

Sports

Tourney features 88 games in five days

Shuffling for the passion of fun competition



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Texas Bandit player

Last week, shufflers - ranging in age from 60 to over 90 - put on a show of athleticism and strategic prowess.

Brea Elford/MVP Staff

BY Brea Elford, MVP Staff

INNISFAIL - Five days. Twelve teams. Eighty-Eight games.

It was the Alberta Canadian Shuffleboard Association's Annual Memorial Team Tournament last week and after many long hours of play, one team stood above the rest.

The Texas Bandits, an eight-person team from Edmonton, Manitoba, Calgary and High River, have been playing together for nearly a decade.

After meeting in Texas - where they all spend the winter - they discovered a shared passion for the game, and a good time.

"We still like each other," said Brian Bissillion, a Bandit.

And maybe that's the key to their success - they don't take themselves too seriously.

And for Eileen Hildebrand, one of the eight, the camaraderie and friendship is what stays with her year after year.

"It's the people we meet," she said.

It doesn't hurt they had plenty of opportunities to hone their skills and develop team strategy. While in Texas,



Twelve teams, with a minimum of eight players per team, played a total of 88 games over the course of the week.

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they play two tournaments a week for 19 weeks. They play against each other, as there are no team events in Texas. And that gives them a chance to learn and study their respective styles and

quirks.

"The team is really cohesive," said Bandit Gina Bissillion.

Brian Bissillion is glad they work well together because although he enjoys

playing and travelling together, he still likes to win.

"The competition is what you are there for," he said.

And there is much more to the game than just throwing the disk. Just like any sport, practice and dedication is required to be successful, said Bill Piett, team-appointed mentor and coach.

"And good Lady Luck," he added.

This is the team's last tournament in Canada and they won't play together again until they reunite in Texas. But they look forward to the Memorial tournament in Innisfail every year.

"This is our favorite place to play," said team player Eileen Hildebrand.

And they love having people coming out to show their support - not just by watching and cheering on their favorite teams, but by playing.

Bissillion said it's not just a game for senior players. It encourages young people to get involved and shuffle, he added.

"If you like sports you'd like the game," he said.

Piett agrees.

"If you'd try it you would enjoy it!"