

Island Speed Skaters successful in Quebec, Ontario

December 17th, 2010, Charlottetown— Eight of PEI's Canada Games short-track speed skating hopefuls had successful meets in Quebec and Ontario recently.

Scott Beamish competed at the Canadian Junior Championships in Chicoutimi, Quebec, finishing 22nd in the field of Canada's best junior skaters who were seeking one of four spots on Canada's national junior team. He was the first Island male in many seasons to qualify for the elite event.

Beamish set a new PEI record in the 500m distance with a time of 44.565 seconds, bettering his own record of 44.940 seconds, set just two weeks earlier in Alberta.

Four New Brunswick skaters competed along with Beamish, as the only Atlantic Canadian qualifiers for the event. Andrew Evans of Fredericton finished sixth, just two places shy of making the team that will represent Canada in Italy in early 2011.

Meanwhile, several of Beamish's PEI clubmates were racing in Clarington, Ontario in an Ontario Cup meet. The Ontario Cup racing series brings together Ontario's top skaters for several events each year, with a large field of 191 skaters competing in Clarington. The PEI squad attended as part of their preparations for February's Canada Games in Halifax.



PEI short-track speed skaters pose with Ontario fan Mike Quesnelle at the recent Ontario Cup meet in Clarington, outside Toronto. Skaters from left to right: Ellen Burnett, Taylor Johnston, Morgan McGinn, Clare Cullen, Dan Cottreau, Jesse Francis and Nathan Cudmore.

“Racing against different skaters than we normally see on the Atlantic circuit helps our team get more comfortable with adapting to sometimes unexpected tactics of skaters they don’t know,” said PEI head coach Phil Byrne. “Being better prepared for that, plus getting more exposure to some of Canada’s best skaters can only help our team when we get to Halifax.”

Jesse Francis of Stratford posted the fastest times among PEI skaters, finishing ninth in the Open male division after recording a personal best time in the 1500m distance. Competing in the same division were Dan Cottreau and Nathan Cudmore of Charlottetown, who finished eighteenth and twentieth respectively.

Clare Cullen finished tenth in the Junior female division, while Ellen Burnett was just as competitive, finishing eleventh. Taylor Johnston picked up personal best times in two of her three distances, finishing nineteenth.

In the Open female division, Morgan McGinn set a new personal best time in the 1000m distance on her way to a tenth place finish.