graduate to the Fort Wayne Komets of the East Coast Hockey League.

On the first day of a professional selection camp in Dayton, Ohio, Roger Tagoona of Rankin Inlet showed the coaches what he's made of — he threw down the gloves and brawled.

"Yeah, I hit a few guys, and the guy on the bench on the other team asked me to fight. I was hitting. That's the reason why I'm sticking around," Tagoona said, adding that the guy he fought was a "big boy."

The fight may have ended in a draw, but Tagoona won the confidence of his coaches afterwards.

"I play a very physical game, you know. I was fighting. I was hitting. That's the reason why I'm sticking around," Tagoona said — leaving out the fact that on the first day he also scored a goal.

And because of his grittiness, the Dayton Demonz of the Federal Hockey League in the northeastern United

States is offering Tagoona his first professional contract.

The FHL is considered a lower level, single "A" professional hockey league with an average salary of between \$175 and \$300 a week.

That makes Tagoona one of just a handful of Nunavummiut to turn professional in hockey, including his idol — and the inspiration behind his playing style — Jordin Tootoo.

"I think most of the kids in Rankin, including myself, play our game based on the way he plays it," Tagoona told *Nunatsiq News* in a telephone interview from his new apartment in Dayton.

Tagoona, a left-winger who stands six feet and weighs 193 pounds, left Rankin almost four years ago to pursue his dream of top-level hockey.

But you can't take the Rankin Inlet out of the boy, he says.

"We're definitely a lot more physical than people out of town or in other places. We take pride in that."

And assistant coach of the Dayton Demonz Jack Collins is grateful for it too.

He said Tagoona, who is

now the youngest player on the team at 21, was picked because of his style.

"I hear he is a pretty hard-nosed kid. And not afraid to drop the gloves and bang in the corners, and that's something we're looking for," Collins said.

"He got into a little fistcuffs with another player. He showed a side there that he wasn't afraid to be physical," Collins said.

Collins said Tagoona will play on the third line as a "grinder" — but the options don't just stop at Dayton.

The Demonz are affiliated with the Fort Wayne Komets of the double "A" East Coast Hockey League.

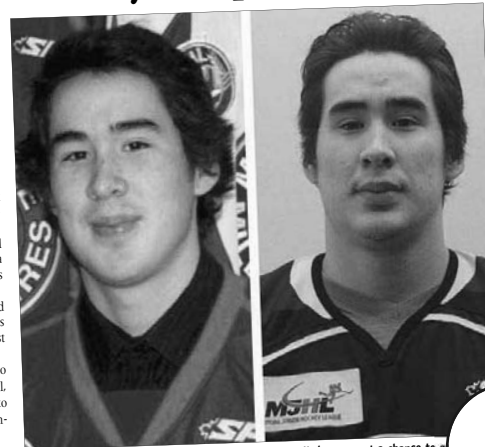
Players can move up to the ECHL if they play well, something that happened to one of Tagoona's old teammates in Dayton last year.

"It's a stepping stone to a higher league," Collins said.

As for Tagoona's old coach in Rankin, David Clarke — someone who played with the Tootooos while growing up in Rankin Inlet — it's no surprise Tagoona has made the leap to professional hockey.

"Roger always had a really good work ethic. He was always the hardest worker," Clarke said from Rankin Inlet.

Tagoona credits much of



Roger Tagoona says that if he works hard and plays well, he may get a chance to graduate to the Fort Wayne Komets of the East Coast Hockey League.

his talent to Clarke and Rankin Inlet — from encouraging him to move south, to opening up the hockey arena during off-hours when he visited from the south.

"There were guys at the rink letting me on any time just so I could skate. The high school was letting me use the weight room after school. And guys were always there

for support," Tagoona said. But Tagoona said that it might be a "long shot" to truly follow in Jordin Tootoo's footsteps and play in the National Hockey League, but he's still hoping.

"You just [have to] get your foot in the door and anything can happen from there," Tagoona said. That's his message to all

aspiring hockey players in Rankin.

"It's no longer an excuse to say that you can't do it because you're from Rankin, or you're so far away," he said.

Tagoona will wear number 21 this season for the Demonz — number 22 was available, but he said "that's Jordin's number, not mine."

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## DAVID MURPHY

Nunatsiq News

David Murphy's story on hockey tough guy Roger Tagoona cuts through the clichés of sports writing and helps create an emotional connection between his subject and the reader.

Judge: Jeff Morris, Publisher & Managing Editor, The Morris Group, Manitock, ON • Number of entries in the Best Sports Story category: 22