Article 16   December 3, 2013 Micheal Oswald

Hello faithful readers of YFN news. Here for your enjoyment is my sixteenth installment about Special Olympics on The Coast with the Most!

Swimming has started and the first practice saw the team going over basic techniques such as blowing bubbles, starfish floating, take offs, kneeling and falling dives and the like.

We have some new swimmers this year…. And Head Coach Marilyn Adams noted that, “There was a waiting list at the beginning of our sessions but we have managed to get enough volunteers to come to the novice group on Saturday to be with the new swimmers. The coaches are happy to have new swimmers join the team.”

Personally I think that everyone heard about the great time everyone had at the Provincial Games and wants to join now. I don’t blame ‘em. LOL. The sole athlete from the Coast to be attending the National Games, swimmer Christel Jensen, will be receiving lots of special training between now and next summer. Assistant Head Coach Marie Telder was asked to be a coach at Nationals and has accepted.

Basketball has been going for a while now and recently we attended a season opening game between Sechelt and Gibsons teams followed by a rematch a couple of weeks later.

Gibsons players played extremely well and Sechelt showed some true initiative. They definitely kept pace well with Gibsons and had good speed while moving along the court.

Meanwhile we carry on with regular practices and look forward to a potential tournament in the New Year.

 As athlete reporter for SOSC, it was high time, I figured, to take a trip to the curling rink in Gibsons to catch up with the coaches and athletes who love the sport.

Ten athletes and four coaches meet regularly to enjoy the art of curling and practice their techniques. Coaches Brian Hache, Bill Climie, George Proudfoot, and Dave Sandness are skilled in the sport and want to share their knowledge with their eager players. The athletes under their tutelage are Brian Ware, Michael Brooks, Michael Beckman, Amber Maher, Bruce Stuart, Shelly McCuaig, Theresa Bystead, Jordan McCourt, Cleo McClarty and Dustin Archer.

When I arrived, they were all gathering their gear and booting up for their time on the ice. I noticed flat red and orange brooms, black rubber slip on soles for their shoes and warm outfits.

When I entered the rink I was surprised that my feet stuck to a blue mat designed to capture and remove all the dirt from my shoes, keeping the ice free from any debris.

While I was watching the players in action, I noticed some adaptive devices that were designed to assist all athletes to perform at their best. One item was referred to quite simply as “the push stick”. This device allowed for delivery of the rock without having the athlete bend over. One coach said that the push stick was originally developed for seniors who have trouble bending their knees but that it is also used for athletes of any age who need assistance.

Another device is called “The Crutch”. Athletes can use this to steady them on the ice while they get ready to throw the rock toward the house. It is useful for new players and for experienced ones who need an extra hand.

I had a little time to chat with some of the athletes between plays to find out how they feel about the sport. Long time player Shelly McCuaig said she has been curling “from the beginning”. She enjoys going to bonspiels for the competition.

Theresa Bystead said it is a great way to “socialize” and that is a “happy thought” for her. Very nice.

Amber Maher had curled for 3 years previously but has been back for just a couple of months. She likes it because it’s “fun” and “it’s good to be back”.

Bruce Stuart has been curling since “bowling ended” which is “7 years”. He enjoys throwing the rock into the house using “in and out turns” and “playing different positions.”

I also talked with newcomer Michael Beckman who is in his first year of curling. He said he “has never done it before and wanted to try it” Such a brave approach. Michael has been trying many new sports this year and shows promise in all of them.

 The whole team will be going to a fun bonspiel in Abbotsford in January. I’m sure it will be a blast.

I had fun chatting with the team and my teeth were not chattering by the end of my visit. I look forward to following their progress through the season.

On Tuesday, November 19th in Sechelt on a crisp evening on the Sunshine Coast I attended a floor hockey practice at Sechelt Elementary gymnasium.

What I saw from the get-go was athletes who were eager to play, and a coach, Mike Gojevic who was more than happy to teach.

There were laughs and smiles as each athlete walked in and put on their gear, whether they were a goalie, decked out head to toe in pads and helmets, or a player with helmets and a stick.

Mike Gojevic, the assistant coach, along with helpers Kelly Van der Heide and Jennifer Hoey smiled with, laughed with and most importantly *played* with each athlete, creating an atmosphere of joy and teamwork.

Adam Casey is one athlete I’d like to center in on. Adam came in wearing a signed Detroit Red Wings jersey, signed by Todd Bertuzzi. Adam’s mom showed me an article his sister had written that had been published in a Detroit newspaper about Todd and Adam’s friendship. Truly amazing how one athlete is able to connect with another no matter where they play.

I also want to thank the gang for letting me; “the press”, take a running shot on goal, though I missed by a good bit. I definitely had fun and look forward to attending another practice in the future.

SOSC was delighted to receive a brand new banner in December with our name and logo on it courtesy of Duane Perrett of Sechelt Signs. A huge thank you goes out to Duane and to Verna Chan who not only works for Sechelt Signs but is our fitness coach every Friday as well.

As per usual, being involved with amateur sports organizations means fundraising, fundraising, fundraising. Our latest effort in this area is holding a raffle. Tickets cost $5.00 for 3. 1st prize is a signed Canucks hockey stick, 2nd prize a Le Crueset Sauce Pan and gift certificate from The Seasoned Kitchen, 3rd prize is a Canucks Gift basket from Pharmasave in Sechelt and 4th, yes 4th prize is a gift certificate from The Local Vinter.

We appreciate the many ways our community supports Special Olympics Sunshine Coast. Whether it is by donating a new banner, goods for our raffle, buying a ticket or volunteering time and energy it all goes toward a terrific cause - helping our athletes be the best that they can be.

So as you can see, we don’t “play around, around here”. We are always on the go, winter, spring, summer or fall. I hope you enjoyed this article and I look forward to submitting more in future issues for your reading pleasure. Ta Ta for now!