

Fitness centre for disabled

The Variety Village Sport and Fitness Facility, currently under construction in Toronto, is considered to be the first such centre in the world designed to overcome the problems of handicapped athletes. Although the centre was opened officially for a recent fund-raising telethon, it will not be ready for use until later this month.

The complex is designed to encompass a wide range of physical handicaps.

A bar circles the area where a track will soon be poured for blind runners so they can touch it as they run by themselves. The track itself will be made of a new synthetic polymer, designed to cushion the jars to a runner with an artificial leg but made durable enough to withstand a racing wheelchair.



Fieldhouse, when finished, will have five-lane track and portable running rail.

lowered to suit the handicaps of the players. There are numerous plugs in the walls of the fieldhouse to recharge battery-operated wheelchairs.

To overcome the mobility problem the complex has put in a number of special features. Two outside lifts will raise and lower wheelchairs coming off buses. The outside sidewalks are heated so there will be no slipping and sliding on ice.

Guide rails

Inside, the main connecting floors have a slightly bumpy surface to guide the blind.



Wooden protectors in halls keep wheelchairs from bumping into wall.

A guide rail and a wooden protector to keep wheelchairs from bumping into the walls are in each corridor. There are no curbs or steps or inclines anywhere.

Bathrooms come complete with shower heads, handles, sinks of various heights. A wheelchair can slip under the specially designed flat-bottomed sinks and through the extra-wide lavatory doors. A special room has been provided for spina bifida victims — the second most common disability in the country — to change their colostomy sacs.

Telephone lowered

Telephones are wheelchair height and in case of fire a stroboscopic light signals to the deaf that the building must be evacuated. The most important athletic equipment of many disabled people — their wheelchairs — will be serviced by



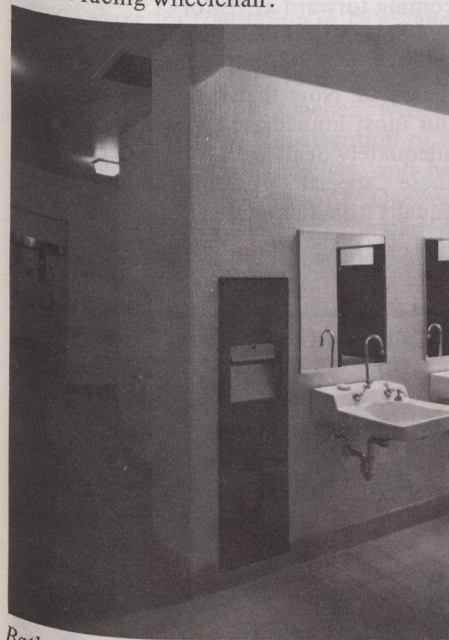
Entrance has permanent ramps and canopy with overhead heating.

Variety Village's users themselves in a room donated for that purpose by wheelchair manufacturer Everest and Jennings.

Although its programs are specifically aimed to develop athletic and physical prowess in disabled young people from ages five to 22, Variety Village also hopes to provide a place where the able-bodied and the handicapped will play and exercise together. The second group it aims to serve are poor children.

The complex also includes a 30-bed sleeping area for groups wishing to have intensive training sessions at Variety Village.

Applied Photography Ltd. photos



Bathrooms have flat-bottomed sinks and extra wide doors.

The lights in the fieldhouse are focused upward to prevent them from shining in the eye of a court sport player with a seeing problem. Special acoustic muffling has been added to the ceiling to cut down on echoes which might resound in the hearing aids of deaf athletes.

Surrounding the floor of the court area is a see-through curtain to prevent balls from escaping. When reinforced by a secondary net it also will prevent archers — archery is one of the 40 sports which can be played in or near the complex — from piercing an unwary runner.

The basketball backstops on the three-court-long playing area can be raised or