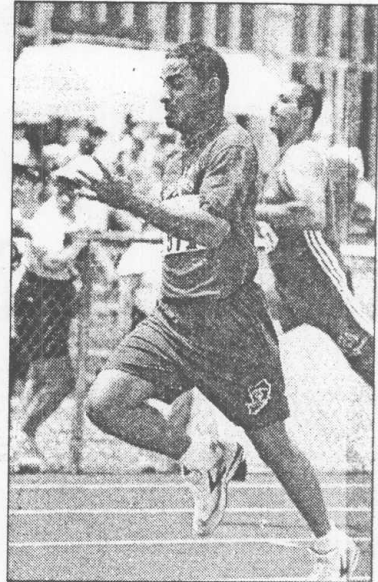


ADVANCE PHOTOS ■ RICH KANE

Kristine Garombone, above, swims the 25-meter freestyle. Right, Louis Lopez runs the 100-meter dash.



The thrill of competing

■ Athletes in Special Olympics share triumphs big and small

By **SUSAN LUNNY**
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Many people would have been shocked to see the smiling face of Louis Lopez as he hugged and endlessly congratulated Special Olympian and gold medal winner William Jackson of Monroe County, N.Y. Just moments before, Jackson had beaten 30-year-old Lopez, of Willowbrook, in a close competition for the gold medal in the 100-meter race.

But no one attending the statewide Special Olympics this weekend at the State University of New York at Albany was surprised by Lopez' reaction.

"They really get so much enjoyment out of this ... everybody's part of the same team," said Richard Salinardi of Elting-

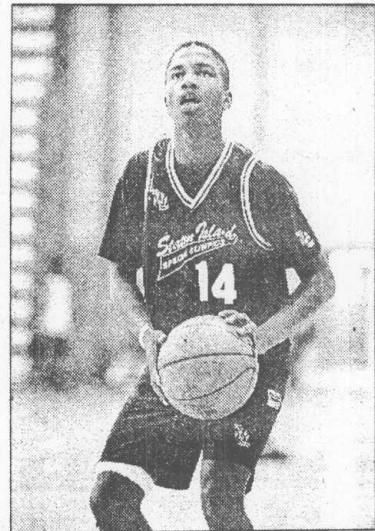
ville, coordinator of the Staten Island Special Olympics.

The Staten Island Special Olympics sent 70 athletes, ranging from age 14 to 62, and more than 30 volunteers, to the games. They were also joined by Special Olympics participants from public schools.

Salinardi said they teach the athletes that sometimes you lose but that success is not just about winning but also having fun and performing your best.

"They look forward to it all year," said Coach Mario Papa of South Beach. "If they win or lose, they're just as happy because they're participating."

Kristine Garambone, 20, New Springville, admitted she had been "just a little bit nervous" about her first performance in the competition. As Miss Garambone waited to receive her silver medal for her performance in the 25-meter freestyle, she said that "winning felt good," but the best part of the competition was "staying here



Charlie Haynes shoots a free-throw basket.

for the whole weekend with my friends."

The athletes stayed in the SUNY-Albany dormitories for the weekend, which adds to their

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Thrill

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experience, said Salinardi. While they are under the guidance of their coaches, the Olympians get the opportunity to do many things on their own, such as bathe and dress.

"It's like four days of independence," said Salinardi. "They come back a different person. All of a sudden they can handle these things better."

The Staten Island Special Olympians left Thursday morning for the opening ceremonies. The preliminary competition took place Friday. The preliminaries allowed event organizers to group Olympians according to their ability and ensured that the competition was equal, said Salinardi. After a long day, the Olympians relaxed and enjoyed a barbecue dinner and an ice cream social that night.

The games began Saturday and the Olympians competed for medals in swimming, basketball, bowling, weight lifting, gymnastics, powerlifting, rollerskating, tennis and volleyball. Some events, such as gymnastics, were held on alternate sites.

Saturday night was also filled with events, including a formal victory dinner and dance, and the closing ceremonies. The weekend came to an end yesterday, following a breakfast for all athletes and coaches.

Coach Christine Dickhut, who has been involved with Staten Island Special Olympics for over 20 years, says she can really see the difference the event has had in the athletes' lives, including her own 30-year-old son, Nicholas Derouaux.

"I've watched a lot of these kids grow up," said Ms. Dickhut, a Graniteville resident. "They don't just train in sports, they have to learn sportsmanship ... and how to support each other."

The Olympians showed that support as they proudly announced to visitors that 17 of their teammates would be attending the Special Olympics international games in New Haven, Conn., July 1-9. The

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Olympians, who will join 7,000 athletes from more than 140 countries, consist of 14 members of the female softball team, two male track runners and a female gymnast. Special Olympians from public schools will also participate.

Mary Pannese, 30, of Arrochar, a member of the softball team, says she is very excited about the World Games.

"I can't wait to meet new friends from different countries," said Miss Pannese.

The New York Special Olympics, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary, has become the largest program of sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with mental retardation in the United States. This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the Staten Island Special Olympics.

The Island Special Olympics winners are as follows:

Aquatics

Anthony Mussetti, first place, 50-meter free, 42:28; third place, 50-meter back stroke, 53:16; third place, 50-meter free relay, 3:14:04.

