

# Tennis tourney has strong backing

By C.J. RISAK

To make any sporting event successful, there must be a driving force behind it — an organizer, spending endless hours on every detail to make sure everything is as it should be.

The Sibley's Shoes Tennis Tournament has such a man — Chuck Karabell.

It was labeled the Seventh Annual tournament last weekend, when it was hosted by the Detroit Tennis and Squash Club in Farmington Hills. It was the seventh time it was held at the club.

But the tournament has deeper roots than that.

It was Karabell who brought the tournament with him when he became the club's manager in 1973. What used to be called the Detroit Open Tennis Tournament had a new home — its third one in eight years.

"I picked it up when I first came up here," Karabell recalled from behind his desk at the Detroit Club.

"It had been dormant for a couple of years, so I thought I'd give it a try."

It wasn't easy, not at first. The tennis popularity explosion was years away. When Karabell first came to Detroit in 1955 as a representative for Ethyl Corp. in Ferndale, tennis was floundering and the Southeastern Michigan Tennis Association (SEMATA) was "a group of about six guys who got together for lunch at a restaurant and talked about tennis."

DETROIT'S ROUGE PARK WAS the first site of the tourney under Karabell's direction. It wasn't an overnight success for him.

"At first, it was difficult to fill a 32-field draw," Karabell said. The tournament was an all-men open event back then.

After three years, the Open was on the move again, this time to Palmer Park, also in Detroit. It was then that the event began to grow in popularity.

"I had to expand the field to 64 when I got to Palmer Park," he explained. "After we moved here and I turned 35, I figured, 'Why not (expand to age group competition)?"

Now, Karabell is forced to limit the open competition to 32, with 16 invitations extended and a qualifying tournament for the final seven spots.

He also has added a women's open division, which hasn't caught on with the same enthusiasm as the men's play has yet.

As for his three men's divisions for older players (44-55 age division 54-65 division, and 55 and over), Karabell figures it was an important addition.

"Most of the players here (Detroit Squash and Tennis Club) are over 40," he said. "So I thought I should try to get some tournaments they could play in. There aren't many in Michigan for older players."

NOTHING SEEMS TO have hurt the tournament since the move to the new location. Entries started going over 100 for the open men's play, making it difficult for Karabell to make the decisions on who participates. Sibley's also helped out by offering to host it.

Karabell credits the tournament's success to the sudden increase in the popularity of tennis. Each year, the tournament's increased popularity is evident in the quality of play.

Last year's finalists in the Men's Open, Chuck Brainard and Graham Snook, were both first round losers in this year's edition. And neither of the players that beat them made it past the quarterfinals.

"The quality of play has jumped tremendously," Karabell said.

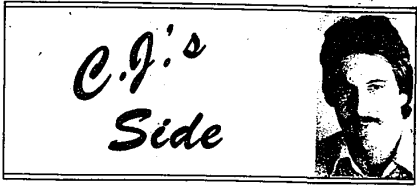
The tourney has had its share of attractions. Three years ago, Eric Iskersky from Toledo was a competitor. Iskersky who now attends Trinity University, finished second in the NCAA singles play and was a winner in doubles competition.

Hans Gildemeister, a Southern California University graduate and now Chile's No. 1 Davis Cup player, was a participant four years ago. Gildemeister now plays on the world circuit.

Even with the addition of better players, Karabell claims the tournament's popularity has leveled off.

"It seems to have reached a plateau, at least in the number of entries," he said.

But it can be certain that as long as Karabell is around, so will the tournament.



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Three West Bloomfield soccer teams will take to the carpet and battle it out for a league championship before the scheduled pro game. The Express will play the Strikers, the team that eliminated Detroit from the playoffs last year.

The West Bloomfield teams will be playoff winners from some of the five divisions in that league. Forty teams, divided into 7-8 year-olds, 9-10 year-olds, 11-13 year-old under 16, and under 19 presently compete in the league.

Tickets are on sale through the Parks and Recreation department for a discount price of \$5. Benefits from the sale will go for new equipment for the league.

Pre-registration for the fall soccer season will be on June 30. Applications are available through the Parks and Recreation Department. Call 661-2240.

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