

Poly-hockey added to Special Olympics format

By DAVE WINES

The Pontiac team was down 5-1, and about to be eliminated. They had practiced for weeks and had traveled to Troy High School to compete against the best in the state.

The previous year they took home a bronze medal in this same event. But not on this cold and blustering afternoon.

No, they were going to have to pack it in after one game against a good Farmington squad, but the looks on their faces told a different story. Almost like the story of a child's first Christmas, before the discovery that Santa Claus is merely a concept meant to deliver as many goodies as possible.

The look was one of joy, not sorrow, of something accomplished, not lost. These athletes were competing in the Special Olympics, an international organization for the development of meaningful athletic and emotional growth in mentally and physically handicapped persons.

It was back in the mid-60's when

the Joseph Kennedy foundation established a fund for the Special Olympics. The fund gives thousands of physically and mentally impaired people the chance to achieve realistic goals in organized sports.

Competition begins at county tournaments, with winners advancing to state playoffs, where champions are selected to represent the state in the national Special Olympics.

It is no surprise, then, to discover that Oakland County has extensive involvement in the program, with teams from several districts represented in various team and individual events—just like the Olympic games in Montreal or Moscow.

Thus, it came as an honor when Oakland County was selected to host the state-wide poly-hockey tournament last month at Troy High School. It was the first such tournament ever held in this area.

If the name poly-hockey is unfamiliar, imagine a hockey game without ice and skates, played on a standard gym floor. Equipment consists of a plastic stick and puck.

Players attempt to score in regular hockey fashion, and can be penalized for fouls. Minor fouls are recorded as in basketball, and a player must sit out only if he or she commits a deliberate major foul, which is infrequent.

Thus, poly-hockey represents many different aspects of both ice hockey and basketball.

Teams for poly-hockey are split into three divisions, depending on age and other factors relating to an individual's degree of handicap. In the case of poly-hockey, all participants are mentally impaired, with those in Senior Division I considered "Educable Mentally Impaired" (EMI), while those considered "Trainable Mentally Impaired" (TMI) and over 16 years are in Senior Division II.

According to area Special Olympics Director Nancy Moran, the difference between EMI and TMI is basically in relative IQ's combined with motor skills. Thus, EMI students attend special education classes in regular public schools, while those considered TMI go to training

institutes.

However, these distinctions are soon forgotten when watching the excitement and thrill experienced by the participants, both boys and girls, children and adults.

Putting the societal labels in perspective is Martha Segal of the Oakland Training Institute, and also one of the coaches of the Senior Division II Lamphere Yellowjackets.

"Our young people can do everything. There is no such word as can't," she said. "They're not differ-

ent. The supposition that our kids are different must be erased immediately."

Echoing this belief are Mr. and Mrs. Noel Smith of Rochester, whose son Gail plays for the Pontiac Panthers Senior II team. Mr. Smith says that Gail "gets up" for an event like any athlete motivated to train and prepare for competition.

As for the benefits of the Special Olympics, Mr. Smith, who works for Troy Schools, said they have helped make people more aware of the

abilities of handicapped people and of their numbers.

"Even I did not realize there were that many. Now it has grown so large that you have to have a first place to go to the state meets," said Smith. "But the media and publicity have helped people understand more."

Funds for local Special Olympics competition come solely from county fund-raising activities. Each year a "superstars" competition is held at Oakland University.

OU matmen win 5th straight

The Oakland University wrestling team won two meets over the weekend to keep its undefeated dual-meet record intact.

The Pioneers defeated Lake Superior State College 27-15, and downed Michigan Tech 29-9. Oakland, which finished fourth in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) standings last year, is currently tied for first place with a perfect 3-0 record.

"That was the first time in four years that we beat Lake Superior," said Pioneer coach Max Hesse, who started the wrestling program from scratch four years ago.

"The wrestlers are showing continuing progress, and they're learning all the time. It's quite unbelievable, and the team is doing a great job right now."

Against Lake Superior Oakland dominated most of the lightweight and heavyweight classes.

East Detroit Phil Liebhang, who had missed most of the season with a knee injury, pinned Dave Saunders at 6:48. Liebhang wrestles at 118 pounds. At 134 pounds, Mike Eble shut out Steve Nelle 8-0. The Ulica Eisenhower graduate is undefeated in dual-meet competition.

Rick Blakey won by void at 126. Dan Lemaster (167), Tim Chapel (177), John Whitfield (190) and Kurt Shoemaker (heavyweight) all did well in the upper weights for Oakland.

Lemaster won a 4-2 decision, and Chapel took a 7-4 victory. Whitfield, a Rochester Adams High School graduate, defeated Lake Superior's Bill Huls 3-1.

Shoemaker drew with Wally Frederick, 7-7.

Liebhang was the only Pioneer to register a pin in the Huskie victory. Other winners against Tech were Eble, Ron Coleman, Mark Christensen,

Lemasters, Ken Masters, Chapel and Shoemaker.

Oakland's other triumphs this year were over Ferris State and Saginaw Valley in league action, and Eastern Michigan University.

Oakland will travel to Grand Valley for an important league encounter Saturday. Grand Valley is a four-time GLIAC champion.

Northern Michigan, which dropped out of the conference this year, won the title last winter.

O&E to begin best boys' swim listings

The Observer & Eccentric will begin listing the best boys' swim times of prep swimmers in our Oakland County coverage area.

Coaches with best times to report should call Troy Athens swim coach Dale Rahn. He can be contacted Mondays-Fridays at the high school pool (524-1898).

Schools included are Cranbrook,

Bloomfield Hills Lakser, Birmingham Seaborn, Bloomfield Hills Andover, Birmingham Groves, West Bloomfield, Birmingham Brother Rice, Detroit Country Day, Rochester, Southfield, Farmington, Farmington Harrison, Auburn Heights Avondale, North Farmington, Southfield-Lathrup, Troy, Rochester Adams, Troy Athens, Southfield Christian and Walled Lake Central.

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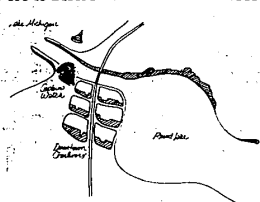
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