

Tourney/ from page 1

the wheel) and then you have to dribble again," Kelly said. "There is no double dribble, so you can dribble, stop, and if you have to, you can dribble again. But you get called for traveling if you push more than twice without dribbling, and that's basically the only difference."

An additional challenge not faced by prep basketball players in South Dakota is a 35-second shot clock.

Dylan, 14, began playing wheelchair basketball when he was 9 years old. He is finishing up his sixth season as an active participant in the sport.

People in the Vermillion area have grown somewhat familiar with the Nebraska Red Dawg. Over the years, the team has played demonstration games during halftime of Coyote basketball games in the Dakota-Dome.

That style of play is much gentler than the competitive action that took place this past weekend in the VHS gym. The action is much more physical; the thick steel frames of the specially-designed wheelchairs are reinforced for a reason — it's not uncommon for opponents to crash into each other as they chase after a loose ball, or battle for a rebound.

And, as spectators learned, tipping over on the hard playing floor is more the rule rather than the exception.

The young athletes take it in all in stride, using their arms to push themselves back on two wheels and back into the game.

"This isn't a timid little game," Kelly said, noting a time during one of Saturday's contests when four athletes tipped over in the heat of the competition — all at

the same time. "All of these kids are tremendous athletes when you think what they've overcome just to get there."

"The camaraderie of these young people is just something else," she said. "They're really going at it and competing on the floor, but off the floor, they're the best of friends. They all go to camps together in the summer and they hang out."

The sportsmanship among wheelchair basketball athletes often surpasses what one regularly sees during a traditional game of hoops with fully abled athletes.

"They might dump somebody over, and some kids can get their wheelchairs back up by themselves," Kelly said. "Once play stops, it's not unusual for somebody from the opposing team to wheel over and help a competitor so that he or she can get their chair back up. You don't see that kind of thing usually in a regular Tanager game — if you get knocked down, you usually have to get back up by yourself. It really is impressive."

The hand of a wheelchair basketball athlete are quickly blackened, once play begins, from the hard dark rubber wheels of their chairs. Nearly every athlete plays with no hand protection so that they can better control the basketball, and in the course of a two-day tournament, participants' hand soon covered with blisters.

"They don't even use bandaids," Kelly said. "They rip their hands into blisters and they just slap some tape on it and away they go. It really shows how tough and determined they are."



That's not war paint on Josh Maier's face, although he competed like a true warrior Saturday and Sunday at the Junior Northern Wheelchair Basketball Conference Tournament held at Vermillion High School. Josh, a member of the Nebraska Red Dawgs, evidently rubbed his face with his hands after they were blacked by the rubber tires of his wheelchair. Nearly every athlete plays with no hand protection so that they can better control the basketball, and in the course of a two-day tournament, participants' hands soon are covered with blisters. "They don't even use bandaids," Kelly Fischbach, whose son, Dylan, is a member of the Red Dawgs, said. "They rip their hands into blisters and they just slap some tape on it and away they go. It really shows how tough and determined they are." (Photo by David Lias)

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Health, Mind & Body



Spring is Ideal Time to Get Moving

After hibernating in your den or on your couch all winter, let those first warm breezes of spring be a call to action. There's no better time of year to stretch your mind and muscles — and launch an exercise routine that will take you through the summer and into the fall. The key to developing a fitness routine that will help you reach your health and weight goals is simpler than you may have thought. There are only two firm rules: Keep it simple and keep it up.

Simplicity is key

Often, the hardest part of an exercise program is getting started — particularly after a long and sedentary winter. So priority number one is to simply get moving by setting aside 20 minutes every day for some kind of physical activity. Spring days are great times to take a walk, go for a bike ride in the neighborhood or

rake those leftover leaves from your lawn. If there's still a bit of winter in the air, stay inside and dance to your favorite tunes or do some chores to fast-paced music. Mopping, vacuuming, dusting can be good exercise if you do them continuously and at a moderately fast pace.

The important thing is to keep yourself moving for 20 minutes. The following week, add an additional 10 minutes and change up your activities. After two weeks, you will have developed the habit of taking time to move, which is essential to making any exercise routine stick.

Consistency gets results

The bottom line is this: Once you are in the habit of exercising, it's much more likely that you will stay with it. What you do during your exercise time isn't nearly as important as sim-

ply doing it — and making it fun. If exercising outdoors with friends will help keep you moving on a regular basis, build an exercise routine that includes walking with others a few times each week. If it's solitude you seek, search out two or three walking routes that are quiet and serene. Building in variety is another key to keep your exercise plan going strong.

Ask for help

Building new habits is hard, and you don't have to do it alone. There are fitness resources galore both in your public library and on the Internet. It's also a good idea to consult your physician for any exercise tips or suggestions.

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