NEIGHBORS

Volleyball tourney a smashing success

The recent 12th annual Michelle O'Neill Foundation's volleyball tournament was a big hit, possibly the largest single event volleyball tournament on the East Coast.

Event organizers said 278 teams played at more than 48 nets. In the tournament's first year in 1997, the participants played at 11 nets and raised $17,000 for charity. This year's final numbers are not yet available but based on attendance, raffle and merchandise sales, the amount raised should surpass that total.

Deacon Tom Evrard opened with a blessing, John Barnes, the MC for the event, asked the crowd to pick a flag among 100 supplied again by Jimmy Tolfree. They then pledged, sang God Bless America, and Carol O'Neill, president of The Michelle O'Neill Foundation, welcomed the crowd and announced the winner of the Best Team Name: "Pulling Muscles for Michelle." Caryl Ann Niven presented that team with gifts. The games then began around 11 a.m.

Scott McGurdy, of Outback Steakhouse, arrived with his staff and grills, hamburgers and chicken sandwiches. Glaceau sponsored beverages and supplied Vitamin Water to donors throughout the day. Proceeds from the hot dog stand will be sent to the families of two children who are undergoing cancer treatment, and the tournament's Cans for Cancer project was continued, utilizing the efforts of the "littlest" volunteers.

Jimmy Lorenzo volunteered his time and sound equipment, and his DJ Anthony provided the music. John Barnes announced the winners of 24 fabulous raffle prizes, including a Disney Resort package, a week in Rincon, Puerto Rico, several Manhattan stays, theatre tickets to Jersey Boys, Woodloch Pines Resort stay, surfboard, golf foursome, diamond pendant, luggage, Hunter Mt. season ski pass, autographed Brian Leetch hockey stick, bicycle and gift certificates to restaurants, salons, and much more. Trophies were awarded to the winners of the competitive and recreational teams.
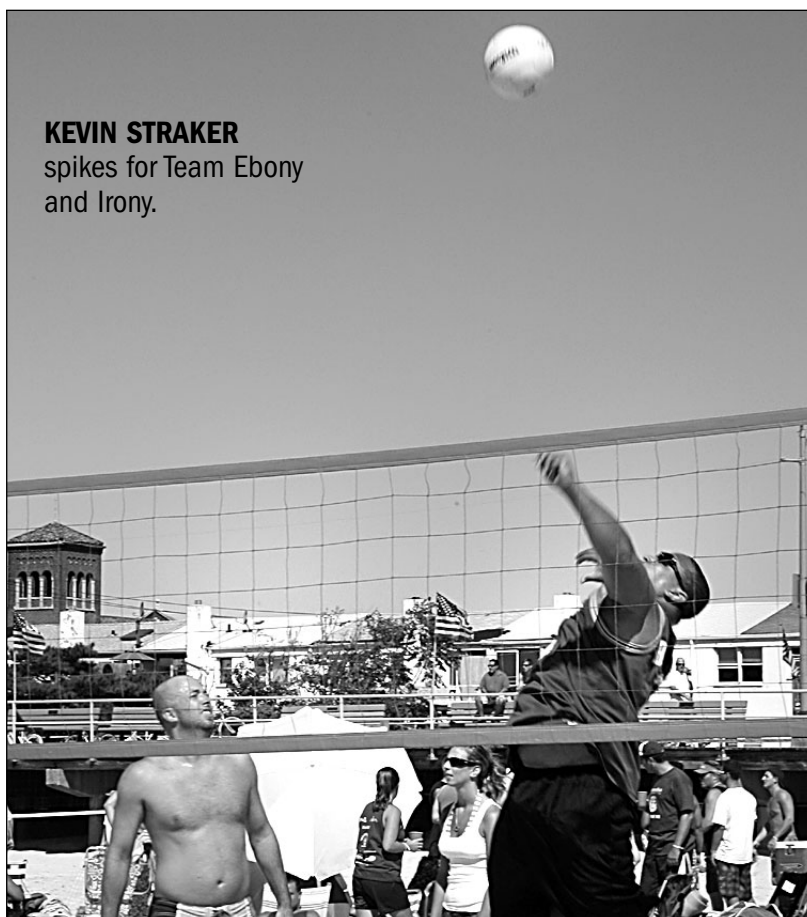
Photos By Paul Hunter/Herald

HUNDREDS PLAYED in the 12th annual Michelle O'Neill Foundation's volleyball tournament in Long Beach earlier this month, as some 278 teams competed against each other at more than 48 nets.

KEVIN STRAKER spikes for Team Ebony and Irony.

WEARING A BUTTON WITH MICHELLE'S IMAGE, Carol O'Neill prepares for the start of the annual volleyball tournament.

BARBARA MILLER puts the ball over the net with authority.