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Critters swarm centre
Cloths, spiders and hairless rats invade Aberdeen Centre as the mall's atrium is transformed into a rare animal zoo, organic farm and petting zoo. 19

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OLYMPICS

Captain Kyle sets a golden pace

Richmond High grad captains gold-winning men's eight rowing team

By Mark Booth
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Kyle Hamilton is now basking in Olympic glory after posting four consecutive years of his life into being a world-class rower.



The 20-year-old from Richmond captured Canada's Olympic gold in the men's eight rowing on Sunday at the Shenyang Olympic Rowing-Canoeing Park in Beijing. The favoured Canadians led from start to finish over the 2,000 metre course — opening up a full boat length cushion by the midway point of the race before holding off Great Britain with a winning time of five minutes 23.89 seconds.

"I hate to use a cliché, but you do dream about it."
— Kyle Hamilton

"I hate to use a cliché, but you do dream about it," Hamilton said. "I hardly get any sleep last night. I was trying to hold out and your mind keeps coming back to, 'What are you going to do at the finish line if you win?' You can't plan it."

"Just hitting the line like that and knowing that you're the Olympic champ and you've got the gold medal is an unbelievable feeling. Everything just spills out then. It's amazing."

Four years earlier in Athens, Hamilton was a member of the Canadian eight crew that headed to the Summer Games as defending world champions and finished a disappointing fifth. Through the encourage-

ment of his wife Felicia, he continued on with the national team program and would be a key member of coach Mike Spracklen's crew — occupying the stroke seat behind co-oarsman Brian Price.

"We've been thinking about it ever since Athens," Hamilton said. "I never thought I'd get the opportunity to be the favourite in an Olympics again."

"It's been a fantastic experience. It's just amazing to be here."

During pre-Olympics Hamilton said his crewing with an all-rounder was easy and he was never late at the

finish in Beijing Sunday. Hamilton occupies the critical 'stroke seat' behind the coxswain, setting the stroke pace for the other rowers.

an early statement with an impressive win in its qualifying heat and the momentum carried over to the final.

The bulk of the hard work that put Canada on top of the world was done on the waters of Elk Lake, near Victoria, where the national men's team is based.

"We're in the wind. We're in the snow. We're in the rain. It's a great experience. It's been a fantastic experience. It's just amazing to be here."



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Creepy, cute critters invade Aberdeen

Animal expert brings an interactive animal experience to the mall

By Michelle Hopkins
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Aberdeen Centre has gone to the animals ... the creepy-crawly, the cute and exotic ones.

The atrium in the shopping centre has been transformed into a rare animal zoo, as well as an organic farm and farm animal petting zoo.

The inaugural Aberdeen Centre Had a Farm E-i-E-i-O is an interactive, educational, fun farm for all ages.

Gary Oliver, a trained animal expert from the Cinemazoo and the Urban Safari Rescue Society, is bringing a number of exotic and rare animals to his show, Exotic Animal Extravaganza. (The next two weekends only).

Oliver grabs the attention of children and adults alike with a hairless rat called Dr. Evil and a mouse called Mini Me, a species of crocodilian from South America — a two-year-old Caiman mini crocodile, the famous Emperor Scorpion that glows in the dark and a Mexican Red Knee and Chilean Rose Hair tarantulas.

"I have a dwarf Caiman, an alligator snapping turtle and a 25-foot long snake skin that I will bring as well," says the 20-year veteran animal expert. "I stand in front and bring the

animals out one at a time and give, what I hope, are fascinating and educational one-hour performances."

"I also let audiences know that these exotic animals are not for pets ... I'll speak about conservation and the importance of protecting them."

Get up close and personal with an Argentine horned frog, also dubbed the Pacman frog because of its huge mouth, which when provoked can inflict pain and draw blood if it bites.

"The Argentine thinks it can eat anything that moves," says Oliver. "Meanwhile, the scorpion is always a highlight of the show because it glows in the dark and changes from black to lime green."

Adults love the show, sometimes more than the children, he quips.

"I teach from pre-school to university, and often parents come up to me and tell me 'I don't know how my kids feel but I loved your show.'"

His exhibition will feature number of exotic animals — hailing from as far as India, Australia, South America and Africa. Oliver hopes to impart to audiences the importance these animals play in our everyday lives — from



Four-year-old Aldrich Luu gets close to a donkey at the petting zoo at Aberdeen Centre Friday afternoon.

providing us food, clothing and medicine.

"It's important to give people an appreciation for these animals and how we have to work hard to preserve them in the future," says Oliver with passion. "Many of these animal are endangered species and so they are protected."

Even though Aberdeen Centre is about offering its customers interesting and fun events, such as last year's popular dinosaur show, one of its mandates is also to be environmentally aware, says Joey Kwan, the mall's promo-

tion and public relations manager.

"Starting last year, we put together a philosophy centered around nature and the environment," says Kwan. "So we put together this show to offer kids an opportunity to come and pet friendly farm animals, discover the world of bees and bugs, learn about organic farming and be entertained by our week-end exotic animal shows."

Another highlight is the real organic rice paddy with live baby ducklings. "People will discover how organic farmers put

ducks in their paddies to eat up the insects that can ruin the rice," says Kwan, who spent weeks researching before putting together the fair. "The ducks also oxygenate the water allowing the fields to grow stronger and healthier roots for a self-sustaining and propagating and harmonized eco-system."

"I bought the rice paddy seeds in China."

There's also Dr. Bee of Honeyland Canada at the Bees n' Bugs Station. He will be on hand on the weekends to explain more about these fascinating

creatures and how they make honey.

"There will also be organic vegetable displays and the Little Critters Farm Petting Zoo where little kids can pet cute lambs, bunnies, goats, a calf, a pony and others," adds Kwan.

Aberdeen Centre Had a Farm E-i-E-i-O show is being held now until September 1 in the atrium of the mall, located at 4151 Hazelbridge Way. For more information about the event and showtimes, visit www.aberdeencentre.com.