

A Chat with the Players of Tomorrow  
By Kip Morrish

I was sitting on the plane heading for Thunder Bay, Ontario to attend the 2005 Youth National Championships when the idea came to me “why not interview some of the youth players for a change”. After all these are our “adults of tomorrow”. I am probably a little prejudiced but I believe Canada’s youth program is one of the best. This is due, in part, to the excellent training the provincial youth leaders have received over the years from Carol Collett, our longtime National Youth Development Director.

Jenelle Legge hails from Marystown in Newfoundland/Labrador, is now 19 years old, and is presently attending college and so this is her final year as a youth player. She has represented Newfoundland/Labrador since 2001 was the Senior Girls Singles Champion in 2004 and again in 2005 as well as Joint 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Senior Girls Doubles in 2005.

She has been playing darts since she was 13 and became interested because her parents played the game. She hopes to continue to play as an adult but she has plans to leave Newfoundland/Labrador and become a resident of Alberta, so she should have lots of opportunity to continue her dart career there.

Jenelle has graduated from high school and is presently attending college. As a result, the money that she won at the bursary shoot will certainly be an asset to her with her post secondary education. The bursary shoot is a new event that has been added for the advantage of our youth players and it was certainly well received this year. An amount of \$500.00 is designed for the bursary for each of the four youth levels with \$300.00 going to first place and \$200.00 going to the runner-up. The youth have two-years from the date of their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday to provide verification of registration in a post-secondary program to become eligible to receive the appropriate amount.

I then spoke to Simon Cayer who hails from Quebec City. Simon has represented Quebec on seven occasions. As Simon is now 18 this will be his last year of competition at the youth level. He wasn’t quite sure whether he would continue to play as an adult but we certainly hope that he will.

Simon first started playing darts in 1997 and became interested because his father sold dart supplies. In 1998, with his partner, he won the Junior Boys Doubles. Although the best standing Simon has achieved in singles is Joint third, he has been a fierce competitor over the years and I am sure he will be missed at future youth events.

Simon achieved a “first” this year. He became the first youth player to attend and pass the Officiating Certification Program, which qualifies him as a Level II Certified Official.

I couldn’t avoid talking to one of the players from the host province. Justin MacLeod is 17 years old and hails from Blind River, Ontario. Jason has been playing darts since he was 13 and this was the second time that he has represented Northern Ontario at the Nationals.

Justin has won numerous events in Blind River and on the first occasion of attending the youth nationals, won the Junior Boys Singles. He won his second national event in 2005 when, with his partner Raymond Ritchie won the Senior Boys Doubles event. His grandparents are great supporters and like to go out and see him play. His main aim is to be the Canadian Singles Champion.

Finally I spoke to Clayton Downs who hails from my home province of Manitoba. Clayton is now 17 years old and has made his presence known at the national championships in past years. He was Junior Singles Champion in 2003 and runner-up in 2004.

This year was his first as a senior and the competition was a little harder so Clayton has found that he will need to do a little more work. He did finish Joint Third in the mixed doubles with his partner Courtney Conroy. I am sure he will be practicing during the coming year in an effort to get back on the winning podium.

He has been playing darts since he was 10 and both his father and grandfather (who is a former member of the adult Team Manitoba) were dart players so obviously he had some family support.

I thoroughly enjoyed the weekend at the Youth Nationals. It is so rewarding to see these young people playing like professionals and we certainly hope that many of them will proceed into the adult program when they reach the magic age.



*L to R Jenelle Legge NL, Simon Cayer, QC, Justin MacLeod, NO Clayton Downs, MB*