

Special Olympics competes in annual tournament

The basketball event was composed of 15 different teams from the North Shore

by *Kate Holly*

The New Trier Special Olympics basketball teams participated in the 2016 Christian Volkmann Tournament on Saturday, Feb. 21 at Maine West High School in Des Plaines.

New Trier competed against 15 other teams from schools in the North Shore area including Maine West, Highland Park, and Niles North.

The Special Olympics program at New Trier consists of three teams with a total of 30 athletes and 15 peer coaches. Each team played in three, 45 minute games during the day. The tourney started at 10:00 am and ended at 2:00 pm.

Kay Pothast and Mary Beth Berrett, head sponsors of Special Olympics at New Trier, oversaw the tournament.

Pothast has worked with the Special Olympics for 15 years at New Trier. She was also involved with the program in her undergraduate and graduate

school.

The Special Olympics program is made up of athletes and peer coaches. The athletes are a part of the adapted kinetic wellness program. The peer coaches are students involved in the Enriching Lives Through Service Club (ELS).

Junior brothers Spencer and Quinn Campbell are athletes who participated in the tournament. Spencer Campbell said that his favorite part about the tournament was playing basketball like the people on television.

According to junior athlete Annie Garcia, she had the most fun dancing with her friends during the breaks between her games.

Senior athlete Christian Boyd agreed with her, adding that he also loves to dance.

Boyd's 11:30 am game against Niles North was close. New Trier was down 14-18 at the half, but came back and tied the game 36-36.

Senior Avery Schatz was one of the peer coaches at the tournament. She said her favorite part about being a coach was "Watching my athletes grow and be able to participate in the game however they can."

Senior Elizabeth Solon, one



Senior Peter Grzeslo takes a shot during the annual Christian Volkmann Tournament on Feb. 21 | **Josh Dreyfus**

of Schatz's athletes, said she enjoyed being around her friends during these tournaments.

Special Olympics provides a sociable environment for all the students to make friends. The role of the peer helper is to be the athlete's friend and to be a mentor, Pothast said. They are positive role models for the athlete, teaching them a variety of skills from being a good teammate to handling the basketball.

Junior Amanda Stiffler said, "I personally think that spending time with these kids—some of my best friends—allows you to learn new skills that you really can't learn anywhere else such as

being patient, understanding, and able to read someone's emotions enough to know how to talk and react to them."

Stiffler has been involved with Special Olympics since her freshman year and is currently a peer coach for the winter basketball season.

She mentioned that being in the ELS club and Special Olympics has inspired her to continue her involvement in special education programs in college. "It has also allowed me to meet many new people."

Junior Katie Jackson also has an active role in Special Olympics. She has been in ELS

Club since freshman year, but started coaching for the Special Olympics as a sophomore.

Jackson is a basketball coach this season and was a volleyball coach in the fall. Her sophomore year, she was a peer coach during the spring track and field season.

"I think Special Olympics has had the greatest positive impact out of everything I have done at New Trier so far. I have made some of my best friends from it and it makes my day to walk down the halls and be able to connect and joke around with students that I might not have ever talked to before."



Senior Romy Bayhack smiles as she finishes her relay at last year's Highland Park Meet | **Varsity Views**

Track adds four new coaches to staff

After two meets, the team is seeing a positive change

by *Jasmine Gonzalez*

With the beginning of the new season, the girls track team experienced a change in coaching staff with the addition of four new coaches.

Changes in the coaching staff, for any sport, isn't a rare occurrence. "[There are] about 40 changes over the course of a year," said athletic director Randy Oberembt.

With 36 sports, 225 positions, and 185 coaches, it is no surprise that some coaches may need to be replaced during the year for various reasons.

The new coaching staff mostly affected the sprinters, hurdlers, throwers, and jumpers of the girl's team, with only two of the sprinting coaches from last season still coaching.

Oberembt, who oversees athletics at New Trier, commented on the change. "When you have

multiple staff members that are new, there is a significant challenge in acclimating the staff and the students. The familiarity is gone and you have to overcome that."

