

By George Maslin
observing sports

Commissioner Denies January Meeting In Northville Winter Racing Jolted By '70 Dates

The holiday basketball tournament has become a BIG thing. Time was when most high school and college teams took time off during the Christmas-New Year's break from the classes. A coach might hold a few workouts and then let his players go their merry ways. No more! Nine out of 10 college teams keep busy during the holidays, playing somewhere. There are major tournaments scheduled from one end of the country to the other. In Detroit, the University of Detroit has booked a dandy four-team tournament for Dec. 26-27 in the Memorial Building. Even without Spencer Haywood, there are indications that U-D is about to develop into a fairly strong contender.

CLOSER TO HOME, the Observerland High School basketball teams will be jumping, too. A great many are slated for tournament action next week with the spotlight shining at North Farmington, John Glenn and River Rouge highs as far as area schools are concerned.

It makes no difference which coach you talk to, they all feel the same about the tournaments. So do their players. "They're great, playing in one meet," said a prominent Observerland coach.

"For one thing, the players would rather take part in games, than practice. Everybody knows that. Secondly, the kids stay sharper. After all, when the holiday from classes begins we are in the midst of our league schedules and we spring right back into them as soon as we get back to school after the first of the year. "Then, too, the tournaments help to stimulate interest among the student body at large... and that's good. "The kids are looking for something to do during their vacations and with a tournament involving their own team, many will go out and support them."

THE TEAMS GET a chance to play two or three games in tournaments, depending on the size of the field. There are eight entries each at North Farmington and River Rouge and six at John Glenn. They play for championship and consolation honors. This means, that even if you lose in the first round, you're assured of coming back for a couple of more games.

The fans get a real bargain. You can come out and for one admission see eight teams in action. Of course, it might be a little rough on your "seat," sitting there from 5:30 p.m. to midnight... but you will be watching some of the finest basketball teams and players in action.

The "oldest" of the tournaments hereabouts is the Holiday classic which involves five Observerland teams—Redford Union, Bentley, Stevenson, Farmington and North Farmington—plus Berkeley, Southfield and Walled Lake Central.

The site switches from year to year. This time the action begins next Monday with two games each at Southfield and North Farmington. Redford Union faces Berkeley at 7 p.m. with Southfield hosting North Farmington at 8:30 Monday in the Southfield play. Then over at Farmington it'll be Bentley vs. Stevenson at 7 and Farmington vs. Walled Lake at 8:30.

All remaining games will be played at North Farmington. Monday's losers play Tuesday night, while Monday's winners are off until the following Friday. The final day's play is set for Saturday, Dec. 27.

GARDEN CITY EAST and Thurston are booked for action at River Rouge where the curtain goes up on Dec. 26 with four games, beginning at 5 p.m. when Highland Park faces Robichaud. Then it'll be East vs. Dearborn Edsel Ford, Thurston vs. Monroe and River Rouge vs. Ecorse.

The Rouge tourney continues on Dec. 27 and winds up on Dec. 29. Something new on the Holiday agenda this year will be a six-team meet at John Glenn High. Play at Glenn begins on Tuesday with Glenn facing Livonia Churchill at 7 p.m., to be followed by Wayne vs. Belleville.

Then on the day after Christmas, the Glenn-Churchill winner will engage Cherry Hill while Plymouth goes against the Wayne-Belleveille winner. The title will be decided on Saturday, Dec. 27.

SHORT STUFF: It's off to Pasadena Thursday and the Rose Bowl for the University of Michigan football team. Forget the odds on this one. Michigan will win by at least a touchdown, despite the fact Southern California has been installed a four-point choice.

Wonder if an Observerland High School hockey league ever will be set up? With the great facilities offered in Livonia, it would be ideal for hockey to be added as a varsity sport.

Ridgers Lose Star

Minus the services of big Fred Street, giant center who was averaging 30 points per game, the Orchard Ridge Community College. Cagers couldn't cope with the marksmanship of St. Clair CC and dropped a 119-80 decision.

It was the second loss against two victories for the Ridgers who will be without Street for two to four weeks. Power Junior High in Farmington was in a walking state when he was an ankle injury. He was in an ankle cast on the campus Wednesday.

Street suffered the injury in the closing moments of the losing battle against Flint JC last week. Sparked by the brilliant work of Guard Bob Callington, who had 32 points for the evening, 30 points per game, the Orchard Ridge Community College. Cagers couldn't cope with the marksmanship of St. Clair CC and dropped a 119-80 decision.

Forward Bill Miller was the Ridge leader with 24 points on Street for two to four weeks. Gary Waters, 17, Gil Mitchell 12 and Jess Hunt 10. The Ridgers entertain Macomb tonight (Wednesday) at the closing moments of the losing battle against Flint JC last week. Sparked by the brilliant work of Guard Bob Callington, who had 32 points for the evening, 30 points per game, the Orchard Ridge Community College. Cagers couldn't cope with the marksmanship of St. Clair CC and dropped a 119-80 decision.

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With the 1970 Michigan harness dates now a matter of record, Jackson's action at Northville Downs swings into its last full week of competition. The finale doesn't come until Dec. 30 but Northville Downs will be dark next Wednesday and Thursday, Dec. 24-25, as Santa Claus takes over the spotlight universally for his annual record run. Jackson's action resumes Dec. 26 for four more nights. Since State Racing Commissioner Leo G. Shirley did not award any extension into January, it will be Auld Lang Syne in every sense of the word on New Year's Eve.