Richie Redmond, fifth place, 50-meter free, 46:59; third place, 50-meter free relay, 3:14:04.

James Anderson, second place, 50-meter free, 54:59; fourth place, 50-meter backstroke, 1:04:14; third place, 50-meter free relay, 3:14:04.

Kim Korzgwinski, second place, 50-meter free, 44:59; second place, 50-meter backstroke, 57:59; third place, 50-meter free relay, 3:14:04.

Kristine Garabone, second place, 25-me-

ter free, 32:49.

Tina Marie Johnson, first place, 15-meter assisted, 17:52.

Daniel Reyes, first place, 15-meter assisted, 58:63.

Athletics

Louis Lopez, third place, 1,500 meter, 5:53; fourth place, 4x100 relay, 1:08:25.

Nick Derouaux, second place, 1,500 meter, 6:57; third place, 100 meter, 20:33; fourth place, relay, 108:25.

Alan Schwartz, first place, 1,500 meter, 6:49; second place, 400 meter, 1:30; fourth place, relay, 1:08:25.

Nick Graevens, second place, 50 meter, :18; second place, 400-meter walk, 3:20.

Clint DeLeonardo, second place, 100 meter, :26.

Joseph Villane, second place, 1,500 meter, 5:46; fourth place, 400 meter, 1:20; fourth place, relay, 1:08:25.

Tommy Sheedy, second place, 200 meter, 48:43; fourth place, 400 meter, 1:47.

Anthony Mazzella, second place, 50 meter, 13:25; fourth place, softball throw, 10 meters.

Frank Niosi, second place, softball throw, 24 meters.

James Pierre, third place, 50 meter, :23; fifth place, 100-meter walk, 2:15.

Danny Lane, second place, 50 meter, :10; fourth place, softball throw, 17.2 meters.

Gymnastics

Jackie Bouquid, third place, all-around,

level 1; third place, vaulting; first place, balance beam; second place, bar.

Shannen Fleming, first place, floor exercise; first place, vaulting; first place, balance beam.

Joyce Scimeca, fourth place, all-around, level 3; fourth place, vaulting; fourth place, balance beam; fourth place, bar.

Powerlifting

John Buttermark, second place, bench, 225 lbs.; second place, deadlift, 355 lbs.

Ronnie Russo, second place, bench, 220 lbs.; second place, deadlift, 285 lbs.

Anthony Fairweather, first place, deadlift, 205 lbs.

Marc Fairweather, second place, bench, 165 lbs.; second place, deadlift, 255 lbs.

Anthony Aragona, second place, bench, 165 lbs.; second place, deadlift, 250 lbs.

Scott Bockisch, second place, bench, 160 lbs.; second place, deadlift, 245 lbs.

Kenny Tobin, second place, bench, 150 lbs.; second place, deadlift, 250 lbs.

Anthony Bates, second place, bench, 135 lbs.; second place, deadlift, 280 lbs.

Bowling

Joseph Arale, first place, singles, 328; third place, team, 111.

Christopher Young, third place, singles, 318; third place, team, 136.

Greg Micieli, fourth place, singles, 289; third place, team, 107.

Basketball

Joe Pellacchia, third place, skills, 24.

George Bowden, second place, skills, 26. Basketball team (1st division), third place:

S.I. Wagner vs. NY Knicks: 49-43, lost.

S.I. Wagner vs. Ulster: 51-39, win.

S.I. Wagner vs. Bronx Eagles: 59-44, lost.

S.I. Wagner vs. Bronx Eagles: 56-63, lost.

S.I. Wagner vs. Ulster: 54-30, win.

Members of team: Patrick Boles, Donaldson Davis, Charles Haynes, Carlon Hurlston, Michael Messina, Jose Montanez, Scott Pedro, Dennis Verderosa, James Williams

World Game Athletes:

Women's Softball Team, 13-5

(win); 12-8 (lost).

Gymnastics

Amanda Wilkinson, first place, vault, 9:05; first place, beam, 7:90; first place, floor, 9:15; second place, uneven bars, 8:70.

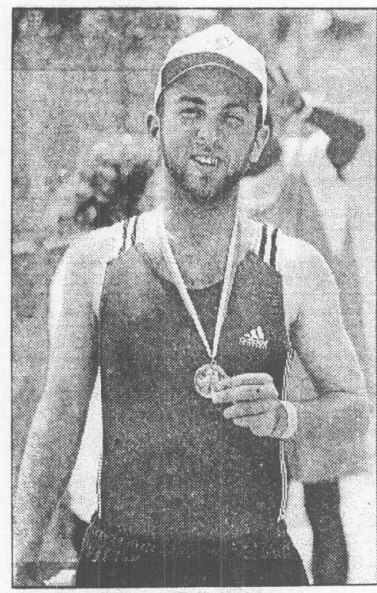
Athletics

Charles Reese and Jose Rios, Gold, 5K Unified.

Charles Reese, fourth place, 800 meter, 2:45.



From left, Nicholas Graeven, Joseph Villane and Alan Schwartz show off their medals.



Charlie Reese of New Brighton shows off the gold medal he won in the 5K run.



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Special Olympics coach Christine Dickhut gets a hug from her son, Nicholas Derouaux.