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FIRST TEST OF WHEELCHAIR RUGBY AT OLYMPIC OVAL GIVEN HIGH MARKS

RICHMOND, BC, CAN – The 10th annual Vancouver Invitational Wheelchair Rugby Tournament concluded Sunday at the Richmond Olympic Oval with Quebec taking the Division 1 trophy. They won 58-30 over Ontario, amidst great reviews of the facility and tournament operations. It was the first of two test events at the Oval leading up to the 2010 World Wheelchair Rugby Championships (2010 WWRC) September 17-26, 2010.

“This tournament has been a great success and I know that Richmond will be ready to host the world when the 2010 World Wheelchair Rugby Championships come to the Olympic Oval next year,” said Minister of Healthy Living and Sport Mary Polak. “Through a \$250,000 contribution to the World Championships in 2010, the Province is continuing its efforts to help build on B.C.’s already sterling reputation for sport hosting.”

Minister Polak tossed in the first ball to start the gold medal game which ended three days of competition by teams from Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, Seattle and Portland, plus two teams from BC.

“We were pretty confident with the team we had,” said winning Quebec team co-captain Daniel Paradis, who noted that the team hadn’t played together for quite a long time. “The only surprise was how strong we finished. We were very, very strong.”

“We put a bit more emphasis on technique and strategy at home and it paid off this weekend,” said Quebec coach Benoit Labrecque. He said mental preparation was also a big part of it after the team won by a similar margin over Ontario in round-robin play. “When you play a game that’s a little bit easy sometimes you get surprised in the next game,” he said.

Labrecque also had high praise for the first appearance of wheelchair rugby at the Olympic Oval. “It’s amazing,” he said. “I think you are already set-up for the big game in 2010.”

“We were really pleased with our first tournament in the Oval,” said Laurel Crosby, President of the 2010 WWRC. “We worked hard to host a smooth running tournament while learning how best to operate in this facility. We did learn a lot, will make some adjustments for the Nationals, and then ramp it up for 2010.”

Seattle won the Division 2 championship 56-37 over Alberta. The host BC team failed to advance to the Division 1 final after losing a tightly contested match against Ontario who managed a 50-49 win to advance.

The second wheelchair rugby test event at the Oval is the Coloplast Canadian Wheelchair Rugby Championships, May 8-10, 2009 when the national team players who won a bronze medal at the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing will be competing for their respective provinces. These athletes will form the nucleus of the national team who will be gunning for gold at the 2010 WWRC when the top 12 ranked wheelchair rugby teams in the world will converge on the Oval. The championships will attract over 400 athletes, coaches, officials, delegates and volunteers to the Oval.

The Invitational was hosted by BC Wheelchair Sports Association (BCWSA), a not-for-profit organization devoted to providing opportunities for athletes with physical disabilities. Founded in 1971, it works to provide access to quality programs for athletes with disabilities. BCWSA partners with other Provincial Wheelchair Sports Societies across Canada in promoting wheelchair sport and community awareness.

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2010 WORLD WHEELCHAIR RUGBY CHAMPIONSHIPS
Richmond Olympic Oval – September 17-26, 2010