



## Special Olympics floor hockey

Lightning squad pours its heart out

**EMILY AFAN**  
Dec 18, 2002

The Mississauga Lightning are quite a force to reckon with.

For this floor hockey team, their mental disabilities are no obstacle -- they're competitive, tireless and they give it their all.

"I see more energy (in them) than I see from my friends," said team manager Ann Labbe, also the community coordinator for Special Olympics Mississauga. "They rise to the challenge and work harder than anyone I know."

After a decade, what began with seven to nine players has flourished to form a team of 21 players with a waiting list for those eager to be a part of the team. The Lightning play in the Mississauga Floor Hockey League (MFHL) along with teams from Brampton, Flamborough, Hamilton, and North Halton.

"When we first started, we were lucky to win," recalled Tim Logan, Mississauga Lightning's head coach for six years.

Logan points out that today, several original players have matured and shown improvement in their skills.

Participating in Special Olympics tournaments, such as the annual Moss Park Armoury, to their own Mississauga Invitational (coming up in February 2003), the Lightning have no shortage of exposure to the sport.

Last Friday, they beat the Flamborough Flyers 5-3 in a MFHL game.

"They gel together and play as a unit," described Logan. "They go out there to win, and they'll seldom walk away leaving a game behind if they're frustrated."

"It's fun and good exercise running around," said Mark Ellis, who plays forward. "If I had to choose what I like best (about playing), I would choose competition. It makes me happy, really happy when I score."

Being part of this floor hockey team also means more than having the winning score at the end of a game.

"We put emphasis on playing right and doing their best," said Logan. "They play with their heart on their sleeve and they're always helping each other out."

Support and encouragement are emphasized. Logan recalls an instance in which a player was out of commission due to a medical condition. Unable to play, this still didn't stop him from coming out to the games to cheer on his fellow teammates. With 21 players, ranging in age from 13 to 40, Logan and Labbe never have problems keeping the team in check.

"They're an easy group to get along with," said Logan. "Coming here, seeing them have fun -- it's infectious, it's an exciting atmosphere."

For more information on the Mississauga Lightning, visit <http://misslightning.tripod.com> or call their hotline at 416-322-1623.



Staff photo by Chris Horobin

Derek Yates of the Mississauga Lightning Special Olympics floor hockey team fires a shot during a recent workout at Hillside Senior Public School. The Lightning play in the five-team Mississauga Floor Hockey League.