

Sports



Regina Sun photo by Don Healy

Andy Wellings, Jim Wingert and Chris McCubbin have lifted their way to Berkeley Calif

Powerful and proud

By DAVID MOSER
for The Regina Sun

Curtis Kemp is proud of what he and other coaches have accomplished with the Special Olympics powerlifting program.

Kemp is one of the coaches involved with the program that started about four years ago for persons with a mental disability.

"When we first started the program, we had a tendency to do everything for them — load the weights, spot for them," Kemp says. "We've evolved from that, where we have the athletes spotting for each other, loading the weights and cheering each other on. They help themselves and help each other. Special Olympics is not a once-a-year event—it's a weekly training program."

Kemp, a member of the Regina City Police, along with fellow police officer and coach Don Jeannotte are preparing three Regina powerlifters for a national Special Olympics powerlifting competition Nov. 5-7 in Berkeley, Calif.

Competing are Jim Wingert, 17, in the 181-pound division; Andy Wellings, 18, in the 132-lb. division; and, Chris McCubbin, 18, in the 132-lb. division. They all train at Mac Game's Regina Weightlifting Club. The Special O powerlifting program



has seven athletes, who train Monday and Wednesday evenings in the sport's three disciplines — the squat, the deadlift and the bench press. Only the deadlift and the bench press are used during competitions.

"It's a fairly disciplined sport as far as Special Olympics goes," Kemp says. "It's not something where you can hand them a hockey stick and let them run around."

"It's a weightlifting sport. It's challenging at times with them, there's no doubt about that, but they've done exceptionally well."

Even though powerlifting can be a very technical sport and the lifters can pull weights of up to 400 pounds, Kemp says there haven't been any injuries in four years.

"We're very careful to move them along very slowly," Kemp says. "That's one of the things we've been really conscious of. We don't encourage them to

overstress themselves. I'd rather have them lift 50 pounds less than risk an injury."

Sure, the Special O athletes have become excellent powerlifters, but Kemp sees other positive aspects of them competing in the sport.

"Because they see the same guys, they build some pretty close friendships," Kemp says. "I'm proud to be involved with a sport that helps their self-esteem. So often they lack self-esteem because of the problems they encounter. My boys have really evolved from that position. They are very proud about how strong they have become. That's one of the things I'm happiest about."

Kemp, who participated in the Saskatchewan police services Torch Run at the 1993 Saskatchewan Special Olympics Summer Games in Regina, is also a competitive powerlifter who has competed internationally. He says helping the Special Olympic athletes has not hurt his own personal training.

"It's nice to be able to work on a program with somebody else, just to see people powerlifting," Kemp says. "It certainly doesn't take away from my lifting. As a matter of fact, just repeating the fundamentals over and over to someone cements it in your own mind so you never forget."