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# Olympics test playground skills

By TOM RAE

Over the years, the Rotary Olympics has become the highlight of the summer for hundreds of Southfield youngsters. Again six through 15. More than 700 young athletes are expected to participate in the 1978 Rotary Olympics, which will be held Tuesday (July 26) at 4:30 p.m. at Southfield Lutheran High School.

Farmington has a similar meet — the Youth Fitness Olympics — which will be held June 20 at Farmington High School, beginning at 4:30 p.m.  
 The names may differ, but the purpose of the meets are the same: to give the youngsters a chance to demonstrate their playground skills in a competitive atmosphere. And by winning an event in the local fitness meets, the participants can qualify for the Metropolitan Youth Fitness Meet to be held July 29 at Wayne State University. That meet will attract more than 3,000 boys and girls from 107 cities in the Detroit area.

Southfield's Rotary Olympics is a well-established part of the city's Parks and Recreation Department's summer program. "This is what everybody looks forward to," said Ed Kraas, the playground director for the Southfield Parks and Recreation Department. "It gives the kids some athletic competition against other schools, and that's been eliminated on the actual school level in some cases."

"The kids really take this seriously. They'd like to be a winner in the Rotary Olympics and then go on to represent Southfield against other cities in the Metro Meet."

EACH YEAR, Southfield's meet seems to get bigger and more colorful. Southfield has eliminated five playgrounds

and only 14 will send teams to the Rotary Olympics. But that won't reduce the number of athletes, according to Kraas. "We really didn't lose the kids," he said. "They just moved to different playgrounds. From the attendance I've seen at the playgrounds and the kids I've seen trying out, it looks like we might have a full team of about 50 kids from each. That's something we haven't had before."

In Southfield, part of the Rotary Olympics fun is making uniforms and banners representing the various playgrounds. "It ties our total program together with arts and crafts and sports," Kraas said. "Our arts and crafts program has been geared to the kids doing tie shirts for uniforms, making pom-poms and banners, and all that."

Last year, Southfield's Lombard Elementary School won the team trophy, and Magnolia Elementary School won the sportsmanship award.

Farmington's Youth Fitness Meet, in its second year, will draw about 300 youngsters from 12 playgrounds, according to Evans Rogers, the playground director for the Farmington Area Recreation Commission. "It's a great activity," said Rogers. "The kids love the competition, and they get all excited when they march onto the field in their uniforms with their parents watching."

In last year's meet, Longacre Elementary School won the team trophy, and Bond Elementary won the sportsmanship award. Farmington won a third-place medal in the 50-yard dash in last year's Metro Meet.

BOYS AND GIRLS will compete in the 50-yard dash, running hop, step and jump, softball throw, running long jump, standing broad jump and shuttle relay. There

## Observer & Eccentric SPORTS

SA (P)

Monday, July 19, 1978

will be a churning competition for boys only.

There will be three competitive classifications — Class A, ages 10-15; Class B, 13; Class C, 10-11; and Class D, nine and under in the local meets only.

The program is popular with the youngsters because the meet's events can be practiced on a playground with little or no equipment.

"There's no special equipment needed, and very little to be purchased," said Southfield's Kraas.

"This is strictly for the novice athletes — the kids who have not excelled in anything in terms of school sports," added Farmington's Rogers. "What we don't want, for example, is athletes from junior high schools who have completed a track."

"This is why I like the program. It gives the non-competitor a chance to compete. They seem to like it. And who knows? Maybe their interest will carry over into the junior highs and the high schools."

The meets also deal with a lot more than winning athletic contests. Participants are judged on appearance and sportsmanship.

At the Metro Meet, the teams will be shooting for the John J. Conard Award emblematic of good sportsmanship, conduct and appearance.

Southfield won the Conard Award in 1976 and 1973. Shelby Township won the award in last year's Metro Meet.

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