

# » Grassroots Friday



**SILVER SERVICE** Mica McNeill (on right) and team-mate Jazmin Sawyers show off their Youth Winter Olympics medals in Innsbruck

## It's snow bad year as McNeill sleighs rivals!

A NORTH EAST bobsleigh champion enjoyed huge success in 2012 – despite living nowhere near a real track.

Mica McNeill has enjoyed a hugely successful year on the slopes and looks set for an even greater 2013, but has to travel abroad if she wants to practice on a proper course.

The 19-year-old from Consett only became involved in the sport when she was 15, but has quickly risen to the top of the pile.

She said: "2012 was probably my most successful and also my busiest year to date."

That success started early in the year when she travelled to the first Youth Winter Olympics in Innsbruck, Austria.

The former Durham High School for Girls pupil added: "I started the year with the Youth Games and managed to get a silver medal which was great.

"We also had the Junior

### Bobsleigh special

» OWEN EVANS

World Championships in Austria where I managed to win a bronze.

"It is hard to say which of those two was the highlight of the year but the silver at the Youth Games probably just takes it."

Pilot McNeill and her brakewoman Jazmin Sawyers produced a dazzling second run of 55.66 seconds to snatch Olympic silver in Innsbruck.

Their podium place was Great Britain's first and only individual medal of the Games.

McNeill rarely has the chance to practice on a real track and does a lot of her training on a dry course in Bath.

Despite this, she was successful in a number of other competitions last year.

She said: "I competed in the America Cup and picked up two silvers at the track in Park City and I managed a gold at the event in Calgary.

"The track at Calgary was brand new and I had never been on it before so I had to learn it very quickly."

Despite these huge successes, McNeill has even higher hopes for 2013.

She said: "I have the second half of the season to go so I am hoping for more success."

"I would love to go to the World Championships but it will be tough because only three groups of women get to go."

Even if McNeill misses out this time, she has her eye on an even bigger prize.

She added: "The long-term goal is to get to the Winter Olympic Games in Russia in 2014, which is a possibility."

"We really have our sights on the 2018 Winter Games, though."



**ON THE RUN** McNeill (right) and Sawyer in bobsleigh action in Innsbruck

## TN squad hoping for Grand success

### Netball

TEAM Northumbria were among the teams starting their 2013 programme today at the Cathedral City Mature Lighter Fast Net Grand Prix.

The event, one of the most intense and high-octane events of the year, started today and concludes tomorrow at Manchester's Wright Robinson Sports Arena.

The tournament is expected to attract an audience of more than 2,000 over the two days.

Organisers hope it will play a significant role in upping the profile of netball – currently the largest female team sport in the UK.

Featuring all eight Netball Superleague franchises, the Cathedral City Mature Lighter Fast Net Grand Prix is being hosted by reigning Fast Net and Netball Super League champions Manchester Thunder.

Jackie Wilson of the event sponsors said: "The Fast Net Grand Prix has already become a key date in our calendar.

"We would love to use our connection to inspire more women to take to the courts."

Joanna Adams, head of marketing and commercial at England Netball said: "We are delighted Cathedral City Mature Lighter are supporting the Fast Net Grand Prix."

CCML is also an official partner of the Netball Superleague.

The nationwide tournament will run from February to May.

Fixtures will be held in arenas across the country with up to 2,000 fans expected to attend each game.

**DON'T miss all the latest junior football news - including a picture special on the Complete Football Xmas Festival and a report on the North East Football Tournament's Xmas Cup - in Grassroots on Saturday night**