

The NWT School Table Tennis Championships: A celebration of community and sport

Northern News Services

Here we go!

As someone deeply involved in various sports organizations, especially in table tennis, I can't help but reflect on the incredible journey I've had over the last few months: the Arctic Winter Games in Alaska to the Canadian Table Tennis Championships in Montreal, the Summer Olympic Games in Paris, the 55+ Games in Quebec City, and wrapping up the year at the World Junior Hockey Championship in Ottawa.

Yet, despite all these prestigious events, the highlight of my year remains the NWT School Table Tennis Championships. Really? Yes!

Having had the privilege to witness the best players in the world, interview them, photograph their incredible skills, and even coach some of them, is undeniably empowering. The atmosphere at national and international competitions is electric, spectators filling the stands, barriers around the courts, live streaming cameras capturing every moment, and the exhilarating cheers that erupt only after a rally concludes. The sight of athletes rallying those tiny table tennis balls from five or six metres behind the table, showcasing their athleticism and hand-eye coordination, is simply breathtaking.

However, none of that compares to the unique spirit of our small yearly school championships. Here, youth from communities like Fort Good Hope come together, fundraising and live streaming each of their matches. Teachers and volunteers pitch in to help set up, ensuring the tables are ready, finding racquets, and adjusting nets to the "appropriate" height (a detail that might make table tennis purists cringe). We gather the



GUEST COMMENT

Thorsten Gohl is the co-ordinator of Physical Literacy NWT

essential table tennis balls —let's be honest, rolled-up socks just don't bounce the same!

A quick introduction to the basics of the rules is all it takes. Yes, we're playing to 11 points per game now, not 21, and serving two times instead of five. In doubles, remember to serve from the right-hand side and alternate hits. And if someone doesn't show up? No problem! We'll find



The high school boys top three were, from left, Will Kanigan from Sir John Franklin, Kevin Canadian from Fort Providence and Paul Mendoza from St. Pat's. Photo courtesy of Thorsten Gohl

you another teammate.

As someone who comes from a background where organization is paramount, I find this easy-going atmosphere refreshing. It may be a different world, but it works beautifully.

The best part of the NWT School Table Tennis Championships is the smiles on the faces of the students. Watching them give their all, trying to keep that ball on the table, showcasing their best serves, and executing powerful smashes is heartwarming. Spectators and teammates crowd around the table, eager not to miss a moment, ready to jump in and celebrate every point. High-fives during rallies and cheers of encouragement fill the air, creating an atmosphere of camaraderie and support.

Winning a medal is fantastic, but the real joy lies in the stories shared, like that unforgettable smash from three metres behind the table, around the net, and rolling to the other side. It's these moments that truly matter.

Ultimately, the NWT



Kathleen Cai, left, and Emereigh Moffatt were the gold and silver medalists respectively in the Grade 8 girls division of the NWT School Table Tennis Championships. Photo courtesy of Thorsten Gohl

School Table Tennis Championships are about coming together, showing up, giving your best, and

enjoying every second. I am incredibly proud of each participant for taking part in this celebration of sport and

community. Let's continue to foster this spirit and keep the love for sport alive.

Thorsten Gohl is the

co-ordinator of Physical Literacy NWT and executive director of Table Tennis North.