

VAISAKHI: Hundreds of Sikh families join in the fun at city park



FINISHING-LINE... competitors battle it out in the sack race

Sports day starts new year festival

By Tina Junday

A MASS sports day was held in Coventry yesterday to mark the biggest festival in the Sikh calendar – the beginning of their new year.

Hundreds played rounders, football, volleyball and hockey at the War Memorial Park as part of the Vaisakhi celebrations.

Excited children ran obstacle races and 30 metre sprints while parents cheered them across the finish lines.

The Sikh Union, a local sports and social club, organised the event to bring together communities from all backgrounds.

Bali Singh Panesar, spokesman of the union, said: "It's very good because it's attracted a diverse number of people and brought us all together on a common sports platform. We want to share our celebrations with everyone. The weather has helped draw the crowds in. It's improved from last year."

"A lot of people have supported the community and donated money to the gurdwara. We have more stalls including one which teaches you all about the history of Anglo-Sikhs during the war. It's educational and a place to where everyone can just enjoy themselves."

Arminder Atwal, aged 37, of Styvechale, came with his wife, Reeta, who was celebrating her 35th birthday, and their two sons, Arundeep, aged four, and Rajan, aged two.

He said: "It's a great event and a good way of remembering our history – by celebrating it this way it helps bring everyone closer together. My wife played rounders – it's a different way of spending your birthday but we've all enjoyed it."

The Ramgharia Sikh temple, in Foleshill Road, provided Langar (free food) which was served throughout the day in the true spir-



SPORT STARS... Left, Arminder Atwal with his wife, Reeta, and their sons, Rajan, aged two, and Arundeep, aged four. Right, Raghbir Sandhu takes his daughter Eishar, aged six, to the fun fair. Below, under 7s team cheer after a victory. Pictured are Karam Minhas, Nathan McQueen, Balraj Sangha, Sukhranj Dehil and Sayraj Karig.



it of the Sikh faith. Volunteers at the gurdwara, Jagdeep Mann, aged 25, and her sister Maninder Jewan, aged 28, of Foleshill, served food throughout the day to hungry crowds.

Maninder said: "Our parents always volunteer and we like to get involved – it's good to celebrate

with the family. My brothers always help out too. Sport and sharing food play a big part in getting everyone together and it's worked."

Younger children were kept entertained thanks to the colourful fun fair rides, including Eishar Sandhu, aged six, who was with her dad, Raghbir, aged 40. Raghbir,

a self-employed courier, of Allesley, said: "It's been a very good turnout. There is a lot for the kids to do – the rest of my family are playing football – there is something for everyone."

"It's important to keep events like this going because otherwise children will forget their roots."