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48 Fighter Wing Public Affairs

3/2/2009 - **ROYAL AIR FORCE LAKENHEATH, England** -- Countless cheering kids from Lakenheath Elementary School gathered together Feb. 19 to watch the "Bury Bombers" as they demonstrated a game of wheelchair basketball.

The Bury Bombers, otherwise known as the Bury St. Edmunds Wheelchair Basketball Club, are an organization that allows disabled and able-bodied children the opportunity to learn and enjoy the game of wheelchair basketball. This club was originally founded 12 years ago by Coach Jill Anderson, Peter and Julie Rix and Paula Aldis.

"As a part of Department of Defense Schools (DoDDS) efforts to incorporate fitness into the children's lifestyle, we thought that having the Bury Bombers come out here today would encourage our children to be more active," said Kristofer Lopes, member of the LES Special Events Committee. "We also hope they learned that just because a person may have a physical limitation in some way, shape or form, you can still get involved in activities."

Throughout the demonstration, Coach Anderson taught the children the rules and techniques step-by-step of wheelchair basketball. Once Coach Anderson taught the children the fundamentals, a tip-off began an actual game.

"It was amazing how the children screamed and shouted for our players," Coach Anderson said. "I don't think our players have ever heard cheering like that. I am glad they enjoyed the game and got to truly understand what it is we do and what we are all about."

After three five-minute quarters, students were also given the opportunity to take a seat in the wheelchairs used in the game. Unlike ordinary wheelchairs, the ones used in wheelchair basketball have been modified to include five wheels, the two main wheels being slanted for better movement on the court.

"These wheelchairs are very different than the regular chairs we see," said 9-year-old Gavin Anderson, LES student. "Getting a chance to sit in the basketball wheelchair was fun. We got to learn how to move around and dribble the ball."

Not only was the visit from the Bury Bombers a treat for the students, but also for the players.

"I think coming out here was a fantastic idea," said Christopher Rix, son of Peter and Julie Rix. "This is the first time I have come to RAF Lakenheath. The kids were awesome. Our team has never had cheering where the kids are chanting and clapping for us, go blue, go orange!"

During the game, when complimented about the skills he and his teammates had, Chris said he wants kids to understand that people in wheelchairs are the same as able-bodied people and can do the same things.

The Bury Bombers visit was only one of several performers who came out to Lakenheath Elementary in support of Physical Awareness Month. Other performances throughout the month of February included gymnastics, karate, and cheerleading demonstrations from organizations on base as well as the local community.

"Although we think education is very important, we also want our children to understand the importance of fitness," Mr. Lopes said. "We want them to make fitness a part of their lifestyle and with the visit from the Bury Bombers, hopefully they are even more encouraged than ever."

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