

Special Olympics offered enjoyable athletes and dedicated volunteers

By CRAIG HENRY
Of The Mercury

Sheer determination, pure enthusiasm and a genuine warmth were in full force last weekend in Estevan.

It was the Saskatchewan Special Olympics at Estevan's Comprehensive School, and for those of you tired of hearing about steroids and dirty athletes - this was the place to be.

Propelled by some 240 beaming competitors and over 300 dedicated volunteers, these Olympics certainly were special. The Saskatchewan police force torch run, the RCMP cadet band, the Saturday morning parade, the presence of Saskatchewan Roughriders legend George Reed and the appearance of Premier Grant Devine and wife Chantal at the Saturday night banquet were all memorable moments - but the athletes deservedly stole the show.

Unabashed and ready to compete in a spirited fashion, the athletes from the eight zones across the province tackled every event with zeal and thoroughly entertained the hundreds of spectators who turned out at ECS on Saturday. A handful of competitions were held on Friday night as well, including numerous swimming events at Woodlawn Pool.

"I'm still stunned - I really am - about the amount of people who came out to help us," Olympics co-chairman Tony Birchall said. "It was just unreal."

Instilling impressions on Premier Devine and many of them recognized Chantal at the banquet. Three particular competitors took time out to ask the premier what could be done about the current unrest in China - a development that has shocked the world. According to Birchall, Devine was just as shocked by the athletes who aired their concerns about the problem.

"People not involved (with the Olympics) don't realize how much potential there is there," he said of the athletes. Amongst the dignitaries attending the opening ceremonies on Saturday were Estevan Mayor John Empey, Souris-Moose Mountain MP Len Gustafson, Moosomin MLA Don Toth and Reed, to name a few.

Olympics co-chairman Pat Birchall said the feedback she received from spectators, athletes and volunteers on the weekend was tremendous. Many athletes took note of Mayor Empey serving them breakfast on Sunday morning at a Rotary Club-sponsored function, and many more were obviously pleased to be paraded around Estevan on semi-trailer flat beds before the Olympics on Saturday morning. Birchall added the volunteers more than enjoyed themselves and the Special Olympians' enthusiasm all weekend long.

Award winners were announced at the Saturday banquet and the following athletes took home some hardware: Rhythmic gymnastics, Alyson Bourassa of Zone one; swimming, Denise Paul and Daniel

Vanderkracht; multi-sport, Denise Paul and Greg Bottomly; masters awards, Patricia Kilbride and Henry Lucier; best rookie, Murray Reaz; best female, Donna Janis-kewich; best male, Sean McGowan; fastest 100 metres, Sean McGowan; fastest 200 metres, Rick Mahutis; fastest 400 metres, Rick Mahutis; fastest relay, Sheldon Bareski, Rodney Carroll, Maryann Yachyshyn and Gayla Bell; longest female shot, Anita Penner; and longest male shot, Jerry Anderson.

Members of zone one's winning rhythmic gymnastics team included Rita Gaetz, Adele Beaulieu, Alyson Bourassa, Mary Styre and Georgina Parish.

The zone one women's swim team consisted of Parish, Michelle Laroque, Wendy Smith and Beaulieu, while Ryan Bast, Trent Slon and Carey Davidge made up the men's team.

Representing zone one in women's track and field were Parish, Smith, Laroque, Karen Keene, Gaetz, Terry Dionne, Beaulieu and Adrienne Vreys.

The men's track team included Bast, Travis Coates, Michael Samenook, Gary Godman, Ivan Mallhot, Davidge, Kenton Whitman, Allan Jordan, Ed Stabick, Joe Harbuz, Frank Correll, Slon, Blain Kimball, Gerry Langlois, Mark Samenook, Wendall Baniulis and Reinhardt Eisenbrenner.

Zone one's co-ed relay team consisted of Mallhot, Davidge, Gaetz and Parish, and the master's team featured Lois Sinkewicz, Bonita Eric, Bob Watson, George Antonuk and James McPhee.



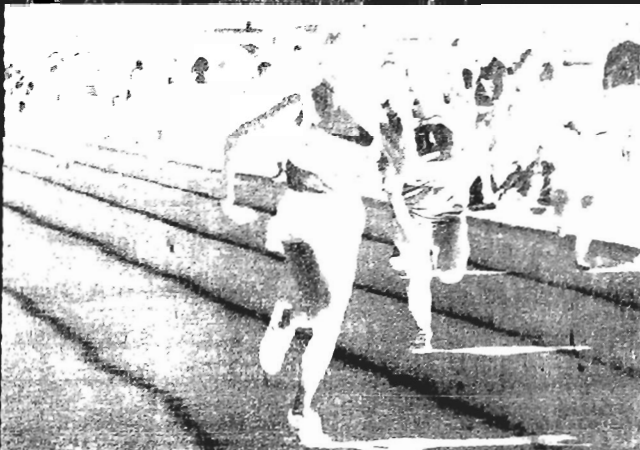
Estevan's Chantal Goodmanson seems to be having a great time assisting Saskatoon's Kyle Demuth, who thoroughly enjoyed his short

race to the finish line. Chantal and Kyle were a prime example of what the Saskatchewan Special Olympics were all about this past weekend in Estevan.



Timing is of the essence in short sprints and these two runners were deep in concentration just before the starter's pistol cracked. The Estevan Comprehensive School's track oval

was a popular place on Saturday as the Saskatchewan Special Olympics unfolded for the first time in Estevan.



This is what it's all about and there was a lot of it last Saturday when the Saskatchewan Special Olympics were held at the Estevan

Comprehensive School. Smiling athletes were everywhere and the feeling was certainly contagious among the spectators.



Long jump was just one of the many events staged at the Saskatchewan Special Olympics on Saturday at the Estevan Comprehensive School's track facility. This prospective jumper

was obviously immersed in the thrill of competition, and the end result drew considerable admiration from the crowd.



The Saskatchewan Special Olympics featured a parade through downtown Estevan last Saturday morning, and athletes from all eight zones were put on display thanks to semi-trailer

flatbeds donated by local trucking companies. Predictably, the athletes took advantage of the opportunity and hammed it up for their audience.