



The Santa Cruz Roller Coasters huddle before a game.

Wheelchair Basketball Is Not For Sissies

Don't get the idea that it's a sissy game just because the Santa Cruz Roller Coasters play basketball from their wheelchairs. The rule that deals with traveling is changed, but otherwise the rules are the regular college basketball rules. And the game is tough and played to win.

"It's a fast game, a rough game and a powerful game," says Roller Coasters President Jon Wittwer. "People get knocked out of their wheelchairs and chairs break."

"I'm concerned that that image comes through. People hear of wheelchair basketball and think of people pushing real slow down the

court. What we are trying to show is that people can be athletes and be in chairs."

The Roller Coasters were formed in 1978 to promote wheelchair athletics and recreation. The most visible sport is basketball, Wittwer explains, but members also ski, go horseback riding, play softball, sail, and race.

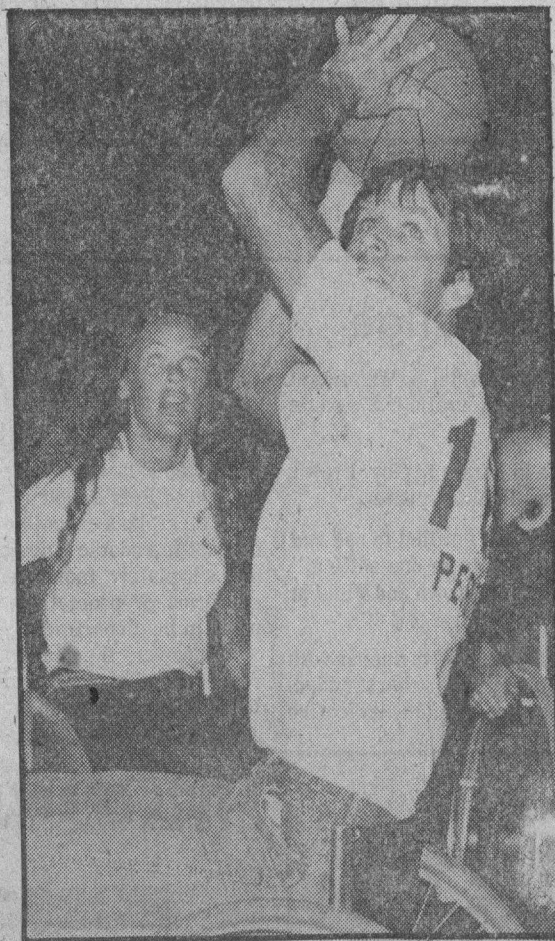
Wittwer says the only rule that has been changed to accommodate the wheelchair is the one that allows two pushes before dribbling.

Membership is open to anyone interested in joining. There are no dues. If interested, call 427-0291.



Roller Coaster Joe Napolitano (foreground) moves the ball down the court while Jack Duffy tries to help.

Above, Don Swafford tries to outreach Barbara McMurdo during a recent game. At right, physical therapist John Courtney of Dominican Hospital gets ready to score during a recent game against the Roller Coasters.



Photos by Dan Coyro