

SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS

SHANGHAI SPECIAL OLYMPICS - ACHIEVEMENT BY TASMANIAN MEN

[2.52 p.m.]

Mr MARTIN (Elwick) - Mr President, I would like to list the names of four great Tasmanians who deserve recognition because they have achieved at the highest level.

Mr Wilkinson - Do you want me to leave the room?

Mr MARTIN - No, you are not amongst them.

Members laughing.

Mr MARTIN - The four are Craig Hanson from Lenah Valley, Gary Burnside from Glenorchy, Lee Medwin from Lindisfarne and Brian Kirkwood from Claremont. Mr President, these four great Tasmanians should be remembered and celebrated because they have achieved something that very few Tasmanians have ever achieved. All of them won a gold medal at an Olympic Games.

Mr President, if these young men had won gold medals at the upcoming 2008 Olympic Games in China we would be providing a ticker-tape parade. Their achievements have not received the same accolades even though in every sense of the word they are out-and-out world champions.

These four men represented Australia at the **Shanghai Special Olympics** World Summer Games in China. Australia was one of 170 countries present and they were four of over 7 000 athletes. These guys, who have a mild intellectual disability, won the precious gold medals in a sensational nail-biting, come-from-behind victory in the softball competition. At one stage the score in the final was one to 10 and they were the one. You would not believe it, but in true Rocky-style they came from behind when all looked lost. It is an example of the tough, never-say-die attitude that is so common for Australian sporting teams, as they fought back to win 15 to 14 against a previously undefeated Chinese team.

Mr Wilkinson - The theme behind *Rocky I* was 'go the distance'.

Mr MARTIN - Yes, they went the distance and, unlike *Rocky I*, they won. All four men played for a team based at Glenorchy called the S.O. Bears, with 'S.O.' standing for the Special Olympics. Their training was not dissimilar to other professional athletes as they trained three days per week for 10 months leading up to the competition. This was a huge effort on their part as well as that of their parents and their fantastic coach Trish Webb, who has voluntarily coached the S.O. Bears for something like 12 years.

These great Tasmanians have worked hard especially on raising funds. They did the sausage sizzles, the lunches, the quiz nights, the donations and everything else to raise the funds to give themselves the chance to represent Tasmania on the world stage in China. I think all Tasmanians should be very proud of them. Well done.