

Mentally impaired play to win



RANDY BOST/Staff Photographer

Players from the Farmington Training Center were taught to try to raise the puck in the air when they shoot, and it paid off by winning them the statewide Special Olympics trophy. Goalie Gordon Jenkins fends off a shot on goal.

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Having a school team everyone can root for makes the special education students feel more like any other student.

Like any team worth its weight, students on the Oakland All-Stars don't like to lose. Coach Gordon Wyman said cooperation and accepting a loss gracefully teaches participants all sorts of socialization skills.

"WHEN THEY first lost there were sticks flying all over the place," Wyman said. "They were mad. They're not used to losing."

In watching the team in scrimmages it becomes apparent these students know plays and the game's intricate rules of icing, high-sticking and blue lines. The games are played with sneakers, not skates, with plastic sticks and puck on a marked-off gym floor in three eight-minute periods.

Talking to the players gives one a sense of what they've learned.

"Keep your eyes on the puck," said Gordon Jenkins, 20, of Farmington, goalie on the winning squad. "No daydreaming."

Being part of the team made him feel better about school, he said, because "you don't get grumpy."

Todd Devitt, 15, of Birmingham learned to "pick the puck up" with his stick and score more goals — a neat bit of manual dexterity he demonstrated.

Also, he said, you score more goals by "going to the center" than always shooting yourself.

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Superintendent spared censure

A motion by Trustee Janet Callahan to reprimand Superintendent Don Sheldon was rejected by the Walled Lake Board of Education at its November meeting.

Callahan called for the board to reprimand Sheldon "for violating board policy and school law" in the administrative handling of bids for roof repair work at Walled Lake Central and Clifford Smart Junior High School.

She called for Sheldon to reimburse the district for any costs associated with having to rebuild the roof repairs.

Although seconded by Trustee Merlin Reeds "for discussion purposes," the motion subsequently was defeated on a 1-6 vote with Callahan casting the lone ballot.

The bids were opened by administration and presented for board approval Oct. 18. Board policy states that the board must open construction bids expected to exceed \$2,000, but that administration can open bids for repairs that are expected to be less than \$5,000.

Taken collectively, the bids for the roof repair at the schools exceeded the \$5,000 limitation.

CALLAHAN OBJECTED to administrators opening the bids at the October meeting, and administration subsequently readvertised for bids, which were opened in accordance with board policy at the Oct. 25 meeting.

Trustee Patricia Jackson claimed board policy is not as clear as it should be in defining the difference between construction and repair bids.

"Sheldon has said administration did not believe it was violating board policy, and that's satisfactory indication of intent to follow policy as far as I'm concerned," she said.

Reeds said he felt Sheldon was as embarrassed as the board had been over the incident, and he assumed "middle-management has had its feathers singed" (for opening the bids).

Callahan responded that every time Sheldon violates board policy he has said it was not his intent. "He has rented out space (in school buildings without board approval), and it goes on and on," she said. "I think it's time for this board to put its foot down."

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