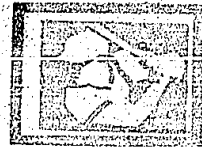


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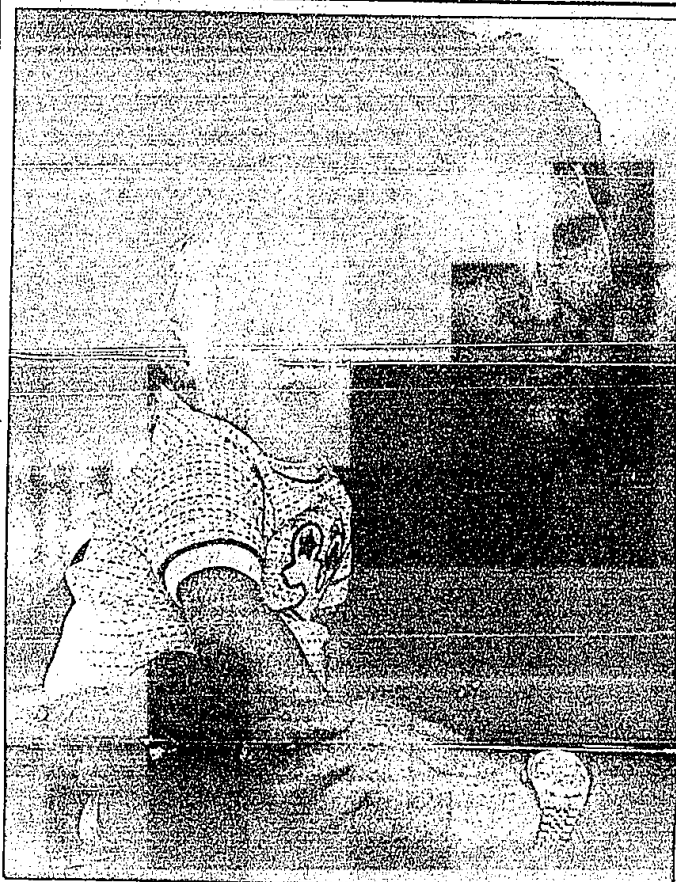
Chris McCosky, Brad Emond, editor/591-2312

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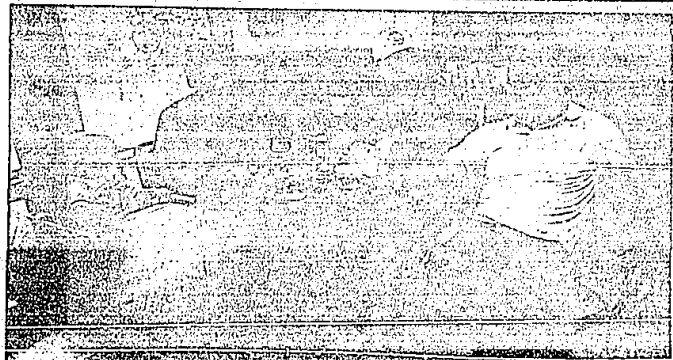


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Young Christopher Roe gets an earful of baseball from his dad Rocky, who is a professional umpire.



Fellow umpires Larry Barnett (second from left) and Dale Ford (right) enjoy the hospitality of Rocky and Chris during their stay in West Bloomfield.

Rocky's road

American League umpire's career shifting to high gear

By Marty Budner
staff writer

IT WAS ONLY the second time he'd been home since the beginning of the baseball season. "Don't know about Thursday because we'll just be coming in, and can't say Sunday because we'll have to fly out," he said by telephone during the All-Star break when questioned about setting up an interview. "We're having a birthday party for my son Saturday. So, I think the best day will be Friday."

So it goes in the fast-footed life of professional umpire John Andrew Roe, Rocky for short. Traveling just sometimes seems like one big flat in the air or sweep of the hands.

Rocky Roe, called upon to help officiate the recent four-game series between Detroit and Texas at Tiger Stadium, had few hours to spare as he spent a pleasant — albeit hectic — weekend at his cozy West Bloomfield ranch house.

His time — whether it be accepting ticket requests from friends, heading up the golf game with colleagues Larry Barnett and Dale Ford or simply sharing precious moments with his wife, Jeanne, and year-old son, Christopher — is fleeting.

THE 34-YEAR-OLD Roe figures he logs close to 150,000 air miles during the baseball season while averaging 50-60 flights a year. During his first-ever All-Star assignment earlier this month in San Francisco, Roe hop-scotched across the country on seven different flights. That's enough to leave almost anyone in a time warp.

"The players don't have it as bad as we do," said Roe as he playfully jostled with Christopher along the shoreline of nearby Pine Lake. "They're only away from home for 81 games (out of a 162-game schedule). We're on the road constantly."

"Last time I was in Detroit was for

two losses back in May. I get back (to Detroit) maybe three or four times a year. I like the American League because cities like Toronto, Cleveland and Chicago are within driving distance to my home. If I was in the National League I'd be away from home more often.

"The biggest argument is my wife and I have are that she wants to go somewhere, and I want to stay home and she wants to get out and I want to eat home," said Roe. "But, that says something about my wife's strength. If I'm considered any type of success in

the big leagues it goes back to my wife."

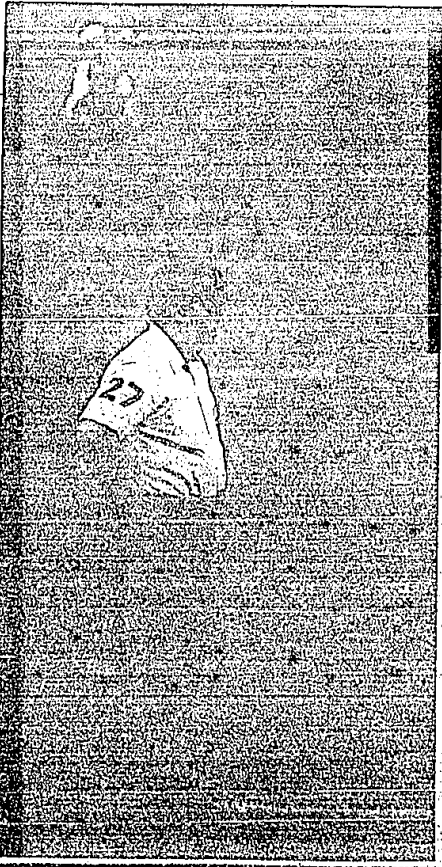
THESE DAYS, THERE'S nothing rocky about Roe's schedule so far in the big leagues.

The 1983 Southfield High School graduate is in the midst of his sixth year as an umpire in the American League. He ranks 25th on the seniority list. But his stock as an umpire is rising faster than his right hand.

He was named to umpire the right field

Please turn to Page 2

Rocky Roe (right), 34 years old and No. 27 on your official roster, is one of the American League's youngest umpires. The Southfield High School graduate recently worked the All-Star game in San Francisco, where he umpired the right-field line. He says "any umpire who tells you he's not a baseball fan is lying," but healthily adds "that you have to put all that out of your mind and be objective."



Staff photos by Mindy Saunders



Before a game at Tiger Stadium, Dale Reid (left) and son Eric of Birmingham visit with Rocky.



Most people end their work days at 5 p.m.; Rocky gives the ball to Jeanne, Mike and another boy during a visit to the ballpark.