

**ANDREA JOHNSON**  
Sports Reporter



PEACE ARCH NEWS  
**SPORTS & RECREATION**

# Blacklaws getting his kicks

by **Andrea Johnson**  
Sports Reporter

**L**ike any athlete, Brydon Blacklaws speaks passionately of his sport. But his recreation of choice—sepak takraw—isn't well known to Canadians. It doesn't seem to matter to Blacklaws, as the 16-year-old leaves Tuesday for Thailand to wear Canada's colours in the World Sepak Takraw Championships, the King's Cup in Bangkok.

The game, Malaysia's national sport, is similar to volleyball, and played entirely with hands and feet.

"It's like volleyball, soccer and hacky sack," Blacklaws explained.

"It's kind of hard and discouraging at first because you have to control the ball with your feet, but once you get used to it, it's just really challenging, it's addicting."

Blacklaws was invited to play for Team Canada in early October and will join two other players from Winnipeg, and a player and coach from Regina.

The invitation came after Blacklaws, his brother Jake, and Travis Lemire from Semiahmoo Secondary and Elgin Park's Allen Kemp represented Team B.C. at the Canadian Sepak Takraw Championships in Regina in August. Team B.C. placed second in that outing.

"Canada wasn't going to send a team until the last minute," Brydon said. That, doubtless, is owing to Canada's station in the world of sepak takraw.

Of the 40 countries expected to compete at the Worlds, Canada is ranked dead-last.

"Our goal is not to come last in the tournament," he said.

"The sport isn't as well-known here as other sports; in most countries it's pretty developed."

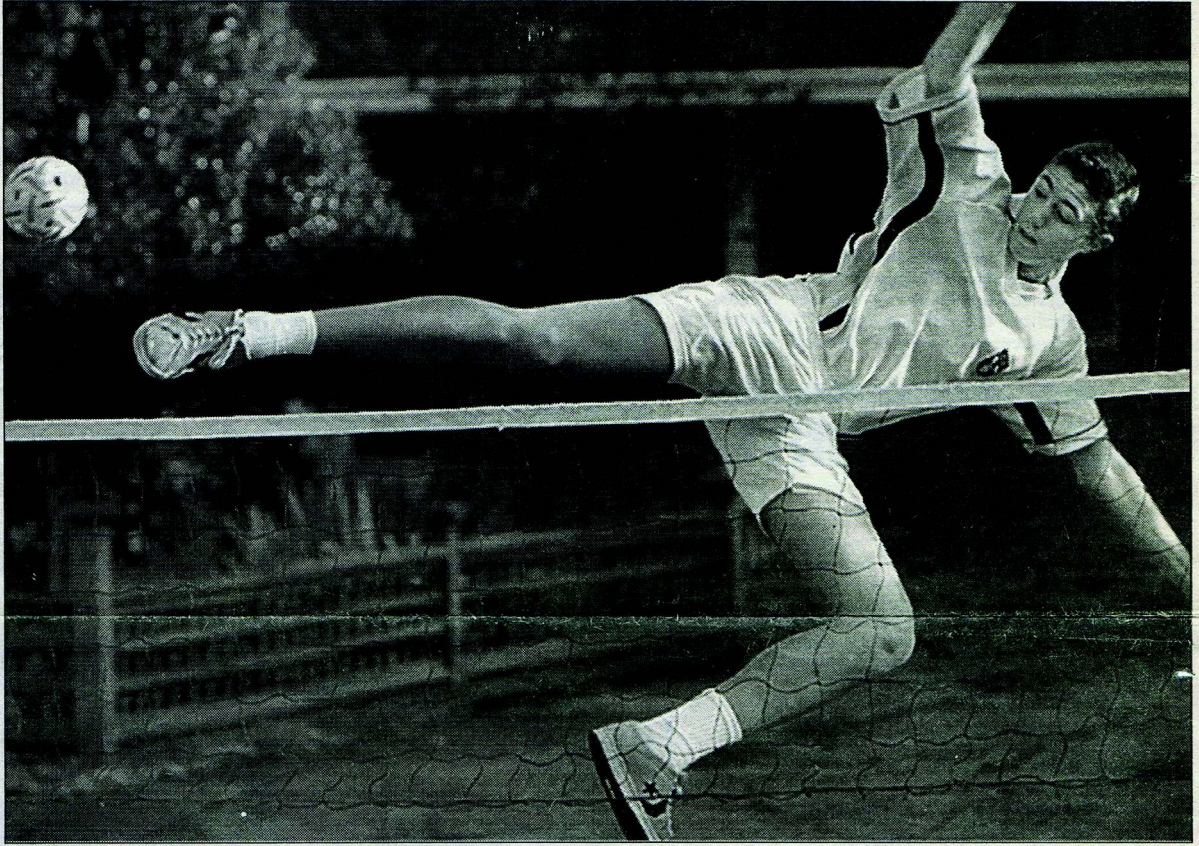
Brydon will be the youngest player competing since others are the top players in their country, between 30 and 40 years-old.

He got into the sport in 1999 after a five-month trip in Thailand.

"I picked it up, I'd never seen it before, but it's so simple."

After he returned last spring, his father Rick found out about members of Canada's national team needing a stop-over place to stay in March on their way to Malaysia.

He opened his home and the group took advantage of the opportunity to raise



Brian Giebelhaus photo

**Local sepak takraw player Brydon Blacklaws is heading to Thailand on Tuesday for the World Championships.**

awareness of the sport by hosting a clinic at Ray Shepherd Elementary.

"It went really well, we got other people interested in it," Brydon said.

That interest led Kemp and Lemire to join Jake and Brydon to form Team B.C.

Interest in the sport has been growing. Rick, a local teacher, put on a clinic for teachers Oct. 20 during a professional development day.

"They're all looking for something new, it's good for community centres when you have teens hanging around.

"In Asia, community centres are temples,

every four blocks there will be a temple and it has a takraw court."

The game can be played indoors or out, incorporating skills used to play hacky sack and soccer.

Played over a five-foot net on a badminton-sized court, it has rules similar to volleyball. The main difference is players can use any part of their body except hands and arms.

It involves one regu of three people—an alternate makes four; three regus equals one team—on each side of the net. The object is to volley the woven ball into the opponents court.

After the ball has been served, each regu is allowed three hits to get it over the net.

Unlike volleyball, one player can make more than one consecutive contact with the ball, as long as the total number of hits per side does not exceed three.

A match features the best two of three sets, with the first two played to 15 points and the third, if necessary, to six.

After Brydon returns from the three-week trip to Thailand, he and his local teammates will compete at the American Open in Fresno, Calif., in December and the Fourth of July Tournament in Minnesota.

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