

THOUSANDS FLOCK TO SIKH FESTIVAL



BEST FOOT FORWARD: Simran Chana and Kiran Bancil in the girls' three-legged race

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EYE ON THE BALL: Amandeep Singh Sahota takes the lead in an obstacle race
Pictures: Mark Radford

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By Warren Manger
TELEGRAPH REPORTER

COVENTRY'S annual Vaisakhi sports day proved a scorching success as thousands turned out to enjoy the spring sunshine.

More than 400 youngsters took part in a wide range of track events, with many more signing up for one of the 66 football teams.

There was also rounders, hockey, volleyball and what is fast becoming one of the event's highlights – the mums' tug-of-war competition.

The Vaisakhi sports day was held in the city's War Memorial Park yesterday to celebrate Sikh new year.

Little Kiya Bhatia showcased her speed by winning the five and six year-olds' obstacle race.

It was the second consecutive year the six-year-old Binley Woods Primary School pupil has taken part.

"I practised at home by running up and down stairs this morning," she smiled as she clutched her trophy.

"It was good fun."

Track races were laid on for children of all ages – the youngest taking part were just three years-old.

Events included sprints, obstacle courses, mother daughter runs and three-legged races.

The winners each earned themselves a trophy and a T-shirt.

While Kiya and her sisters took to the track, others youngsters happily wandered around the stalls.

Tavleen Sekhon, aged seven, and her three year-old sister Jasmine were the picture of contentment as they tucked into refreshing ice creams and enjoyed the vast array of colours

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CROWDS: Thousands join the fun in War Memorial Park



GOOD SPORTS: Winners of one of the boys' races

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and scintillating smells. The stalls offered everything from bright balloons that bobbed in the breeze to Indian jewellery, artwork and snacks. They was also Langar, free food laid on by the city's Sikh temples for visitors to enjoy.

There were also a series of health related stands running diabetes screening sessions, raising awareness about drugs and recruiting people to join the organ donor register.

And there was a fantastic fun fair full of rides for all the family.

The Vaisakhi sports day has been held in Coventry every years since 1991.

It marks the climax of the Sikh new year celebrations, following the huge

parade held a week earlier. This year's event was the biggest yet, with an estimated 8,000 flocking to the festival.

Bali Panesar, from the Coventry Sikh Union, said: "Our aim is to encompass the whole community and share our culture with everyone. The more we share, the richer we get as a community.

"We would like to thank everyone on behalf of the Sikh Union for their contributions to make this event a success."

This year's Vaisakhi sports day celebrations were sponsored by Coventry City Council, Coventry City FC and NTC Training (the Nuneaton Training Centre).



FUN RUN: Jaspreet Panesar in the girls' obstacle race

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