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Team Lamorinda represents at 2023 Special Olympics NorCal Summer Games

Submitted by Lupi Gutierrez Beagle



From left: Kevin Bao, Andrew Beagle, Aimee Gee, Coach Juliet Gee, Justin Lo Photo Lupi Gutierrez Beagle

Team Lamorinda, representing Contra Costa County, had a successful run at the Annual Special Olympics of Northern California Summer Games June 24-26 in Santa Clara. Over 30 Northern California counties were represented by almost 1,000 athletes and coaches coming together in the spirit of inclusion and competition.

In May, Special Olympics NorCal Track and Field Regionals were held in Pleasanton. The entire Lamorinda team consisting of 13 athletes, qualified for the Summer Games by winning gold in at least one of their events. However only four spots were allotted.

The 2023 squad also known as Lamorinda Avengers includes Miramonte High School Class of 2018's Aimee Gee, 22, of Orinda and Moraga's Kevin Bao, also 22. Andrew Beagle, the youngest at 14 is an incoming freshman at Miramonte and Oakland resident Justin Lo, 18, represented the team.

Gee, who qualified by winning gold in the long jump and turbo javelin at Regionals, once again placed first in the javelin and received silver in the shot put. She was disqualified in the running long jump which was contested, but denied.

In Pleasanton, Bao won gold in the running long jump and silver in the 200 meter to qualify. He returned home from Santa Clara with a bronze in the 100 and placed fifth in the 200.

Beagle went three for three in the Regionals with gold medals in the 100 meter, running long jump and the turbo javelin. He returns home from his first Summer Games with a silver and two golds respectively.

Lo who also made his debut at the 2023 Summer Games placed first in the running long jump. He followed up with second in the turbo javelin and third in the 200 meter. Lo was very proud to walk around with a gold, a silver and a bronze around his neck.

The captain of this crew, coach Juliet Gee has been coaching Special Olympics for 20 years and has been to five Summer Games with the team she founded in 2017. The Avengers qualified for their first Summer Games in 2018 with a total of six athletes attending. All six won gold medals including one in the pentathlon. As for the 2023 team, Gee states, "We have a remarkable group of athletes. They all worked very hard to earn a spot in the Summer Games. They all exude the spirit of Olympians in competing while also cheering on fellow competitors."

The 2023 Summer Games Opening Ceremony was held Friday, June 23 at Stevens Stadium on the campus of Santa Clara University, commencing with the Parade of Athletes and concluding with the region-wide Law Enforcement Torch Run. This year's keynote speaker was Pro Football Hall of Famer and celebrated 49er Bryant Young. The event was hosted by both Santa Clara and San Jose State Universities and Track and Field was held at Cupertino High School.

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