

# SPORTS

## Coaching duo looking forward to new challenges

By **ECHO ROSS**  
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While the economic benefits of Whitehorse hosting the 2007 Canada Winter Games (CWG) have been well documented, the athletic edge they offered Yukoners is just starting to take effect.

With dozens of local athletes offered Outside tryouts or scholarships for the upcoming season because of their performance at the Games, at least two local coaches are also cashing in.

Mike Young and Joe Martin, who coached the Yukon men's hockey team at the Games, have landed a plum job as co-general managers and co-coaches of the Creston Thundercats.

The Thundercats are a junior B hockey team located in the Kootenay-area town of Creston, B.C., competing in the Kootenay International Junior Hockey League (KIJHL). For Young and Martin, it's a nice jump up from the midget-aged hockey they've been coaching together for the past two seasons.

With a silver-medal performance at the 2007 Midget AA B.C. Provincial Championships under their belts, a gold medal the 2006 Arctic Winter Games, and a respectable performance at this past CWG, the duo was ready to move on.

"We just wanted to crack the league," explained Young, when asked why they chose to apply for the position with the Thundercats.

They saw the job posting on-line, submitted a joint resume in mid-May, and waited to hear back. Boasting references such as Team Canada manager Ron Pyatt, whom they met through the Games, and Moncton Wildcats head coach and director of hockey operations Danny Flynn, a regular at the local Summit Hockey School, Young and Martin impressed Creston enough to earn a two-year contract.

"The Thundercats are pleased to have two highly motivated and organized staff members who have coached at a high Hockey Canada level and are excited to have Mike and Joe bring their program to Creston for the next two seasons," the team said in a statement on the KIJHL's website.

Martin admitted the CWG were a big thing on their resume.

"Because our kids played so well during the Games, it definitely bene-



Photos by GERRY PERRIER

**ON THE MOVE – Mike Young (above) and Joe Martin (right), co-coaches for the Yukon men's hockey team at the Canada Winter Games, are leaving the Yukon for a new job opportunity in Creston, B.C.**

fit us. Summit Hockey School and Canada Winter Games have just been a huge help to us. We've just been around the right Canadian hockey people."

"The training they got with Canada Winter Games, it's huge," agreed Jim Stephens, who was an assistant coach on the Yukon men's CWG team and team manager for the Whitehorse Northern Cross Midget Mustangs rep team under Martin and Young.

"That whole event, the exposure and the networking. I think they'll do really well."

Young and Martin have spent the last month or so recruiting prospects for their tryout camp in August, sending out e-mails to various coaches and contacting players they've seen in action over the past couple of seasons at Outside tournaments.

"Right now, we have potentially 19 guys who can come back," explained Young. "But understandably, a lot of them want to make a push for junior A first. Some of them have already said they want to go to school.

"We'd like to have 40 to 60 kids at camp."

The team is only allowed eight imports on their roster, which means eight players from outside of British Columbia. Fortunately, Yukoners aren't considered imports because they play under the B.C. Amateur Hockey Association, and both Young and Martin hope a few will make the trip south to play for them.

"We've already given letters out to a few players (from the Yukon) we want to be on our team," said Martin. "Most of them are trying junior A first."

"Our camp is before junior A camps, which is planned that way," added Young. "They can come to ours first and then come back after if they don't make it in junior A. Potentially, we can set them up with school beforehand so if they come back, everything is ready to go."



Stephens believes local players now have a great opportunity in Creston, and he would like to see them take advantage of it.

Both Young and Martin are products of junior hockey themselves. In fact, Young travelled through the Creston area competing in the KIJHL one season. He knows what kind of atmosphere to expect.

"I just want to get down there and get behind the bench, get into it," stated Martin. "It's hard being up here and trying to get things done. You just play phone tag all day and you'd rather be talking face to face."

Still, they'll miss Whitehorse, as well as the players they've watched grow over the last few years.

"Just a lot of the little things," said Young. "The road trips, the hotels, listening to those goofy kids."

"They put a crab in my bathtub in Richmond once," recalled Martin with a grin. "That was a good one."

Martin said the experience has been rewarding and it feels good to see so many local players now having success Outside and moving onto higher levels of hockey. Over the past few years, the respect for Yukon hockey has certainly increased, and while neither Martin or Young would take direct credit for it, they played a role.

Young, who was also the sport coordinator for the Whitehorse Minor Hockey Association, pointed out the overall registration numbers are slowly increasing, as well as the performances of the rep teams at all levels.

"From all the tournaments (the midget rep team has) been at the last three years and had success, now who-

ever the new coach is for the midgets, they can just step in and know where to go," added Young. "We had to kind of feel it out before."

As of right now, there have been no applicants for the coaching vacancies on the midget rep team this coming season. Martin said he would just like to see a coach that will be able to give the necessary amount of time to the players. They deserve that, he said, adding he and Young were basically at the rink six days a week last year.

And while there is no Canada Games to train for next year, if the territory wants to continue improving its program, a coach will need to put in at least three or four days a week.

"The challenge will be to find more good coaches here," said Stephens. "In the last three years, we've really made a name for Whitehorse players. We've produced a lot of talent."

"Hopefully we can continue running a successful midget program up here."

Both Young and Martin plan to return to the territory in the off-season. Young, who is from Whitehorse, plans to keep the house he recently bought with his girlfriend. As for their long-term goals, Martin would only say he hopes to be coaching somewhere five or 10 years down the road.

"We'll just take it as it comes and try to win every year," stated Martin.

Stephens said if Martin and Young can do well in Creston, who knows where they could end up down the road.

"They're young, dedicated hockey people. I think they have a pretty good shot at going far."

Whitehorse Co-ed Slo-pitch League Second-Half Standings			Division III		
Team	W-L-T	Pts	Team	W-L-T	Pts
Roche Firth	5-0-0	8	Coke	5-0-0	10
Chilkoot Brewers	4-1-0	8	Discovery Bar	4-1-0	8
Dental Donkeys	4-1-0	8	Elks	4-1-0	8
Sportslife	4-1-0	8	Up North	4-1-0	8
Trappers	4-1-0	8	Coasters	4-1-0	8
Sam & Andy's	4-1-0	8	Kustom Kuts	3-1-1	7
Tlingit Electric	3-2-0	6	Coff'n Dodgers	3-2-0	4
Roadhouse	3-2-0	6	PC Pirates	2-3-0	4
Chiefs	3-2-0	6	Catalyst Fireballs	2-3-0	4
unitech Bulldogs	2-3-0	4	Co-operaiders	2-3-0	4
Nuway Crushers	2-3-0	4	Air Cargo	2-3-0	4
Kal Tire	1-4-0	2	Cashplan	1-3-1	3
Whitco	1-4-0	2	Crown Royals	1-4-0	2
Faro F.M.	0-5-0	0	Emco	1-4-0	2
RCMP	0-5-0	0	Coyote Video	1-4-0	0
Hello Gorgious	0-5-0	0	Arctic Insurance	0-5-0	0