

PAC Saints help Canada West claim gold

JOSH THOMAS

Mason Svarich and Robert McGowan helped team Canada West run the table at the ball hockey world championships.

Canada West went a perfect 6-0 on the way to a gold medal at the International Street and Ball Hockey Federation Junior World Championships in Prerov, Czech Republic from June 28 to July 1. The team had only three days at training camp to get to know each other before an exhibition game against Canada East. They won big, and the victory gave them all the confidence they needed.

"Right off the start we were very confident that we could win, and I think coming together as a team quickly helped us do that," said Svarich.

Their run began with a down-to-the-wire 3-2 win over Slovakia.

The Slovaks surprised the group initially with their physical style of play, but the Canadians were quick to adapt with a roster full of players that spend their winters on the ice.

"The European teams like to shoot from the outside, they'll let it go from anywhere. Ball hockey in Canada is also less physical, but playing overseas there was a lot more body.

Because we all play ice hockey, we adjusted really quickly to the physicality," said Svarich.

From there, they took down Great Britain, the Czech Republic and Team Canada East to earn a spot in the gold medal game against their fellow countrymen.

Both teams brought their best offensive performance in the all-Canadian final.

Fans were treated to a barn burner as Svarich, McGowan and Canada West secured the gold medal with an 8-6 victory.

"After our three-day training camp we were confident we could win, but actually seeing it happen was crazier than I thought. Just hearing the national anthem play after we won. It was crazy," said Svarich.

The pair will now turn their attention from the court, to training for the upcoming ice hockey season.

Svarich put up 41 points in 33 games last season (18-23-41) for the minor midget Parkland Athletic Club Saints.

He will be attending camp for the Alberta Junior Hockey League's Grande Prairie Storm where he will try to crack their roster as a 16-year-old.

"I'm hoping to make it there. They said they really like me and I have a shot to make their team. I'm hoping that happens, but if they decide I'm not ready I'll be excited to go play major midget in St. Albert," said Svarich.