

Delvin Cappel: The Power of the Paddle

As Delvin Cappel has found out, table tennis is more than a game, it is a competitive sport taken seriously in many areas of Canada and the world.

“There was a table at school and my friends and I would play on it at lunch time,” said Cappel. “I didn’t even know it was an actual sport, we just hit the ball back and forth.” It was the support, enthusiasm and knowledge of physical education teacher and table tennis coach Derek Mercer that helped make Cappel a competitive player. Mercer, who hails from Newfoundland, was himself a professional table tennis player.

With Mercer’s direction, a group of dedicated players in have turned Carry the Kettle First Nation into a centre for table tennis in the province. Cappel is one of those players.

He is 17 years old entering grade 11, and with six years of table tennis experience he is already a veteran in the sport. Since 2006 he has been playing competitively and participating in leagues, and for the last three years he has been a member of Team Sask. He has won more than 50 titles or medals and is the dominant player in the South East, winning eight consecutive titles.

“It’s awesome,” said Cappel. “I like the training more than I thought I would. It’s fun to learn about strategy and play against really good players.”

Team Sask trains in Saskatoon, which is more than 300 km away from Carry the Kettle, and though Cappel enjoys the training it involves a great deal of travel time. “They train on week days, but I only get to Saskatoon for weekend training because I’m in school and because I live so far away.” Over the summer months, Cappel has been on break from Team Sask training.

Cappel also travels to compete. He explained that there are not many people in Saskatchewan that play table tennis at his level, and he travels outside the province to compete every two months. “There are tournaments happening in different parts of Canada all the time,” he said. “It’s not possible to go to all of them, so I only travel to the biggest tournaments.” Cappel identified Quebec and British Columbia as Canada’s two most competitive table tennis provinces.

Though Cappel takes table tennis seriously, it is far from his only athletic interest. At school, he also plays basketball, volleyball, badminton and competes in cross-country running. “It’s a toss-up between basketball and table tennis,” he said when asked which sport is his favourite. “Once the basketball season is done, I start getting into table tennis.”

Still at a young age, already sport has done great things for Cappel. “Sport has opened a lot of doors for me. I’ve been able to go to a lot of different places,” he

said. "Table tennis has got me known in Saskatchewan. I've been called a role model at some places, and I have to admit it feels pretty good."

Though graduation is still a few years away, Cappel's plans for after high school are already in place. "After I graduate, I'm going to go to university," he said. "I want to take marine biology at UBC."

For anyone thinking about getting more physically active or getting involved in sport, Cappel assures it will open the door to many different opportunities for them. "Find something you like and stick with it," he said.