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Student animators quick on the draw

By Matthew Gauk - Red Deer Advocate

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Like the fleet-footed tortoise in their gold-medal animation, Jordy Smith and Reese Bartlett sped towards the finish line.

The two Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School students, both 17, won the Skills Alberta 3D animation competition with a piece on the old fable of the tortoise and the hare.



Jordy Smith, left, and Reese Bartlett at work on their project at the Skills Alberta competition. by Photo contributed

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"The twist was instead of the (hare) falling asleep because he passed the tortoise, we decided to make the tortoise just run really, really fast and beat the hare," said Bartlett, in Grade 11.

Their animation, a little more than a minute in length, also featured funny spots, such as the hare training for the race, straining to bench press a bar with no weights on it. With story-boarding, script-writing, drawing and then computer animation, they finished it with 10 minutes to spare in a competition last week that demands students create, in 14 hours, the type of animation that usually takes a semester.

Clinching first place, Smith and Bartlett are off to the national Skills Canada competition starting Thursday in Waterloo, Ont., where they will represent Alberta.

The duo have Bugs Bunny-big shoes to fill. Lindsay Thurber animation instructor Gilles Theriault led his students to gold in the provincial challenge for four straight years prior to this spring, and the team that went to nationals last year came in second place.


"The year before that they got bronze, the other two years it's been fourth place, so if the pattern continues we're going to get first place," said Smith, in Grade 12.

"I'm not really that nervous, because whatever happens, we competed nationally. That's sweet."

Theriault said the two have a great shot at a medal if they keep up the work flow they established at the Skills Alberta competition.

"They worked good together," said Theriault. "(Bartlett) is a meticulous kind of guy, he looks at all the little details. Then we have Jordy Smith, he's the same way. He's got great ideas."

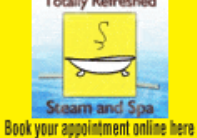
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Therault said a number of his students have gone on to further study in animation, particularly at the Art Institute of Vancouver.

That's where Bartlett wants to go when he graduates, in the hopes of one day doing 3D modelling for a computer and video game company like Edmonton-based BioWare.

"For me, it's just something I seem to be good at," said Smith, who hopes to pursue a career in graphic design.

Therault, Smith and Bartlett return from Ontario on Sunday.

Another local school establishing a trend of gold medals at Skills Alberta is Ponoka Composite High School, which this year won its third straight gold medal in cabinet-making.

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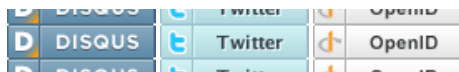
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