

SPORTS
FEATURE

Special Olympian bags bronze at World Games

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

HENRIETTA — Spectators and television cameras lurked all over the place, and this man wasn't even aware of their existence.

Forget nerves. Brian Dioguardi had an athletic task at hand, so potential distractions didn't faze him in the least.

"I was kind of focused," remarked Brian, 25, a Rochester resident and student at School of the Holy Childhood.

Focused enough to return from his first-ever Special Olympics World Games

with a bronze medal in tow.

Brian's attentive attitude and natural athletic ability made for a winning combination at the World Games. Held July 1-8 in New Haven, Conn., the competition attracted 7,200 athletes from 143 countries.

Although he only took up golf three years ago, Brian looked like a seasoned veteran on the difficult Yale University Golf Course layout.

He and volunteer playing partner Angelo "Butch" Rose, a Rochester attorney, became eligible for the highest division of competition after excelling in preliminary rounds July 3-4. During the preliminaries, Rose reported, Brian shot a nine-hole score of 47.

The final competition, held July 5-7, employed three formats: Brian and Rose played alternating shots Wednesday; best-ball Thursday; and aggregate individual scores Friday.

Highlighting this duo's bronze-medal performance was a birdie on the par-3, 129-yard fifth hole at Yale July 5. Rose hit a tee shot 30 feet from the cup, and Brian proceeded to roll in the long putt.

"Everyone went nuts. It sounded like a PGA Tour event," Rose recalled.

A few days later, Brian was understandably elated upon receiving the bronze medal.

"I felt proud, glad and happy," he said. His favorite part of competing with Special Olympians from other countries, he said, was "hanging out, talking to friends and meeting new people."

These outgoing aspects of Brian's personality were noted by Rose, who said, "He's an incredibly special person. He



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Brian Dioguardi said he considers driving to be the strongest part of his rapidly improving golf game.

has a heart of gold and would just do anything for you."

Brian is an eighth-year student at School of the Holy Childhood, a center for mentally and physically disabled children and adults operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester.

Brian's physical-education instructor at Holy Childhood, Tim Baird, stressed the tremendous value Brian and many of his classmates place upon the Monroe County Special Olympics activities they compete in throughout

the year.

"Through Special Olympics, you see a way this population can integrate into society. And through sports, they can be equal or superior in some aspects of athletics. Some of Brian's scores have been very compatible with regular golfers," Baird said.

No less an authority than Pope John Paul II offered his praise of Special Olympics in a statement issued for the World Games.

"Special Olympics offers a remarkable testimony of the ability of the human family to overcome differences and divisions, to work together in serving the needs of others and thus build a culture of solidarity and peace," said the pope.

"May this event awaken in all people of good will a renewed commitment to cherish and protect life, especially when it is weak or threatened, and to realize that respect for every human being is the indispensable moral foundation of society," he added.

Now that he has returned from the World Games, Brian is ready to move on to several other sports in which he regularly competes. His other athletic activities include powerlifting, basketball, soccer, floor hockey, swimming and track and field.

"He's probably one of the top two athletes I've taught," Baird observed.

"In my opinion, he probably could qualify for a number of events in the World Games," Rose added.

And that may just happen somewhere up the road, if Brian has his way.

"I'd like to do something like (World Games) again some time," Brian said.

PEARL PERFORMANCES

●The Geneva DeSales High School girls' softball and lacrosse squads were recently named recipients of state Scholar-Athlete team awards.

In the classroom, DeSales softball earned a combined grade-point average of 91.294, while on the field, the Saints won their first Section 5 Class D title. Meanwhile, the Saints' first-year

lacrosse team had a 90.206 average.

●Danielle Boncaro, a DeSales graduate, helped the 1995 St. John Fisher College softball team to a final record of 22-12.

Boncaro, a senior, hit a team-high 394 and was named to the NCAA All-Northeast All-Star second team.

●James Miner and Jenny Werner, both recent graduates of Aquinas Institute, have been named that high school's 1994-95 Athletes of the Year.

Miner starred in football, baseball and weightlifting. Werner was a volleyball, basketball and softball star and also ranked in the top 10 of her class.

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