

# Coach fosters growth for 'special' athletes

By Barbara Ann Homick  
Staff writer

Based on its performance in Connecticut last weekend, the New York Special Olympics Area 19 women's basketball team should fare pretty well at the 1991 International Summer Special Olympics Games in Minnesota next month.

At least Coach Doug Cramer hopes so. The 10 women on the team — who range in age from 16-30 — hail from Ontario, Seneca, Wayne and Yates counties. Competing against the Connecticut International Team in the Special Olympics Games in New Haven on June 22-23, the Ladyhawks were a perfect 3-0. They won 28-16 and 32-16 on June 22, and 32-15 on June 23.

Cramer, who has been coaching Special Olympic athletes for the past 22 years, said last weekend's competition served as a good tune-up for the big games coming up. "It (going 3-0) says we are progressing on schedule," said Cramer. "We didn't have to press to get the lead."

Scheduled for July 19-26, the International Summer Special Olympics Games in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minn., will feature 6,155 athletes from 105 foreign countries as well as 54 U.S. states and territories.

New York state will send 89 Special



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer  
Doug Cramer, who has coached Special Olympic athletes for the past 22 years, will take his women's basketball team to the International Special Olympics Games in Minnesota next month.



Kathy Walters (right) keeps her eye on the ball during a recent practice as teammate Tracy De Roo (center) waits her turn to shoot along with Cramer's son, Benjamin.

Olympians to the games, including the two-time defending state champion Ladyhawks.

A parishioner of St. Mary's Church in Canandaigua, Cramer has been playing basketball since he attended Canandaigua Academy. During his junior and senior years, he played forward and center for the varsity boys' basketball team.

At Peru State College in Nebraska, Cramer continued his hoop career as a guard on the varsity for four years. He later played semi-professional ball as a forward for the Western Iowa Indians.

After teaching history and coaching varsity basketball for one year at Newmarket High School in Newmarket, Iowa, Cramer moved back to New York in 1969. The 44-year-old coach said he became interested in Special Olympics after he took a physical education job at the Newark State School, which later became the Newark Developmental Center.

According to Cramer, the Special Olympians he coaches come from public schools or from the Newark Developmental Center. Others hear about the program through the Association for Retarded Citizens.

Since 1970, when Cramer's track-and-field team went to its first state competition at the University of Rochester's Fauver Stadium, the program has grown rapidly, he said.

In 1984, 14 years after swimming and gymnastics were added to the competition, basketball was inserted into the program.

After the men's basketball team placed seventh in the International Summer

Games at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind., organizers decided to field a women's hoop team.

"New York State Special Olympics is so large that the chance of sending another boy team to the internationals was slim, so we switched over to the girls," explained Cramer.

According to the coach of the Ladyhawks, the philosophy behind the Special Olympics is for athletes to go as far as they can in one sport before moving on to another competition.

Even though some athletes lose interest after a few years, Cramer said others have been in the program for as long as 15 years. As far as his role, Cramer said coaching high school athletes and coaching Special Olympians is quite similar.

But, according to Cramer, the experience is quite different.

"We don't feel pressure from the community or from the schools," said Cramer. "We promote teamwork and cheering on the individual." The coach said his team does not overemphasize the mistakes that are made.

"NBA (National Basketball Association) players make mistakes, too, and everyone sees them. We don't dwell on it — we promote the positive instead of the negative," said Cramer.

In addition, Cramer said his faith has been an inspiration for him in his coaching duties.

"I pray each day for the success of the girls," he said. "Not necessarily for them to win, but for them to grow."

## Memorial golf tourney to fund scholarships

ROCHESTER — The third annual Lavery/Dorsey Memorial Golf Tournament is scheduled for Blue Heron Hills Country Club on Aug. 13.

Named after Father Charles Lavery, second president of St. John Fisher College, and Father Joseph Dorsey, former dean and interim president of the college, the tournament can accommodate up to 32 foursomes.

Beginning with a shotgun start, the tourney will feature a four-person team handicap scramble. The cost of the event is \$150, which includes lunch, greens fee, electric cart, refreshments, dinner and prizes.

Business sponsorships are available. Proceeds from the event will be used to fund student scholarships at Fisher in memory of Fathers Lavery and Dorsey.

For information, call Luke Miller at 716/385-8103.

## SPORT SHORTS



### Golf tournament set to benefit Easter Seals

ROCHESTER — The Genesee/Easter Seal Golf Tournament will take place on Monday, Sept. 9, at Shadow Lake Golf Club in Penfield.

Registration for the event will begin at 11 a.m., followed by lunch at 11:30 a.m. The tournament will tee off with a shotgun start at 12:30 p.m. An awards dinner will take place at 6:30 p.m.

Cost of the tournament is \$75. Since only 100 teams can sign up, early registration is encouraged.

Proceeds will benefit disabled children and adults in the Monroe County area.

Call 716/232-2540 for information.

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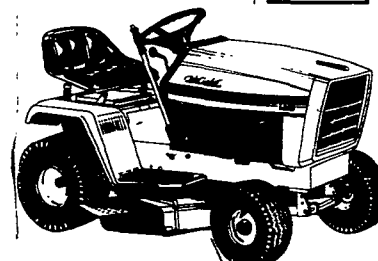
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