

sports & recreation



James, 10, and Greg Huvenaars, 13, are new to the game of squash. Both got involved through school and now have moved onto playing with the junior program at the Racquet Club.

Don Page/WIC photo

Junior squash surge

Number of young players doubled this year

by Chris Puglia
Northern News Services

When squash coach Al Cook sat back and took stock of his junior squash program last year, he realized the program was growing itself out of existence.

He said a majority of the youth in the program were in the higher age group, between 15 and 16 years old.

"Our pyramid had flipped and we didn't have a lot of younger kids in the program," said Cook.

To combat the problem, Cook initiated two new youth-based squash programs — the school squash program and Squirts for Squash.

The school-based program was geared to students in Grades 4 and 5. Cook said it was a tremendous success in its inaugural year.

"We had five schools and 300 kids," he said.

The Squirts for Squash program is aimed at children aged four to six. Its aim is to introduce younger children to the sport and work on hand-eye co-ordination.

Numbers up

Between the two programs, the Racquet Club's junior squash program was able jump from 35 players last year to 80 this year. Twenty of those youth are in the squirts program, which Cook said has a waiting list for next year.

Now the junior squash's top-heavy pyramid is more balanced, which Cook said is important for development.

"We needed to have a

strong bottom so we decided to push for younger kids and it's been working well," he said.

The plan is to continue developing interest in the sport.

Cook said the school program will be back next year

to help with that goal.

James and Greg Huvenaars, 10 and 13 years old respectively, each enrolled in the school-based program and then registered for the 10-week junior squash program.

James said he was

attracted to trying the sport at school from seeing an ad in the newspaper.

"It said 'squash: cure for the video-game thumb,'" he said. "It caught my eye."

So far James said he is enjoying squash. Beyond having fun he hasn't thought

about how competitive he wants to be in the future.

"I like how fast-paced it is," he said.

For his brother, squash is all about the challenge.

"It's easy to learn, but hard to master," he said.

Ten of the program's more

competitive junior players are headed to Victoria in a week for the Pacific Northwest tournament.

Cook said in the past, Yellowknife competitors have performed very well at the event. Last year Pooja Chugh won the event in her division.

**BEST RIDE.
BEST HANDLING.
BEST OFFERS.**

Sled of the Week

HUGE rebates on all in-stock snowmobiles

Polaris IQ 600 Shift 136
reg. \$8,849
\$800 rebate \$147/mo

Custom Graphics from **MONSTER**

IT'S YOUR LAST CHANCE TO GET A GREAT DEAL ON A NEW POLARIS. OAC. \$2000 down over 84 months. See dealer for details.

FORCE ONE 362 Old Airport Road
Yellowknife, NT X1A 3T4
Phone: (867) 920-2225
Fax: (867) 873-5178
www.forceoneyk.com

**HURRY!
OFFERS END SOON**

**LOG ON. LEARN MORE.
OWN.THERIDE.COM.**

POLARIS RIDEOUT
WALK IN. RIDE OUT.

Rider pictured in a professional and cleared course. Polaris recommends that all snowmobile riders take a training course. Do not attempt stunts beyond your capability. Always wear a helmet and other safety apparel. Snowmobile and sled. © 2008 Polaris Industries Inc.