Jackson has drawn 30 nights of racing for 1970, starting Friday, April 27 through May 30. It will mark the first time since Leon A. Slavin took over the operation in 1949 that the outstate track has operated at such early date.

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1970 Harness Dates

HAZEL PARK RACEWAY
Mon., March 23-Tues., June 2 (61 nights).*

JACKSON RACEWAY
Mon., April 27-Sat., May 30 (30).

NORTHVILLE DOWNS
Wed., June 3-Tues., Aug. 4 (54).

WOLVERINE RACEWAY
Wed., Aug. 5-Tues., Oct. 13 (60).

JACKSON-NORTHVILLE
Thurs., Oct. 15-Sat., Dec. 19 (40).**

*No racing Good Friday, March 27.
**Dark Mondays in October; Dark Mondays and Tuesdays in November and December. No racing Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 26.

Jackson Harness Raceway also will be in direct competition for part of its meeting with Hazel Park which kicks off the season Monday, March 23 and runs through Tuesday, June 2 for 61 nights.

Northville Downs will conduct a 54-night meeting starting June 3 through Aug. 4 and Wolverine Raceway swings into action Aug. 5, through Oct. 13. Jackson's transplanted meeting at Northville Downs will begin its second season starting Thursday, Oct. 15 through Dec. 19 for a 40-night session.

However, Commissioner Shirley has stipulated Jackson at Northville will be "dark" on Mondays during October and "dark" on Mondays and Tuesdays during November and December. There also will be no racing on Thanksgiving night. Jackson at Northville completed its 18th night of

St. Agatha Adds To Hot Streak

St. Agatha High's basketball team keeps booming along. Five victories in six games, and tied for the lead in the Southwest Division of the Catholic League.

However, it wasn't an easy matter for St. Agatha to fashion its latest triumph. The Townshipers had to go all out to squeeze past Our Lady of the Lakes, 64-61.

St. Agatha was on top virtually from the start. After one quarter it was 21-15. At the half the St. Agatha command had increased to eight points.

But down it went to three going into the final quarter as

competition Saturday as 3,801 patrons wagered \$286,039 on 10 races. A late scratch in the 10th race kept the handle from going over \$290,000. On Friday night a gathering of 2,680 wagered \$226,183.

Despite a drop in play and attendance over the previous weekend, Jackson's action during the week increased, giving the Slavin operation a nightly average of \$168,000.

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Rock Swimmers Win 3rd

With victories in eight events, Plymouth High's swimmers rolled to their third district triumph, dunking Bentley, 65-40 in a Suburban Six League encounter. Bob Davis, of Bentley, won two events to lead Livonia. For Plymouth it was balance all the way that enabled Coach Dick Gretzinger's crew to record the easy triumph.

The summaries: Medley relay - Plymouth (Covington, Kindree, Jewke, Kowach). Time 1:51.2; freestyle - Davis (B) Time 2:01.4; 200 Individual medley - Len Wendell (P). Time 2:15.3; 50 freestyle - Steve Finley (P). Time 2:43; diving - Jim Shinn (P) with 79 points; 100 butterfly - Ed Jewkes (P);

Time - 1:02; 100 freestyle - Blake Lawless (B). Time 1:32.7; 200 backstroke - Tom Covington (P). Time - 1:01.2; 400 freestyle - Davis (B). Time 4:25; 100 breaststroke - Mark Kindree (P). Time 1:11.3; freestyle relay - Plymouth (Finley, Wendel, Ed Norman and Don LeClair). Time - 3:42.9.

Son Aids Pop, Stevenson Wins Third Straight

It's nice to have a family affair in which any endeavor and Stevenson High School can't complain about the one it has going in basketball this season. The Van Wagoner duo has a star player.

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West Pair Wrestle To Titles

Two Garden City West entries—Rick Stewart and Essa Sackliah—merged as the only Observerland winners in the annual Garden City East Invitational wrestling invitational tournament.

Stewart took the 129-yard class title while Sackliah captured the heavyweight laurels. Stewart won all-area honors last season as he took the district title and triumphed in 30 of 37 matches. Sackliah a year ago pinned 18 of his 22 rivals.

Meanwhile, Ypsilanti repeated as the invitational winner with 14 points. DEARBORN was second with 68 points. Then came Crestwood 46, Belleville 42, Ann Arbor 130, Secrest 37, Thurston 25, West and John Glenn 34 each, Fordson 29, Wayne 26, Franklin 20, Stevenson 15 and Bentley 3.

Other winners in individual weights: 98 pounds, Stewart (Ypsilanti); 107, Syrian (Fordson); 115, Kalmbach (Benton); 130, Secrest (Dearborn); 137, Kokas (Dearborn); 145, Bow (Ypsilanti); 155, Burke (Ypsilanti); 165, Nicol (Dearborn); 175, Wilkes (Crestwood); 185, Resume (Romulus).

Humerup honors in the 107-pound and 137-pound heavyweight classes went to Geier of Franklin and Leo of Glenn, respectively. Glenn's Jones and McIlley placed third at 122 and 45, respectively.

The invitational is one of the biggest staged in the state each year.

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