

Scott shoots for Olympic berth

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STAFF REPORTER

In December 2005, the Kelly Scott rink had its collective heart broken on one shot at the Canadian curling trials in Halifax.

Shannon Kleibrink scored three unlikely points with her last rock in the 10th end, launching the Calgary rink to the Olympic Games in Italy and sending the Kelowna curlers packing back to the Okanagan.

Four years later to the week, a more seasoned and resolute Scott crew has returned for another shot at Olympic glory as the Canadian trials open today (Sunday) at Rexall Place in Edmonton.

Eight women's and eight men's rinks will take to the ice over the next week to determine this country's two curling rep-

resentatives for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver.

"This is a goal that's been almost four years in the making and I think we all feel thrilled to be playing in Edmonton, it's what we've been working towards all along," said Scott. "Now, it's just one event, one tournament, instead of a series of events, so now we can just focus on this one tournament and try and grind it out.

"Halifax (2005) was a really big lesson for us," Scott added. "We can take what we learned back then and what we've learned since forward with us, not dwell on the hype, the media, or the distractions. We need to just go out and curl."

For the Scott rink, there have been plenty of highs and a few lows since that heart-wrenching set-

back four years ago. The Kelowna crew won the 2006 Canadian women's title, then followed up with wins at both the 2007 national and world women's curling championships.

After slipping somewhat under the radar over the past couple seasons, the Kelowna women made a personnel move in the summer of 2009, adding a new lead in Jacquie Armstrong, and have since regained some of their winning ways.

Scott, third Jeanna Schraeder, second Sasha Carter, and Armstrong won the Manitoba Lotteries Women's Curling Classic in October, while qualifying for the playoffs in three other World Curling Tour events. Then, last month, the Scott rink emerged from the Canadian pre-trials in Prince George with one of four

berths to Edmonton.

In Sasha Carter's mind, the Scott rink couldn't be in much better form heading into the trials, both mentally and physically.

"It's been a really good year for us," said Carter. "We feel like we're right there with our game, we're getting back to where we need to be and we're not doubting anything...and I think we probably were doubting some things for a while.

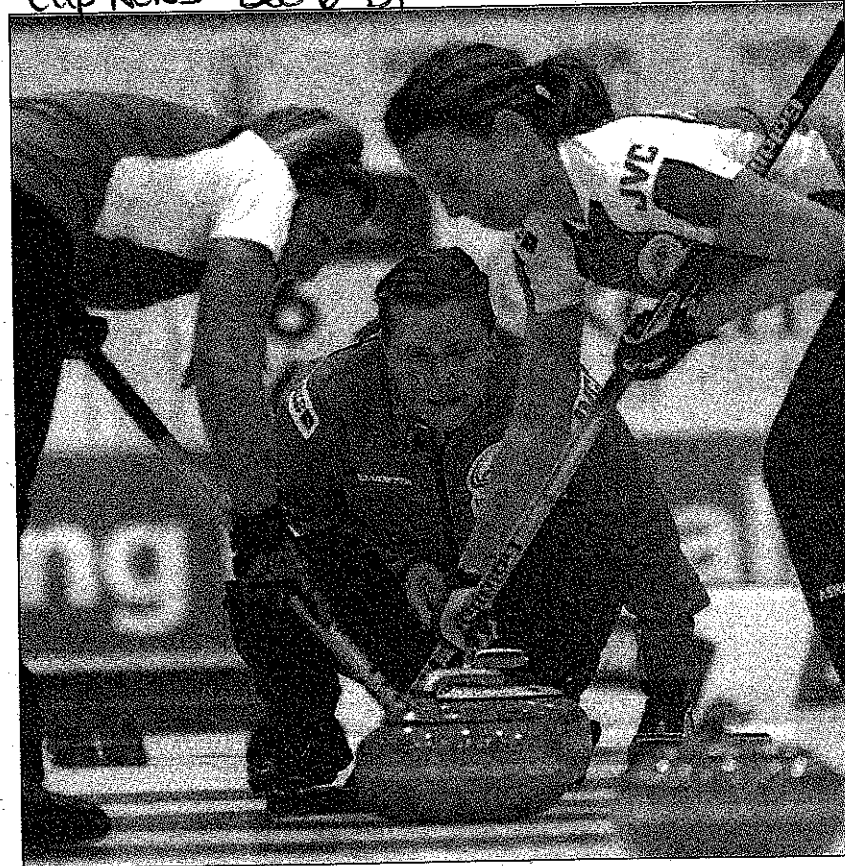
"Whether it's yourself, or the ice, or whatever, there's no room for doubt. We know we'll have to play well to win and I know right now we're believing in ourselves."

The teams will each play seven round robin games in Edmonton with the first-place rink earning a bye into the final on Sunday, Dec. 14. The second and third place teams will play off for the right to advance to the championship.

For the Scott rink, it's been an eventful journey getting back to the trials, one they clearly hope will end with a trip to Vancouver next February.

"The harsh reality is

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MICHAEL BURNS/CCA

KELOWNA'S Kelly Scott (middle), along with third Jeanna Schraeder (right), second Sasha Carter and lead Jacquie Armstrong (not pictured) will be in Edmonton this weekend for the Roar of the Rings Canadian Olympic curling trials.

that there is only one winner, it's been a four-year process narrowing down to eight rinks and it's been pretty cutthroat up to this point," Scott said. "Now it's a matter of playing our hearts out for a week where one team is a happy team, and the rest are los-

ers, basically.

"We just have to really stay grounded and know it's just a game," she continued. "If we win, great it's the chance of a lifetime. If we don't, this isn't a do-or-die moment for us, we'll be playing after this regardless of the

results in Edmonton. So we're just going to give it our all and maybe be really happy girls when it's all over."

The Scott rink will open play Sunday at 1 p.m. against Saskatoon's Stefanie Lawton.

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