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LOCAL NEWS

## Wrestling with timber

Woodsmen contest draws 25 teams. McGill-organized event features old-time skills; where scars are beauty marks

Montreal Gazette

Sunday, January 26, 2003

Charles Chlanda fixed the five-foot-long bow saw over the log of aspen, and waited for the judge to yell: "Start!"

He sawed furiously back and forth over the log, slicing it the way a loaf of bread is cut.

In less than 14 seconds, he sawed two slices off the log.

In the timber-sport world, a slice of wood is called a cookie. He picked up one of the cookies, put it to his nose and inhaled the fresh scent of wood.

"I'm going to save this cookie for my girl," said Chlanda, one of 175 student athletes who converged yesterday on Macdonald campus in Ste. Anne de Bellevue for McGill University's 49th Annual Woodsmen Competition.

Twenty-five teams of lumberjacks and lumberjills from eastern Canada and the United States faced off in such events as the axe throw, log roll, double V-chop and water boil.

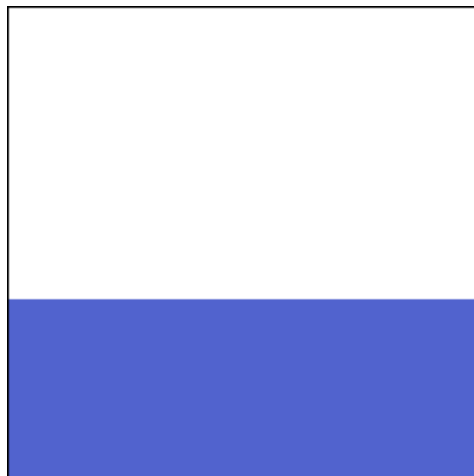
Chlanda, of the College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, N.Y., takes a Zen-like approach to timber sport.



CREDIT: JOHN MAHONEY, THE GAZETTE

**Celia Wales strains to lift a log onto a stack at the Canadian Intercollegial Lumberjack Championships at McGill University's Macdonald campus in Ste. Anne de Bellevue yesterday. She was competing for Sir Sandford Fleming College in Lindsay, Ont.**

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"It's good for the soul," said the 20-year-old student, wearing a stars-and-stripes bandana on his forehead.

"It's very cleansing. It's just you and the woods."

The athletes didn't seem to mind the cold, strong winds that whipped down Centennial Field from Lake St. Louis. The air buzzed with the sounds of chainsaws and people hollering and laughing.

Wood chips flew in the air as 18-year-old Derek Weeks chopped a vertically positioned log on either side.

"Killer her, boy!" a team member shouted as Weeks chopped away with piston-like precision.

"It's great physical exercise," said Weeks, who studies at Nova Scotia Agriculture College.

Weeks took deep breaths after his event, resting the axe on the frigid ground.

He was surrounded by a group of tough young women who had competed earlier in the afternoon. One of the women showed off a scar on her finger - an old timber-sport injury.

"We all have some scars," said 22-year-old Kelly Cousins, also from Nova Scotia.

"Beauty marks," said 19-year-old Beth Trueman, correcting her friend.

Across the field, two men stood on either side of a log, each grabbing onto the handles of a two-man cross-cut saw.

One was Pierre-Paul Lacroix, a 21-year-old McGill plant science student.


They were required to saw off three slices, but they failed to cut one completely, and had to saw a fourth time.

"It's too bad that we broke a cookie," Lacroix said later. "We lost 40 per cent of our time."

After the competition, the athletes gathered last night for a banquet and the awarding of prizes.

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