With such a range of experience, many new ideas are brought to the table with the addition of new coaches.

"The advantage [of having new staff] is that you have new ways to do things, different perspectives."

The most significant change made is the fact that sprinter and jumpers now train together. Additionally, there is no longer a separation of Junior Varsity and Varsity runners.

"I think it is great that we have all been training together so that everyone can have an equal opportunity to succeed. We get to know other girls on the team who we may not have otherwise practiced with," said Captain Isabelle Robbins.

The overall response from runners has been generally positive. "I like the new coaches [and] I feel like they pay attention to everyone on the team. Practice is far more organized than it was last year," said Lily Craley, a sophomore on the

team.

Along with the coaches, the senior captains Isabelle Robbins and Alex Cook have helped keep the team on track. "There's a good group of seniors on the team who stayed [from last year]. That core group of seniors will get us pretty far when we actually start competing in meets," said one of the new coaches, Tim Kelleher.

Although the team has only attended two meets this season, the hard work is already starting to pay off, according to Coach Jamie Klotz who has been coaching since last year. "In terms of overall performance, we are faster than we were last year at this time which would be indicative of positive performance."

Robbins also noticed the change, "We have a lot of potential and the changes the coaches have brought to our training have already improved times and performances in our first two meets."

Head coach Robert Spagnoli, who played an important part in selecting the new coaches, is happy with the change. "The new coaches have brought a wealth of experience, energy, and dedication to NT."

Safe Sets claims Spike League Division A win

There were two separate playoffs for each division

by *Helen Fagan*

Energy was high during the Spike League playoffs because close games kept the players on their toes.

Both winning teams won by only two points in their final games. Safe Sets beat Spicy Green Beans 17-15 in Division A. In Division B, Spiked It won against Price Carlson and the Crew 16-14.

Though Safe Sets took home the title, the Division A game was full of ups and downs. Junior Niko Gjaja, a member of Safe Sets said, "It started off really well, [but] we got blowtorched in the second set. We picked it up in the third and it was a good win."

Spicy Green Beans player Kevin Tsuru said his team's loss was due to a lack of team camaraderie. "We didn't have enough synergy between the players. We just need to work on it and practice some more."

Junior Lauren Johnson, who played for Safe Sets, said the energy between her teammates is what enabled them to clinch the win. "We have a lot of teamwork to really motivate each other."

At its core, Spike League seems to be all about fun. The no-cut intramural and co-ed volleyball league plays on Monday nights. It is simply a chance for friends to hang out and have a good time.

Many of the Spike League players don't play volleyball outside of the league. Freshman Price Carlson said, "The majority of our team rows. We're on our offseason right now and we needed something fun to do. It's kind of a

workout but it's still fun."

The Spike League season ended with a bracket style final between the top 8 teams in both Division A and Division B on Feb 22.

The teams are separated into two divisions by their preferred level of competition. Division A is for more competitive teams, while Division B is a little more laid back.

Senior Mary Kate Maloney, who plays for Spiked It, expressed her love for Division B. She said, "It's more fun [because] there's more of a team community."

Junior Emma Lipinski, who plays for Safe Sets, commented that Division A is more geared towards athletes who play volleyball outside of the league.

"Since this is the A League, it's a little bit more intense. Some teams don't have people who play volleyball, but it definitely helps if you do."

Even though no spectators watch the games, players in both divisions take the league very seriously and try their best. Senior Clare Rooney, a Spiked It player, said, "We thrive on the fun and the energy. It's laid back for us but we're still very competitive."

In Division A, the stakes are even higher, as everyone plays to win. Kevin Tsuru said, "Spike League is so fun because we usually win all the time. We play really hard."

Though winning feels great, Niko Gjaja said that he ultimately plays Spike League so he can spend time with his friends. "It's a chance to play volleyball with my friends who I normally don't get to see on the volleyball court. I get to have a social time and play with girls as well as guys."