

Jamaican bobsled team a hit at local school

With the possible exception of British ski jumper Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards, no one created a bigger stir at the 1988 Calgary Olympics than the Jamaican bobsled team.

The fact that the Jamaican team had never seen snow, or a bobsled track, but were prepared to hurtle down the icy bobsled run at speeds approaching 80 miles per hour (130 km), seemed to catch the public's imagination. Helping fuel the team's island image was their reggae record, in which the only intelligible word seems to be 'bobsled'.

It's a very long way from Jamaica, to Calgary, to Port Elgin, but students and staff at the Port Elgin-Saugeen Central Public School were very excited to learn that the Jamaican team would be paying a visit to the school, last Wednesday.

It all started when a combined class of Grade 7 and 8 students wrote the Jamaican team in Calgary. In their letters, the students welcomed the Jamaicans to Canada and complimented them on their courage for entering the bobsled event.

Last Tuesday evening, Port Elgin-Saugeen principal, Calvin Russell, received a phone call from the Jamaican team manager, George Fitch, who said the team wanted to come and personally thank the students for their support.

At first, Mr. Russell thought the call was a prank, but was finally convinced of its authenticity. It was agreed that the team, which was staying in Toronto, would visit the school the following day.

Unfortunately, the team received the wrong directions to Port Elgin and were sent east, instead of west, out of Toronto. They ended up in the vicinity of Cobourg, Ontario, before realizing their mistake. They persevered, however and, instead of arriving at the school at 11:00 a.m., finally arrived at 4:00 p.m.

The delay did not spoil the excitement of the

students, however.

Upon arrival, Mr. Fitch told the students how pleased they were to have received the students' letters. He said the visit to Port Elgin was one way they could repay the students for their kindness, as well as thank Canadians in general.

During the hour-long visit, the team members presented each student with the team's Olympic pin and poster. They also made sure that each student received an autograph.

The Jamaicans, in turn, were presented with school crests and town and county pins. The biggest hit was when the Jamaicans were presented with caps, bearing the school crest and 'Honorary Wildcat' on the front. The school's sports teams are called the Wildcats.

Mr. Fitch told the students that the team decided to enter the Olympics because of the challenge of adapting to a new sport, in addition to wanting to have their country represented at the Winter Olympics.

The Jamaicans did not fare well in actual competition, placing 30th out of 41 teams in the two-man event, and being disqualified for crashing in the four-man event. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured in the crash, due to the team's preliminary training.

The obvious question asked of the Jamaicans was how they prepared for the event in Jamaica. Since the start of a race is so important, and much of the rest of the race is left up to gravity, the team practiced their starts with a push go-cart.

Eric Combe, a physical education teacher at the school, was very impressed with the visitors. 'It was really terrific of them to come; it really made the kids' day', he said.

He added that the team members were polite with the teachers and a few local dignitaries, but spent most of their visit with the students.



Another successful afternoon of public speaking was held at St. Joseph's School, last Saturday. Sponsored by the Port Elgin Legion, a total of 16 students participated. Winners from the Junior and Senior divisions advance to the Zone finals in Shallow Lake, March 6. The district finals will be in Port Elgin March 27. Senior speakers were: Kara Van Bastelaar, Erick Grimstead, Jason Vanderkleyn, Sean Martin, Laurie Pennarun, Christie McPhee; J.D. Smith and Fiona Campbell (holding trophies) were winner and runner-up respectively.



Junior Division winners at Saturday's Leg'n Public Speaking competition at St. Joseph's School were: (back row) James Campbell, St. Joseph's; Matthew Iley, Northport (winner); Stacey Jennings, St. Joseph's (runner-up); Sarah Cooke; (front row) Kim Smith; Kari Robinson; Stacy Finnis.

Burgoyne

Mrs. J. McCannell

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Ian Hepplewhite on the birth of a son.

Word was received that Mrs. Barbara Patey passed away on the weekend. Ken Patey died on March 24. They resided at Riverview.

Mr. and Mrs. Jim Esplen, Mrs. Grant Grieve and Mrs. Gordon Grieve drove to Toronto to visit Grant Grieve who is a patient in the Toronto General Hospital. Hopefully we will soon hear him whistling around Burgoyne.