

## Disabled Athletes

# Determination pays handsomely

Disabled athletes representing Canada in worldwide competition are in an elite class, achieving new heights with every effort.

Their determination has paid off handsomely. Canada finished fourth among the 66 competing nations at the 1988 Paralympics in Seoul, Korea. In 1984, Canada placed third in one of the largest international competitions for disabled athletes on Long Island, New York. And the Canadian Cerebral Palsy team and the Canadian Wheelchair team are recent world champions.

Much of the success Canada has achieved can be traced back to Ontario where almost 40 per cent of all Canadian team members in disabled sports live.

The Ontario Games for the Physically Disabled, first held in 1975, has been a boon to disabled sports. Originally designed to provide disabled athletes with an opportunity to train and develop their skills to compete at national and international levels, the program has expanded to include 1,000 athletes and more than 200 coaches, officials and staff.

As a Games partner with the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, Sports for the Disabled Ontario is a coordinating agency, collecting and distributing information on all areas of disabled sports.

While it has made tremendous strides, Executive Director, Doug Wilton, says there is much more to be accomplished.

"Our next big goal is to have disabled sports events integrated with major able-bodied competitions, such as the Ontario Summer and Winter Games, the Commonwealth Games and Olympics," he said. "The International Paralympic Committee has been formed to encourage integration of disabled sports into competitions in Canada and other countries."

"We've been told by the International Olympic Committee that once we demonstrate we can do it ourselves, their officials will be ready to discuss doing it in the Olympics," Wilton said.

Talks are also underway with the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations to explore having disabled sports events integrated with able-bodied competitions at the high school level. An important objective of disabled sports groups is to promote more events in the schools to inspire more young people with disabilities to become active and participate in sports.

Disabled sports are organized by four Provincial Sports Organizations, including the Ontario Sports Amputee Association, the Ontario Blind Sports Association, the Ontario Cerebral Palsy Sports Association and the Ontario Wheelchair Sports Association.

All four groups of athletes are eligible to compete in three sports: track and field, swimming and powerlifting/weightlifting. Each group also organizes events in additional sports.

For example, amputee athletes compete in archery and volleyball; blind athletes wrestle and take part in gymnastics; cerebral palsy athletes play bocce and soccer; and wheelchair athletes play basketball and sledge hockey.

Wilton promises that the typical sports fan will get as much enjoyment from watching disabled sports events as from watching able-bodied sports.

"At the Seoul Paralympics, the wheelchair marathon had a capacity crowd of 100,000 standing in their seats and cheering the end of the race," Wilton says.

He says that the standards of competition have continued to increase each year. "At the Boston Marathon, they used to let the

wheelchairs go first so that by the time the runners caught up, the wheelchairs would be well dispersed.

"Now, the runners don't even come close to catching up! The time for the marathon is about one hour and 38 minutes, well under the two hours and 10 minutes the runners take. And it's pretty hard wheeling up those hills, believe me!"

A coach of both high school and disabled athletes for 10 years, Wilton says his involvement has been rewarding. "Compared to able-bodied athletes, our athletes are more tough mentally, more creative, and are extremely self-motivated and dedicated. They don't cut practices."

He points out that they do "some really amazing things. For example, a one-legged amputee, Arnie Boldt of Saskatchewan, high-jumped seven feet."

Wilton says the considerable accomplishments that are evident in disabled sports today result from the efforts of a lot of people.

"The Ministry of Tourism and Recreation has been very supportive in all aspects of our development. For example, it provides over \$100,000 a year for the regional and provincial games. The four PSO's share about \$300,000 a year and this office gets about \$65,000," he said.

He also gives a pat on the back to the many Ontario municipalities that "host our events and support our activities."

Wilton points out that disabled sports are promoted throughout the province by about 22 clubs and eight or nine affiliated organizations.

"Most of the clubs integrate all four sports groups and are run by volunteers. There are a few paid staff.

"We run clinics for their coaches and provide seminars for club administrators, offering advice on fund raising, recruitment, and risk management and safety."

Wilton says there is a good deal of excitement in the disabled sports community these days about a testing and scientific training facility for disabled sports. It could be a big step forward," he says.

Wilton points out Variety Village already runs games for young disabled athletes. "This is an important area so we've hired a new technical director to work on development of activities for youth. We have about 250 disabled athletes in our high schools," he says.



Although his features might be a bit hard to distinguish, 9-year-old Tyler Pearce of Georgetown was in pretty distinguished company at the National Hockey League awards banquet held June 6 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. In the above picture, Tyler poses with Ray Bourque of the Boston Bruins, the 1989-90 Norris Trophy winner as the league's top defenceman. (Photo submitted)

## Georgetown youngster meets NHL stars

Tyler Pearce, 9-years-old, of Georgetown, experienced an evening countless minor hockey players only dream about.

On June 6th, Tyler attended the 1989-90 NHL Awards and Dinner held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

For this special occasion, Tyler was dressed in a tuxedo and got to ride in a white stretch limousine.

During the course of the evening, Tyler met with and got autographs

and photographs of many NHL award winners.

Wayne Gretzky, Darren Puppa, Brett Hull, Mark Messier, Lanny McDonald, Patrick Roy, Andy Moog and Ray Bourque are just a few of the NHL stars Tyler met and had his picture taken with.

Tyler also had his picture taken with the Stanley Cup.

Tyler played hockey for the Georgetown Minor Novice Rep team this past season as their goaltender.

# Catholic schools hold track meet

The Halton Roman Catholic School Board's track and field meet for elementary school students was held last Tuesday (June 5) and Wednesday with 29 schools, including Holy Cross, Sacre Coeur and St. Francis of Assisi elementary schools of Georgetown and St. Joseph's elementary school of Acton competing in the two-day event staged at Burlington's Nelson Stadium.

The approximately 2,000 competitors challenged in four divisions: Bantam, Atom, Midget and Tyke.

Georgetown's Holy Cross elementary school led the charge by the North Halton schools, picking up six ribbons.

Angela Orticeo was a double ribbon winner, placing third in the 100 metre event and second in the high jump event in the Bantam division.

Nelson Esteireiros placed second in the Atom division 200 metre dash for Holy Cross, Danny Jackman placed first in the Tyke division 60 metre dash, Kim Moore was third in the Tyke division 60 metre dash and Heather Nesman won the softball throw.

St. Joseph's Elementary School of Acton had four ribbon winners in the Atom division.

David Clark won the high jump event, Louie Mastro was second in the softball throw, Michael Lavrin placed third in the 60 metre dash and Joy Christopher was second in the long jump.

St. Francis of Assisi had three ribbon winners - Martin Johnson won the Atom boys 400 metre event and Danielle Cory was third in the high jump.

In the Midget division, Kelly Campbell of St. Francis of Assisi finished third.

Julie Dugas was the lone ribbon winner for Sacre Coeur, finishing third in the Midget girls 60 metre dash.

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