



FLUIDLY RISING

Water polo remains somewhat of a mystery for many people – something to be admired but not quite understood.

“It’s kind of an illusion,” said Drake Greschner of the sport. “You look at it and it seems easy, but once you get in, it’s much more physical.”

Greschner is one of three local athletes playing at the national level while training through a new high performance program within the Regina Water Polo Club (RWPC). He and teammate Russell Laferna from Weyburn play as part of the Regina club, but they also made the 18-and-under junior national team. They will both look to qualify again next year for the junior national team that will compete at the Pan American Championships.

“It’s a very fluid-moving game that I can really control my actions in,” said Laferna, who came to the sport after leaving hockey about nine years ago. “I find every little part interesting. I love watching it, love playing it, love the things that you do in it.”

Rachel Krieger plays on the female juvenile team in the RWPC. Last year at nationals, in which her club team placed fourth,

Krieger was selected to join the national youth team. She spent three weeks with the team this summer, and will now play in the Canadian Select League, participating in several tournaments throughout the year.

“When I’m asked what I enjoy about water polo, it’s the feeling of when I dive in the water, it gets me every time,” said Krieger. “Every time I jump in and feel the cold rush of the water, it gives me so much adrenaline and makes me want to go out and play and fight.”

Regina has a strong background of athletes making it to the national level. But now the RWPC is looking to the future and developing their athletes from a young age – and providing options for those at a higher level of development.

Cyril Dorgigne became head coach of the RWPC three years ago. He brought his experience from France and as club coach and provincial coach, he developed programs from the development to high performance levels to improve the teams and athletes here in the city. Regina teams have improved immensely; placing 4th and 5th at the Regina-held nationals last year.

“I want to continue on what we did last year at nationals,” said Dorgigne. “I’m confident because I’ve got talented kids.

The program now is pretty strong. For the high performance, they can swim 14 hours a week, so it’s very good.”

The high performance program was developed in Regina for the first time this year in conjunction with the high schools. Typically, players in a national program would have to move to one of the training centres in Calgary or Montreal. With the program now here, Regina athletes can remain in the city, play on the club teams, and also train at a higher level. It also pushes and develops other athletes playing on the Regina teams, and will hopefully open doors in the future.

Laferna, Greschner, and Krieger also spend time with their national commitments. Laferna and Greschner spent the summer training in Montreal, including a week in California playing against the US team.

“It’s different then stepping out as a club player,” said Laferna. “You feel that you’re Team Canada. Everyone has a certain pride in the way they play. There’s an attitude.”

“It was great to go to the States,” added Greshner. “To play for Team Canada and beat the US, that was great. Our Canadian team is really strong at the moment.”

Goals for all three athletes include winning as a team and improving as individuals.

