Prema, Atika come out tops

Bocce competition gives special needs participants a chance to socialise

Story and photos
By JAROD LIM
jarodl@thestar.com.my

DESPITE her best effort to get the ball next to the palina, Bocce participant A. Prema still finds it difficult to aim and bowl, featuring in Team PDK Kuala Langat B, the 45-year-old from Pusat Pemulihan Dalam Komuniti, Teluk Datok Kuala Langat 2 still managed to top the girls’ doubles category with partner Nor Atika Dollah Sajat, the latter being from PDK Permata Karish Tanjung Sepat.

“The game was fun and we enjoyed it very much,” said Prema, who has learning disabilities.

“I still find it hard to bowl and get the ball near the palina or target ball due to its distance from the starting point.

“But we are glad that we beat the other teams to win,” she said.

Bocce is a Special Olympics sport that dictates participants try to bowl coloured balls as close as possible to the palina, which is a smaller white ball that all the competitors aim at.

The local Bocce competition, dubbed “Let’s Play Bocce 2015” and organised for the first time by Peratam Anak Irama Malaysia, was held at Cruyff Court in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur.

Eight teams from different PDKs in Klang Valley participated in the event, which was split into three categories, namely singles, doubles and team — for boys and girls.

President Sunny Shahesh, who is a coach for the disabled, said the game was easy to understand.

“It provides people with special needs the opportunity to socialise and interact with others as well as develop physically and self-confidence.

“It also helps to encourage each other during the games,” he said.

The player who throws the palina determines its position and will be followed by trying to get the coloured balls next to it.

Points are awarded to each ball on the same team that is closest to the palina.

Each team completes three frames with each frame involving switching sides on the 12ft by 60ft playing field.

Prema and Atika, who represented PDK Kuala Langat B, deservedly lifted the title in the girls doubles category and were followed by SMK Segambut and PDK Kuala Langat A, who finished second and third, respectively.

Sunny, who also coaches the national five-a-side B1 blind football team, said he planned to promote the sport in different states.

“We started off in Klang Valley to get more participation from PDKs. And just like the football, we hope it can spread to more states,” he said.

Experts at work: Officials checking the distance of a ball to the palina.

Energetic throw: A participant giving his best during the competition.

Champ: Prema on Cruyff Court.