

Coaching takes patience but results worthwhile

by JO-ANNE PELISSE

Coaching athletes can sometimes try a person's patience, but coaching athletes with handicaps takes more than a lot of patience, according to Yvonne Tratch.

Tratch is one of the coaches for the Zone 4 team which competed in the 14th annual Saskatchewan Special Olympic games, held in Yorkton on the weekend.

"It takes a lot of patience, but the end result makes it all worthwhile," she says.

When training these children, Tratch explains, you have to start with the basics.

"You start by teaching the swimmers to kick their legs to get them moving in the water and slowly move up to more difficult areas," she says.

"It's hard on both the instructor and the kids," she adds.

Sometimes, according to Tratch, the children get mad because they feel they are being pushed too hard, but they keep trying.

"Winning doesn't matter to these kids. They're out there for the fun and the excitement of participating."

The crowds' cheers and the encouragement of fans and volunteers at the games tells the athletes they are important.

"You have to do so little to make them happy," says Tratch.

Participating in the Special Olympics is fun for both the participants and the organizers.

Tratch has been involved with teaching handicapped children for about eight years. She is currently studying special education. She originates from Buchanan.

This is her second year of involvement with the Special Olympics.

She is hired through a government grant to help prepare athletes for the provincial meet.

"The purpose of the games is to make people more aware that these kids are individuals and have a mind of their own," she says.

Doing well in the provincial games does not automatically advance an athlete into the national Special Olympics, to be held later this summer.

It costs a lot to send the athletes to meets. Most areas have a campaign to sponsor an athlete.

For example, Special Olympics recently held a walkathon—a 20 mile hike into Regina—from which money raised was used to send athletes to the provincial games.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

One participant raised more than \$3,000 in the event.

Also, each zone supplies its own superstar, a well-known professional or amateur athlete who is local to the zone.

Blue Jays drop out of league

Yorkton Corona Blue Jays were forced to drop out of the Southeast Parkland Baseball League last week after the squad's pitching staff was totally depleted.

Blue Jays' ace Steve Cole has been picked up by Regina Maroons for the rest of the season while veteran Garnet Johnson, with a stretched tendon, is unable to pitch any more this year.

The team met last week and decided that without pitchers, it couldn't continue in the league this season.

"You can't play without pitchers and we had no pitching talent left," says team spokesman Brent Dergousoff.

The superstars can be any athletes with media recognition. Their participation, which is strictly voluntary, helps to draw attention to the Special Olympics.

"I think Yorkton is more aware of the Special Olympics and the mentally handicapped because of the games," says Tratch, adding, "It really opened their eyes."

BASEBALL

Jays also lost the services of veteran second baseman Matti Schikowski who has agreed to play with Binscarth Orioles of the Manitoba Senior Baseball League.

"What we were left with was not enough to field a competitive team," says Dergousoff.

"It's no fun losing 25-0." Dergousoff says the team has decided to call it quits for this season and try to start again next year, hopefully attracting some new pitching talent before then.