

CONNECTICUT POST

SUNDAY
March 4, 2007

SportsFest hits a downtown home run

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BRIDGEPORT — Billy Frostick didn't need any practice.

The 11-year-old Fairfield boy quickly analyzed what he had to do.

With his right hand he deftly bent the vinyl cone aiming it directly at the round hoop some six feet away.

With his left hand he grabbed the ping pong ball holding it between his thumb and index finger just a quarter of inch from the cone's opening.

Then he let go.

A whoosh of air picked it up and floated it up and into the hoop.

Five times in his next 12 attempts the Holland Hill fifth-grader popped the ball through the hoop. He only needed two to take home a family pass to the Discovery Museum.

"That's not easy," Linda Malkin said of Frostick's accomplishment. Malick, the museum's executive director.

Malick should know she stood there for hours Saturday watching child after child walk away disappointed for not netting even one. "You have to deal with the erratic physics of the air flow."

But Frostick was not the only winner at the Park City Sportsfest in the lobby at



B.K. Angeletti/For the Connecticut Post

Spencer Jones, 6, of Fairfield, putts under the watchful eye of pro Gregg Gaulocher at the Park City SportsFest on Saturday.

People's Bank on Main Street Saturday afternoon.

Rushaan Barnes, an 11-year-old city boy, took home an appreciation of golf, along with several drivers and irons after being shown the correct form by Randy Taylor, a pro at the Fairchild Wheeler Golf Course.

"It's pretty hard," said Barnes after missing the first shot. Taylor repositioned the boy's hands on his club,

adjusted his feet and shoulders and wham, Barnes blasted a rising line drive that was only stopped by the cage's netting.

If basketball, golf or puck shooting offered by the Bridgeport Sound Tigers was not your game, there were martial arts demonstrations by the students of Matt Jones; a chance to talk football with the semi-pro men's Connecticut Giants and women's Connecticut Cyclones gridiron teams or the opportunity to climb a vinyl rock wall.

For the more sedentary, Maria Conlon, Derby's favorite daughter and a UConn women's championship point guard; Walter Lockett, the former Detroit Piston and Kolbe High School star and Gail Goodrich, the Los Angeles Lakers Hall of Fame guard from its Wilt Chamberlain/Jerry West/Elgin Baylor era, posed for pictures and signed autographs.

"Our goal is to have something for everyone," said Tom Chiapetta, a spokesman for the Fairfield County Sports Commission which helped arrange and staff the events. "We know people are going to go to the games. What we want is to give them a chance to see Bridgeport before, in between and after the games."

Several of the downtown restaurant's opened early and closed late in expectation of drawing the lunch crowd as well as the last game's after midnight crowd.

A similar sportsfest was conducted in conjunction with the NCAA Women's Basketball Regional final here last March 25. If all goes as Chiapetta plans bigger and better events will take place when the NCAA Women's basketball tournament returns next year followed by the NCAA Hockey Tournament in 2009.

"I think we've made a lot of progress since last year. Just look around at all the smiling faces."

There was a huge one that spread across Brittany Romero's seven-year-old cheeks as she batted an oversized foam basketball with clowns Cari Klick and Laurie Pepe. The trio finally got the ball into the net with an assist from the Bridgeport Bluefish.

For Chuck and Kevin Martone, two Albany brothers and Sienna fans, waiting for the tip-off of their favorite team's game, quickly passed through the Sportsfest. They thought it was a little too "kid-friendly" when compared with the events of MAAC tournaments hosted in Albany and Buffalo.

Both also expressed some surprise at the small crowd they saw while watching the tournament's opening round on television Friday night.

"I think Albany draws better but that may be because it's more centrally located for several of the schools," Chuck Martone said.