



Roger Tepper photo, special to The Citizen

Gillian Missellbrook of Prince George battles through two Okanagan players during a game at the Kelowna invitational ringette tournament, played on the weekend. Prince George won the game 7-2, and went on to finish second overall.

Belles ring up win over Finnish team

by JASON PETERS
Citizen staff

The Northern Belle 'A' all-stars did something not even the western Canadian champions could accomplish — beat a touring Finnish team in a game of ringette.

The all-stars, formed by players from Prince George and Quesnel, attended a four-team invitational tournament in Kelowna on the weekend. While in the Okanagan city, they defeated Espoo, Finland, 6-4 in round-robin play.

Earlier on its trip, Espoo downed Delta, the current B.C. and western Canadian champions, 8-6.

"(The win) was just a highlight," said Northern Belle coach Madeleine Crandell, whose club later fell 3-2 to Espoo in the Kelowna tournament final. "Even losing in the final game

against them, they knew they had beat them once and they were just ecstatic."

In the win against Espoo, current division champions in Finland, the all-stars put their playmaking instincts to full use.

"I had a line with basically the top Prince George girls and (a line with) the top Quesnel girls," Crandell said. "They played together and they just played as a team. The passing, it was fast. They just clicked. Everybody was at the same level, I guess you could say."

Espoo is located in the southern part of Finland, not far from Helsinki. The team, Crandell said, was filled with talent from top to bottom.

"They're a very good skating team and the goalie is just phenomenal," she said. "They only came with seven skaters and a goalie.

That's how fit they are and how fast they are.

"I honestly was going there thinking, 'I don't want to get blown away.' Finland is well-known for ringette. They're good ringette players."

The Northern Belle all-stars are 16- and 17-year-olds. The Prince George players who had their blades in motion for the all-stars were Sara Engler, Jodi Gandy, Stephanie Crandell, Nicole Crandell, Gillian Missellbrook and goaltender Lisa Matzelle. In a skills competition, Missellbrook — despite the wheels shown by the Espoo players — won the fastest skater contest.

In their other games in Kelowna, the Northern Belle all-stars beat Kelowna 14-2 in their opener and downed the Okanagan Female Athletic Academy 7-2.