

Race is a small part of Michigan Mile

BY DAVE SCHWARTZ

Months of planning went into an event which took less than two minutes to complete.

That's the story every year for the Michigan Mile, won Saturday by favored Sensitive Prince at the Detroit Race Course. The win could be a sad one, as Prince was limping after the race.

Bud Sears, racing director at DRC, puts a lot of time into making the Mile Michigan's most prestigious horse race. As the four-year-old Sensitive Prince crossed the wire in 1:52.3, it culminated the efforts of hundreds of hours of work.

Preparations for the 31st Michigan

Mile started months before the running. First of all, the money must be set up for the purse.

This year, it was \$115,500. A big stakes race like the Mile generally never will pay for itself. Not enough is bet, and not enough people attend on Michigan Mile Day, to make it profitable for DRC.

The way that DRC handles that problem is by taking the purse money from the profits made during the regular racing schedule. Sears figures that exposing the fans to a top racing card for one day will be worth more exposure and money for DRC in the long run.

THAT'S WHY Sears added three other features to the 10-race card, such

as the \$20,000 Damascus Stake, the \$15,000 Sting sprint race and the \$25,000 Replay Handicap.

However, Sears feels that "it's in the very near future" that the Michigan Mile will be able to offer those \$300,000 purses which will attract racing's elite horses.

Letters are sent all over the country and Canada screening possible entries. About 100 top horses are considered. From those 100 horses, the list is trimmed down to a field of about 35. This is known as being nominated. Of course, one important consideration is which trainers will accept an offer to race in the Mile.

It is not realistic to expect horses such as Affirmed, the Kentucky Derby winner, to compete.

However, the field always has impressive candidates. Sears felt that this year's was the best ever. Sensitive Prince and runner-up Prince Majestic both chased Affirmed and Alydar in last year's Derby.

The next step is where the money starts to flow. It costs \$100 to accept a nomination. That's just the beginning. The 15 starters had to put up an additional \$1,000 to go to the post.

BUT WAIT, there's much more. Add expenses of travel, workers and other intangibles and it costs as much as \$5,000 for a horse like Darby Creek Road to come all the way from California. And that's a very conservative estimate. Sears then must decide handicaps. Some horses are allowed to carry less weight than others. Sears decides this by evaluating the horses' past performances. Sensitive Prince was assigned the heaviest weight at 123 pounds.

Post positions are drawn a couple of days before the race at a media brunch.

Action begins early on Saturday. The weeks and months of preparation are coming to a head. At 2 p.m., the first race is set to begin and 12,108 fans pour into the track, ready to bet more than \$250,000 dollars during the day.

JUST OVER 4½ hours later, the mile began. Actually, the race has been going 1½ miles since 1964. The necessity of lengthening the race came about when a horrible jam-up marred the 1958 mile. The distance was eventually

changed to its present length.

Twelve horses paraded to the post. The list included A Letter to Harry, last year's Mile winner; Hold Your Tricks; a Chicago entry; and Poverty Boy, a Detroit favorite.

Sensitive Prince was the listed favorite at 8-5. The odds on him dropped to a very heavy favorite 3-4 before post time. Prince Majestic was listed at 4-1, Darby Creek Road, 5-1.

It was a cool, sharp day. The track was dry and fast, with shadows lengthening due to the setting sun. The gates opened and the race was on to the screaming of the fans.

THE RACE was almost anti-climatic. Sensitive Prince broke away right from the start to an early lead on the inside rail. He looked strong and almost effortless as the horses bunched up around the first turn. "It's too tight out there. Someone's going to get hurt," yelled an excited racing buff.

At the eight pole, Prince Majestic came up to challenge. He appeared to have a chance to overtake the leader.

But Sensitive Prince had too much horse in him. Jockey Jacinto Vasquez held off the challenge easily, to win leading wire-to-wire. The win paid \$3.20, \$2.80 and \$2.40.

In winning, Sensitive Prince overcame a big jinx of favorites who have been upset. In 1965, Tom Rolfe, the 1955 national three-year-old champion ridden by Willie Shoemaker, was beaten by Stanislaus, a 21-1 longshot. The next year, he was beaten by unknown

Estrano II, a win that paid a mile record of \$250.60 for a \$2 win ticket.

The most stunning upset came in 1968 when super horse Damascus, who had garnered almost every honor in '67, was upset by Nodouble.

PRINCE MAJESTIC, who placed second, paid \$4.40 and \$3.60. Sorry Lookin' finished third, a longshot that paid \$7.00 to show. A Letter to Harry finished fourth, failing to be the first horse to win two consecutive Miles.

Jockey Vasquez and owners Dennis Milne, Joseph Taub and Hillary Boone accepted the traditional winner's trophy and roses.

"He's a speed horse — you can't reign him," said Vasquez, who rode two winners during the day. "He handled well, but not as well as I would have liked. It was a very consistent track. Prince has had luck with horses like Affirmed, but he's still one of the top horses in the country."

After the race was over, and the fans had long left, Sensitive Prince was seen limping heavily. He had never pulled up sore after a race before. With trainer H. Allen Jenkins away at a funeral, the fate of Sensitive Prince was up in the air. It was announced that he would be tried in another race, but it would have been a very tragic victory.

It was a sad ending to the festive day. Meanwhile, Sears will start the whole ball of wax over again next year for the 1980 Michigan Mile.

Pro highlights tourney

Four doubles winners emerged from the Tennis and Crumpets Super Finals tennis tournament last Sunday at the Farmington Racquet Club. Buy the big news was Wendy Turnbull.

Turnbull, a professional on the women's tour, made an appearance at the charity tournament, which benefits Children's Hospital of Michigan. She played a doubles tiebreaker with Brian Marcus against Susie Mascarin and Joe Fedell. The Turnbull team won, 10-8.

But in one of Turnbull's singles tiebreaker matches, she was beaten by West Bloomfield High School sophomore Kristen Streng, 5-4.

It was all in fun, as Turnbull played several balls that might have been out. But Streng is considered one of the up-and-coming stars of local tennis. She was the first singles player on West Bloomfield girls' tennis team as a freshman.

In the competition that counted, Francis Evans and Scott Davidson of Grosse Pointe teamed up to win the Open Division, besting Keith Cullen and Audrey Cox of Birmingham, 5-3, 6-4.

Cox and Cullen had advanced to the super finals on the strength of a 6-2, 6-2 win over Ricky Crowe and Donna Robinson of Detroit Saturday in the finals at Beverly Hills Racquet Club.

The A Division championship was captured by Anita Goldman and Neal Marcus of Bloomfield Hills. The team beat Peter Beryl and Bernard More of Southfield, 7-5, 6-2, Saturday in the finals, and then topped Tom Robinson and Roger Powers of Grosse Pointe, 6-1, 6-4, in the super finals Sunday.

SHIRLEY AND CARL Russell of Southfield won the B Division title by defeating Patty Bowers and Mike De-

soff of Dearborn, 6-2, 6-0 in the super finals.

The Russells were 6-4, 6-4 winners over John Mullen and Gwen Leach of Westland in the finals Saturday.

In the final category, Lou and Frank Clark of Birmingham won the C Division championship in three sets over Jerrie Lee Semon and Don Valentine of Dearborn, 2-6, 6-3, 6-1.

The Clarks had gone three sets in winning their final match Saturday, beating George and Sandy Hoppings of Farmington, 7-6, 5-4, 6-2.

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