

With extra effort, these stars shine

By Kathy Parrish
Staff writer

NINO MUSCATO sure looked like a football fan.

Every chance he got during the Super Stars competition, the Special Olympian hurtled into Lem Barney's arms.

Actually, the Troy youth was after the former Detroit Lions cornerback's white cap.

"Lem Barney has a hat and Nino likes hats, so he's going for him," explained Terry Muscato, proudly watching his severely retarded son take third place in the barrel ball contest.

Nino was one of 70 mentally impaired youth teamed up with local celebrities Sunday for the sixth annual Super Stars competition set up by Oakland County Special Olympics.

Sponsored by area businesses, each group consisted of two sponsor representatives, two Special Olympians, a celebrity and a coach who works with mentally impaired youngsters.

During the action packed two hours, team members propelled themselves across Oakland University's Lepley Sports Center on fiberglass scooters, bounced balls into a barrel and tackled an obstacle course fashioned of cones, hurdles and hula hoops.

"I'm getting it down to a science," said Oakland County Prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson, admitting he "final-

ly figured out the scooter course after six years.

"All these kids do better than I do. But it's one of the most rewarding afternoons I spend all year."

UNLIKE THE adult participants, many of the Special Olympians practiced all year for the event which raised \$78,000.

At the urging of fellow team members, they maneuvered as quickly as their handicaps would allow.

For some, it was simply a matter of remembering which way to run or which obstacle to tackle when.

But others needed a firm helping hand -- or in one case two sets of hands lifting him up over a hurdle by his shorts.

"Pick this hoop up. Pick it up and put it over your head," encouraged one special education coach. "All right now."

"Remember, you have to bounce the ball first," coach Denise Yokley briefed her two Special Olympians before the barrel ball competition.

The Rochester teacher has been bringing educable mentally impaired students from North Hills School to Special Olympics events for 10 years.

"They all want to come. It's such a thrill," said Yokley, whose team took first place in the scooter relay.

"There's a feeling of success that can't be duplicated anywhere."



Rochester Special Olympian Chris Pariseau, 11, and his teammate Detroit Lions running back Dexter Busssey proudly show off their awards.



With help from former Detroit Lions cornerback Lem Barney, Nino Muscato plays barrel ball. Lending encouragement to the Troy youngster is volunteer Chuck Walby.



In her third Super Stars appearance, Rochester resident Mauriah Swain pushes her scooter propels her scooter around the relay course. Her efforts helped the North Hill student's team carry home first-place ribbons.



Working together, coaches and their students shared in the excitement of Super Stars. (Above) North Hills teacher Denise Yokley and Mauriah Swain keep their fingers crossed while the over-all winners are announced. (Left) Arleen Smale, teacher's aide at Wing Lake School in Bloomfield Hills, enjoys triumph with student Nino Muscato.

Staff photos by David Frank