

Special Olympians close World Games

By DAVID DROSCHAK
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DURHAM, N.C. — With tears and cheers, thousands of athletes from around the world said goodbye in an emotional closing ceremony of the Special Olympics' 10th World Summer Games.

Despite sadness over the deaths of three people connected to the games, the ceremony at Duke University's Wallace Wade Stadium was a casual, sentimental event.

The Wisconsin delegation entered the stadium Sunday night wearing "cheeseheads" to help shield heat that sickened more than a dozen participants. Others beat the 95-degree temperature by wearing bathing suits, dousing themselves with water from squirt guns or wearing wet towels over their heads.

Athletes danced together and one drew a crowd as he dropped to his knees, pretending to play an inflatable toy guitar.

"Since I was here last Friday I was told to make new friends. I have made 304 new friends," said a sobbing Joseph "Papa Joe" Garceau, a 64-year-old softball player from Massachusetts. "I had a lot of fun."

The Special Olympics, held for individuals with mental retardation, was founded in 1963 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver. This year's games featured competitors from 150 countries and drew 400,000 people, organizers said.

"I have to believe the Shivers, who have seen it for 30 years, that this was the best ever," said LeRoy Walker, president of the Games and former president of the United States Olympic Com-

mittee.

There was a moment of silence early in the program for a volunteer who died of heart problems just after the opening ceremony, an Egyptian athlete who died of an apparent seizure and University of North Carolina chancellor Michael Hooker, who died of cancer during the games he was instrumental in bringing to the Durham area.

Two Dominican basketball players and two Moroccan soccer players slipped away from their delegations in the event's opening days. Three have been heard from since, but one of the Moroccans remains unaccounted for, officials said.

The next world Special Olympics competition will be held in 2001 at the Winter Games in Alaska.

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