



—Sun Photo by Greg Pender

Table tennis competitor Delvin Cappo, in practice during Provincial Table Tennis Championships at The Saskatoon Christian School

Cappo is cream of the crop

Table tennis player finds his game in small town Sask.

By Taylor Lambert
for The Saskatoon Sun

The town of Sintaluta is 343 kilometres from Saskatoon. Delvin Cappo knows this very well.

The Grade 10 student didn't reach the top level of provincial table tennis by sitting around.

It took a lot of work, and a lot of trips north to Saskatoon for training.

"I live about three hours from where I train," he says. "I take a bus, travel and train for about two days and then go back."

"That gets pretty tiring."

Sintaluta is about 80 kilometres east of Regina. The community of 98 could prob-

ably be called a village or even a hamlet rather than a town.

But it has become an unlikely provincial hot spot for table tennis.

The local school's physical education teacher cum table tennis coach brought the sport to the town after playing during his youth in Newfoundland.

"We started six years ago with a clinic by the (Saskatchewan Table Tennis Association)," says Derek Mercer.

"They came down and did sessions with our gym classes, and they have every year since then. And through that, some kids got more interested."

After that first clinic, a few of the kids who stuck with it decided to try out for the Canada Games just for kicks. As it turned out, they made the team by default after no one else tried out.

"That opened some of the kids' eyes, and it's grown bigger and bigger every year," says Mercer.

"We've got a group that takes it more seriously, and the more serious they take it, the better they get."

Cappo is definitely the cream of the crop in Sintaluta these days. Now in his third year of playing, he's completely immersed himself in the sport — something he didn't expect.

"I thought I was going to get sick of it and stop playing. But as I trained more I got into it more," says Cappo.

"Once I started training, I had to change the way I played. I didn't know they had professional tournaments when I first started. It was just a school thing, lunch time."

From a school thing to a provincial thing, Cappo joined the Saskatchewan team and found himself travelling to competitions in Edmonton, Winnipeg and Quebec, playing national-calibre players.

"He's on par with almost anyone in the province when he's playing well," says Mercer.

"Table tennis is a vehicle that's opened a lot of doors for him."

One door that didn't quite open wide enough was the one that led to the Canada Games.

Considered a favourite to qualify, Cappo wasn't on his game when it mattered most.

"I had the second spot going into second tryouts. I played bad, didn't even win one game. It was horrible," he recalls.

"The guys that beat me I had beaten many times before. When it comes to the biggest tournament, the biggest thing of my high school life, I blow it."

Cappo shakes his head and mutters to himself as he remembers the feeling. "Just an off-day. Worst day ever."

The passion is clearly there for Cappo. He also plays basketball, volleyball and badminton (and says table tennis is his second-favourite sport behind hoops), though he sees more of a future for himself in table tennis.

"First of all, I want to go to university. I want, hopefully to do marine biology at UBC," he says.

Given the opportunity to continue in the sport, Cappo is game. But he knows there's still a lot of work to be done.

"I'd still like to play sports if I go to university. I started it young," he says.

He pauses and adds with a smirk: "Kept me out of trouble, and all that stuff."

Sports



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