Sports





The Hoke County Special Olympics took place last week at Raz Autry Stadium on the campus of Hoke High School. Over 100 students participated in track and field events and games. (Left photo) Angela Thornton of Hoke High gets a little help from Grand Marshall Jeff Huffman with the lighting of the torch to kick off the Olympics. (Right photo) Danavian McNeill of Sandy Grove Elementary School participates in the softball throw as Coach John Bombatepe of Don



Lead referee Arthur Salisbury comes to Jennifer Valliant at the beginning of the game, pats her on the shoulder and gives her the coin used in the coin toss. A moment of silence was observed just prior for her brother Kaleb Valliant and his friend Thadius Markle.

Emotional night for Bucks' soccer

By Hal Nunn Sports writer

It was a tough decision whether or not to play Monday night's soccer game between Hoke County and Purnell Swett - and the decision was left to the family of Kaleb Valliant and his younger sister Jennifer.

As most people are aware by now, Kaleb Valliant and Thadius Markle of Raeford were killed in a car accident Saturday afternoon in Fayetteville. Kaleb was the captain of the boys' soccer team and his sister is on the girls' soccer team. Both Kaleb and Thadius were seniors and members of the Jazz Band at Hoke High. Kaleb was the public address announcer and clock operator for the girls' team.

The girls hosted Purnell Swett Monday night.

'We knew this was going be a tough night," Hoke Athletic Director Gary Brigman said, "so we left the decision to play or not play the game up to the family." Coach Derek Butler said, "We felt that it would be best for the girls to try to play and heal a little bit and Kaleb loved soccer and we believe that's what he would have wanted us to do.' Jennifer attended the game

and, although she did not play, she was made the honorary captain. "I thought it was great that Jen was able to be our honorary captain at the game and she is a great girl and is being so strong during all of this," Coach Derek Butler said. The pre-game routine was the same but when the referee, Arthur Salisbury, blew the whistle to start play, the planned memorial began.

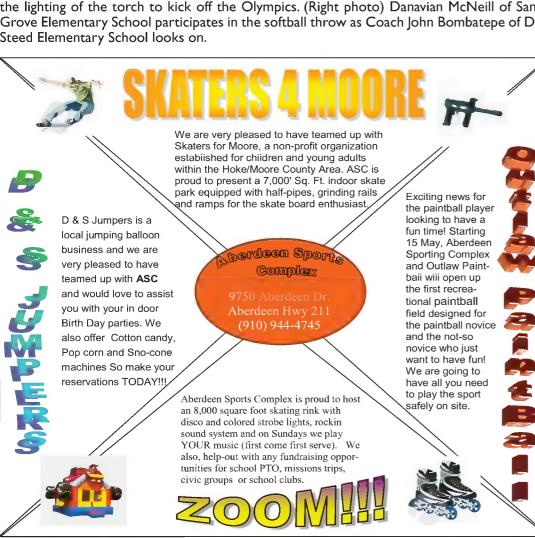
In a ceremonial gesture - the clock not starting - the referee blew his whistle again and motioned to the press box, where an announcement was made about the tragic accident that took the lives of two young men, Kaleb and Thadius, and that Kaleb's sister was in attendance for the game.

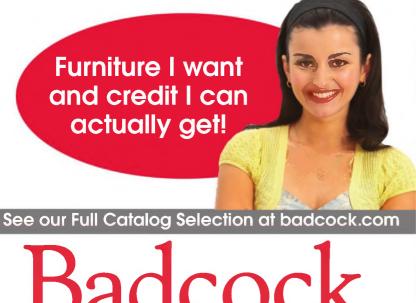
After a moment of silence and a few tears and hugs, head referee Arthur Salisbury ran over to the bench where Jennifer was sitting and gave her a pat on the shoulder and the coin used for the coin toss - a simple but profound gesture by the lead referee.

With the game underway, the Bucks went on to literally destroy the Rams 11-0. How ironic is that score? Kaleb wore number 11 as the captain of the boys' soccer team. Jennifer also wore the number 11 on the girls team. "I wanted to get 11 goals in the first half to honor Kaleb, so the 11-0 victory was a tribute to him. The girls wanted to reach that goal and accomplished that for Kaleb, Jen and their family." Butler said. The game was called at halftime because the rule states that if a team scored 10 goals or more in

the first half, the game is then over. After the game, many friends and fans came down onto the field and surrounded Jennifer with hugs and support.

The girls' soccer team will play at home Monday night in the first round of the conference tournament. Senior night festivities will take place that night.





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