

A 'Special' day on the diamond

Susquehanna League players went head-to-head with Special Olympians.
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Special Olympics coach Dwayne Neff, left, teaches Jay Messinger a game to see whose hand reaches the base of the bat first before Saturday's game against Susquehanna League players at Wilmer Neff Field at Laucks Park in Windsor. (Daily Record/Sunday News - Kate Penn)

Conrads manager Chad Kennell had two tough jobs Saturday.

First, he saw his team fall behind by five runs after four innings before rallying to a 12-7 win over [Windsor](#) in a Susquehanna League game at Wilmer Neff Field at Laucks Park.

Then he umpired the [York County](#) Special [Olympics Softball](#) Team vs. Susquehanna League players charity game, which followed the Conrads-[Windsor](#) contest.

"Umpiring was pretty difficult," he said afterwards. "I did the best that I could back there."

His calls behind the plate were probably more instrumental in the Special Olympians' 14-0 win than his managing was in the Conrads' victory -- not taking away anything from his managerial skills.

The good-natured ribbing on some of his umpiring calls only added to the cause, which this year brought in more than \$700.

That total included money raised from raffling off items such as Hooters gift certificates (two Hooters girls were in attendance helping with the event), Orioles and [York Revolution](#) tickets, and Subway coupons, to name a few, along with food donations.

With the rest of the league teams also making pledges and other groups donating, the grand total should be more than \$3,000.

"It's just a great time," said Dwayne Neff, who is actively involved in Special [Olympics](#) in [York County](#) and organized the fundraiser for the fourth straight year.

Neff, son of Windsor coach Nate Neff, doubles as the Special Olympics [softball](#) coach, but this will be his last year, because "my wife is having twin girls." But he said he expects to remain involved in one way or another.

Special Olympians Russell Green, Tony Dewalt and Wyatt Bowman all reached base both times they went to the plate and scored two runs each.

Susquehanna League players such as Nate Neumann and Doug Bacon of Windsor, and Jimi Nomikos, Nick Root and Gregg Rhodes -- who were instrumental in their teams' performances earlier in the day -- were unable to muster an attack.

Mighty swings went unrewarded. Fielding became a lost art. Root had the team's only scoring chance, trying to stretch a single into a home run. He was gunned down at the plate.

Nate Neff, who couldn't do much dancing during his team's loss, broke into a conga-line dance -- with appropriate background music -- as he approached the mound to talk to his pitcher, eventually leading a line that included his entire team on the field and half the Special Olympic lineup.



It was merely symbolic of the fun had by all.

The Special Olympians obviously had fun again as they improved to 4-0 against the Susquehanna stars.

Special Olympians Paul Bowman, Wyatt Bowman and Michael Mullaney threw out ceremonial first pitches prior to the Susquehanna game, and Tim Moran sang the national anthem.

"This is a wonderful event," said Kennell, who noted that his entire team remained for the [softball](#) game. "It made (the Special Olympians') day, and we wanted to come down and make our day first by beating Windsor. Second -- and more importantly -- do something for (the Special Olympians). "Hopefully they had a great time. It looked like they did. We were really happy to be involved with it this year."



Jamie Dewalt cheers for a teammate during Saturday's game between Special Olympians and Susquehanna League baseball players in Windsor. (Daily Record/Sunday News - Kate Penn)