

In Virginia Slims Tournament

Rosie guns for top tennis honors

By PAUL NATKE
The printing jumps from the page in every Virginia Slims advertisement. You're come a long way, baby. Indeed the Virginia Slims Circuit and the Women's Tennis Association has come a long way from their first tournament in 1970 when Rosie Casale defeated Judy Dalton in the finals for the \$1,000 winner's share.
When the Slims circuit comes to Detroit Feb. 17-23, Rosie will again be gunning for first place but this time the purse is \$2,000 with a \$1,000 first prize.
Rosie stopped in Detroit for a few hours last week to promote the Slims Tournament at Cobo Hall, the fifth stop on the women's tour this year. The circuit has already set an attendance record when 12,000 people watched the finals of the Washington, D.C. tournament several weeks ago.
But from the way Rosie tells it, it wasn't always easy to attract the crowds, the money of the press.
At the start, she said, the top three or four players were the top promoters of the tour. Ann Jones, Francine Durr, Billie Jean King and herself were the advance persons who tried to drum up some interest in upcoming tournaments.
"It was hard to sell women's tennis and hard to get coverage or interviews," Rosie said. "We'd call a press conference and sometimes to have three press people there to talk to us was great."
"This went on for three or four years," she said. "It was tough because we were also playing to empty stands."
Without Virginia Slims support, Rosie admitted it would have taken longer to get the tour rolling along.
The women's circuit wouldn't exist today, she trusts, without a handful of people who wanted it to happen.
"What turned women's tennis into something big was a combination of women's lib and women players who were strong enough to yell and make certain we weren't ignored."
Rosie said that the U.S. Tennis Association (USTA) had ignored women's tennis "we either had to get out or die. We decided to die trying if we had to. We tried and made it."
Women's tennis turned the corner in 1973, Rosie said and the USTA wanted a piece of the action. "We told them we didn't need their help."
Now the women's tour draws greater crowds and offers larger purses than the men's.
Rosie, the former captain of the Detroit Loves, took last year off so she could take a rest from the constant traveling but plans didn't work out like she had hoped.
But she's back on the tour this year and she believes she could surprise some people because of the extensive training she's done recently.
She underwent a 17 day crash conditioning course in Montreal, an idea of Julie Jean King, and she's been running two miles a day during her three hour work outs at her California home.
"I feel physically fit which has been a lot of my problem in the past," Rosie said. "Since I'm short (5'2") I have to chase everything down. I must go into a match in good shape because it's important that I don't get tired. This could be my year."
The reason for all the extensive training before the season is the tougher competition on the women's circuit.
"The competition is much greater now than it was several years ago," Rosie pointed out. "You can't take time off and

then walk into the tournament as a third seed anymore. The competition is the good because there are many kids eager to get into the top positions."
"You just can't afford to relax anymore."
Rosie figures that Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova are the ones to beat on the tour. But, she adds, both can be beaten.
"Chris has been more emotional lately because she's been becoming more involved with people. This is hurting her concentration and makes her game more vulnerable."
"She hasn't played as well lately as she can and she seems to be feeling the pressure of being number one. She just couldn't believe it when Martina beat her in the Houston final."
"She's won so much in the past that maybe she doesn't know how to cope with it (losing)."
Martina is the 19-year-old Czech who defeated from her hometown last year to take up permanent residence in this country.
"She's big, aggressive, strong and her left handed serve gives Chris trouble. But her inexperience and temperment hurt her

at times—I think all the attention she's been getting has gone to her head."
"She also let herself go last year and she put on 30 pounds. It's important for her to stay in shape."
The Detroit Slims tournament is co-sponsored by the Junior League of Birmingham which contributed \$80,000 of tournament earnings in 1975 to 62 charitable organizations in Wayne and Oakland County.
Rosie was in town just long enough to fish a steak for lunch, then she made for the airport to catch a plane to Chicago where she was scheduled to play her first match in the Slims Tournament there.

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Driver is safe in flying crash

An airborne car driven by a Farmington Hills man caused an unusual accident on the John Lodge Freeway in Southfield this week.
Southfield police said Cass Nowak, 28, Greening, Farmington Hills, was driving northbound on the Lodge at about 1:40 p.m. Monday when he suddenly found himself to slow behind the car in front of his. Nowak hit his brakes, police said, and his car went out of control and ran up the snow bank that lies along the median divider. His car became airborne, flew over the guardrail and landed in the southbound lane of the Lodge.
A second car, driven by Gerald Asase, 36, of Novi, swerved to the right to avoid a head-on collision with Nowak, but his car was struck on its passenger side, police said.
Asase's car reportedly was spun around, went backwards up the guardrail, struck a light pole and rolled over onto its top.
Miraculously, neither driver was apparently injured in the accident. Police summoned paramedics from the Southfield Fire Department's Life Support Unit, but both drivers declined medical attention.
According to Southfield police, Nowak, 36, was cited for failing to maintain control of his vehicle.

Student tops math contest

Alfred Jean of Harrison High School in Farmington will be honored at an awards program sponsored by Michigan Bell Telephone Co. for placing in the top 100 of 21,000 high school students who participated in the 19th annual Michigan Mathematics Prize Competition.
The award will be given on Feb. 21 at Western Michigan University.

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