

Grand Slams win silver at Provincial Games



By Jake Courtepatte

The Grand Slams hit it out of the park at this year's Provincial Summer Games.

Aurora's softball representatives for the Special Olympics earned a silver medal at the Games, held every four years, and attracts over 800 athletes and coaches.

Head coach Rhonda Wood said she was 'delighted' with the way the athletes conducted themselves on and off the field at the Games.

'Just qualifying for the Provincials was a massive accomplishment, and finishing with a silver medal was so inspiring for everyone,' said Wood. 'Parents, coaches and athletes couldn't be more proud.'

Facing off against teams from Brampton, Durham, and Mississauga in the Giants division, the Grand Slams advanced all the way to the championship game before falling to the host team Brampton Royals.

Starting five years ago with a team of thirteen players, the Grand Slams have grown to a team of 24, and are always looking to continue expanding.

'There is a core group that is still together from the beginning of this team, with a few players being added each year and, unfortunately, a few that move on to other sports,' said Wood. 'We welcome any athlete from ages nine and above and accept all levels of play.'

Practicing once a week, the team's schedule runs from mid-May to mid-September, with games against Georgina and Newmarket and usually a tournament or two thrown into the mix.

The core of the team taken to Provincials have been working towards their goal together for two years.

We have come so far in such a short period of time,' said Wood. 'When we started the team, most of these athletes couldn't throw or catch and hit the ball was a very difficult task. It has been truly amazing to watch the progression of each of these athletes.'

'Each and every one of them came through at some point in each game we played. I think at times they shocked themselves and you could tell from the parent gallery how proud they were of them all. The support these athletes show for each other is heartwarming.'

There are no bad players on the team. They played and continue to play as a team with kindness and caring.

Wood called it 'a pleasure' to be able to coach these athletes.

'I always say, 'You can have a horrible day at work or home, come out to coach these incredible athletes and go home and think life is amazing.'

After such a solid showing at Provincials, the team is hoping to have players chosen to attend nationals in Halifax in 2018.

More information on the program, as well as a registration form, can be found at aurora.specialolympicsontario.ca.