

Aurora bocce showcased in regional tournament



By Jake Courtepatte

One needed only a trip to Richmond Hill last weekend to prove that the sport of bocce is growing at a rapid pace in Canada.

As featured last month in *The Auroran*, Special Olympics Ontario ? Aurora entered their first competition against out-of-town athletes. Two teams of four took to the courts at the Rouge Woods Community Centre last Saturday, travelling the shortest distance while joining teams from both Barrie and Durham.

Friends, family, volunteers and athletes alike packed the gym featuring a handful of indoor bocce courts for a day of sportsmanship and cheering on the ?Aurora Rollers.?

Technical coach Peter Cellitti was one of those volunteers. He has been playing bocce since the age of twelve, reaching the world level numerous times while taking his game to locations like Argentina, Italy, and California.

He says the opportunity to play on a real court is a great learning experience for the players.

?They don't get the full experience playing where we do. They need an actual facility to really learn at the best pace.?

Currently, the Rollers' facilities are housed on the hardwood flooring of Lynet Hall at Aurora's Our Lady of Grace Church, as there are no indoor bocce courts in town.

But the Rollers, most of whom also take to the outdoor courts of the Aurora Seniors' Centre in the summer, don't let it get them down.

?They're very involved,? said Cellitti. ?All of our players really get into it?like anyone else, they don't like to lose.?

In the Division A bracket, Aurora missed the final round by a tiebreaker, earning a 0-1-2 record along the way. The Division B bracket saw a Rollers team make it to the finals, but a powerhouse Richmond Hill team was too much for the budding bowlers.

Cellitti admits that, like most Canadians (athletes or not), his players were not very knowledgeable of the game when they took it up. However, he was happy to announce that they picked up the skills and strategy needed quite quickly.

?It's not just throwing the ball, there's strategy behind it. You have to take into consideration distance, speed, ball placement?and

they've done that quite well.?

The competition in York Region is just heating up. One team of elite players will be sent to Seneca College's King Campus at the end of April to compete against sixteen other teams from around the world in the Special Olympics International Bocce Tournament.

For more information on the program, visit www.aurora.specialolympicsontario.ca