

WHEELCHAIR ATHLETES

Teen develops special understanding

Working for the wheelchair sports section of the B.C. Winter Games is right up Sherri-Lee Woycik's alley.

The Grade 12 Duchess Park student helped in the 1979 and 1980 Special Olympics held in Prince George and enjoys working with the handicapped.

She volunteered to help with the wheelchair sports section of the Winter Games "because I seem to get on well with people with disabilities."

"I don't want to categorize them, because they're just

normal people, but many of my friends seem to have disabilities and I enjoy being with them," Woycik said.

She's sure she'll be kept very busy, if her experience with the Special Olympics is anything to go on.

"I was assigned a group of kids to look after and it was really hard to keep track of them. They seemed to be able to move faster than kids not in wheelchairs."

Woycik says friends have tried to teach her how to manoeuvre wheelchairs, "and it made me realize just



how difficult they are to operate."

The wheelchair sports section of the Winter Games is fairly small with only four teams entered in the volleyball, and as yet, no firm figure on the number of people entered for the table tennis.

"The athletes arrive Thursday March 5, at the airport

and I'll be there to meet them and show them to their quarters at CNC," Woycik says.

The handicapped athletes won't be alone at the college — more than 500 participants are being billeted there.

Woycik has to make sure proper transportation is provided for the wheelchair participants, and that trained people are on hand to help them into and out of the buses.

"Any of the participants who are 19 or under have to stay in the accommodation provided and have to use the

transportation which has been provided," she said.

Entrants in the wheelchair section range in age from 13 to 54 years.

Mark Cormack, a Grade 12 student from Vanderhoof is one of the star players on the Prince George volleyball team.

The young paraplegic has been confined to a wheelchair since November 1979.

But by spring 1980 he was part of the volleyball team which won a gold medal at the handicapped games in Esquimalt and at the 1980 B.C. Summer Games in Kelowna. Cormack won a bronze medal for archery.

Cormack hasn't been able to practise for the Winter Games, as his new wheelchair, specially designed for sports, has not yet arrived.

He's looking forward to the Winter Games, and a chance to get to know Prince George a little better. He plans to attend the College of New Caledonia in September and take the drafting course.

The four volleyball teams attend a one-hour clinic at the YM-YWCA Friday March 6, and the first game begins at 2:30 p.m. at the Y.

Semi-finals begin 10 a.m. Saturday, March 7 at the Y. Table tennis games will be

held Saturday, March 7 from 3 to 6 p.m. at College Heights Secondary School.

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WHEELCHAIR ATHLETES

Little difference in table tennis

Wheelchair table tennis began in 1967 because of a growing interest in games across Canada. The Canadian Wheelchair Sport Association became involved at a national and international level and as a result, wheelchair table tennis became popular. There is little difference between regular table tennis and wheelchair table tennis in that participants use the standard size table and their wheelchairs.

Wheelchair volleyball dif-

fers in the fact that a badminton-size court with a six-foot net is used. Players must have all the skills of playing volleyball. Wheelchair volleyball has only become popular within the past four years, as many volunteers were active in able-bodied sports.

Diane Eaton, chairman for wheelchair sports in the Winter Games, points out that the disability level of wheelchair athletes is

expanded because of participation in the Games. The Winter Games next year in Trail will include skiing for the blind, sports for deaf people, amputees, and of course, wheelchair sports.

Athletes participating in wheelchair sports will be housed at the College of New Caledonia and have special beds designed for their use. These beds are approximately two feet high with hand rails to make it easier to get from bed to

wheelchair.

The main problem wheelchair athletes have to contend with is lack of accessibility — lack of ramps on airplanes and making sure they can get in and out of places. As the United Nations has declared 1981 the year of the disabled, fellow athletes and spectators will be afforded the opportunity to become aware that a physical disability does not negate the fact that they have the same will to win and sense of team spirit.



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