

Victorian Championship Basketball Competition for players with an Intellectual Disability

Winter 2011 – GRAND FINAL RESULTS

The 2011 Victorian Champions are:

Men – Dukes

Women – Rebels

On Friday 28th October at the Hawthorn Secondary College, the 2011 Winter season concluded for the Victorian Championship Basketball Competition for players with an Intellectual Disability. Five exciting games were played before a large crowd of supporters.

Now in its 24th year of operation, this unique volunteer run competition focusses on the development of Melbourne's intellectually disabled community through the sport of basketball. Founder of the competition, Vern Tessier, had this to say "All five games tonight showcased the amazing talent and ability that our players have. I was particularly impressed with the Victorian Championship Men's game where the standard of play was exceptional and the final result showed only a one point margin, both teams demonstrated the fabulous attitude to sportsmanship that reflects so well on the players and their coaching staff".

"The founder of the Power House Basketball Club (Jeff Swann) joined us for the night, along with our number one supporter - Lindsay Gaze, Gordon & Barb Sincock from Spartans Basketball, Linden Hearn Principal of Rossbourne School, Peter Corr Sports Principal at Rossbourne and Ann Monahan Special Olympics General Manager for Sport & Competition – all were there to see the Grand Final games. Both the Rossbourne program and the Special Olympics program are strongly represented in our competition, matched against each other in 3 of the 5 finals. Rossbourne were also represented in a 4th game".

Game Wrap:

Division 4 – Ravens 19 d SO Wizards 8. Don't let this low score deceive you – what a game! With a massive crowd to watch these young players compete, the excitement level remained at fever pitch for the whole game. The crowd cheered every basket made, and with only two points separating the teams at half time, we were set for a fantastic 2nd half. But while the Ravens managed to convert 4 field goals (all by Caitlin Syer) and one free throw, the SO Wizards couldn't get the ball to drop with only one score (by Matthew Bennett). You can imagine the number of "Oohs" and "Ahhs" as the teams put all their energy into this second 20 minutes. Congratulations to the Ravens on winning the Division 4 championship in their first season in the competition!

Division 3 – Renegades 28 d Grass Killers 27. One of the most amazing grand finals we are ever likely to see. These teams played 2 x 20minutes halves and the score was even at 19 each, they then played another 3 or 4 overtimes (we lost count) before a 1 point margin sealed the game for the Renegades. Congratulations to all the players and coaches for what was a fantastic game thoroughly enjoyed by another massive crowd. Summing up the game, Peter Duncan (referee) said "Any sporting organisation would be thrilled to have such an exciting game to cap off the season – well done to all of the players for keeping up the intensity right to the finish". Peter made special

mention of the score bench who were tested time and time again – major pressure for these kind volunteers. The Renegades are being promoted to Division 2 next season and with their speed and never-say-die approach to the game, are sure to challenge the older players.

Division 2 – SO Braves 22 d Roar 13. One point separated these two team - at half time and also for the majority of the second half. It was only late in the game, when foul trouble hit the young and athletic Roar team that the balance of the game moved in favour of the SO Braves. Also in their first season in the competition, the SO Braves have been able to counter the youth and fitness of the challengers, with their experience and size. Both teams are being promoted to the Men's Championship Division next season, to continue to provide them with the opportunity to improve their skills.

Victorian Women's Championship – Rebels 22 d SO Storm 14. With both teams including World Champions , Australian Champions and Victorian State Champions, this game was always going to be awesome. And it was! The whole game was played at a fast pace and with players prepared to fight hard for possession. The scores were locked at 9 all at half time with both Dannielle Burden (Rebels) and Jenny Ensor (SO Storm) impacting the game. In the second half the younger Rossbourne team, pulled away with more accurate shooting, although the SO team never gave up and played hard right to the finish. This hard fought game reflects the high standard of women's basketball that is played in Victoria. Coach of the Rebels, Carol Syer, paid credit to her team who started off with many girls who'd never played basketball before – “they have kept coming back and improving week after week, and can now be very proud of tonight's achievement”.

Special mention to Dannielle Burden, recently returned from the Global Games in Italy. As the point guard for the Australian Pearls, Danni and her team played some fierce basketball to retain their #1 World ranking and win the Global Games competition.

Jenny Ensor from the SO Storm team, also represented Australia earlier this year (July) at the Special Olympics World Games as the captain of the Australian Women's team, who were also successful in winning this tournament.

Victorian Men's Championship – Dukes 39 d Doncaster 38. Can you imagine anything more exciting that a 3 pointer on the buzzer to win a grand final by 1 point. Doncaster led the first half by 6 points (24 to 18) after an impressive scoring spree by Chris Abraham (16 points). The Dukes pegged Doncaster back in the second half, led by Melvin Lee who shot 14 points in the 2nd half (including the winning 3 points). Accurate foul shooting at 83% also helped the Dukes close the gap. With two players on each team accurate from beyond the 3 point circle, the crowd was treated to an exceptionally high standard of game. It was physical and fast , and also played with a great deal of sportsmanship – a credit to all players, their coaches and the supporters. This game showcased the high standard of this competition and many spectators commented on how impressed they were with this standard.

And a final word from the Organising Committee – well done to all teams on such a fantastic night of games to cap off the Winter season. We'll see you all again next week (4th Nov) as we commence the 2011-2012 Summer season of games. And remember to pick up your invitation to the Presentation Night / Christmas party, our annual celebration to be held at the Hawthorn Town Hall on Friday 25th November.