

Hectic world of the Velodrome

Lynch falters

The Birmingham Lynch and Sons baseball team struggled through a rough past week, losing three of five games.

Lynch and Sons started the week by losing two one-run games, came back to win Friday and Saturday, then dropped a 12-0 decision to Waterloo Group One on Sunday.

The week's action led the Birmingham team in third place in the Pontiac Class A Baseball League with a 9-4 record.

Saturday, Lynch clipped second-place Jason's Jalopy 6-2 behind the strong pitching of Mark Pomorski. Catcher Jim Price smacked three hits, including a long double, and drove in two runs. Joe Maloney, Jeff Maher and Bruno Petrella added two hits each.

Mike Cullen was 1-for-1, reaching base four times on a single and three walks.

Pomorski allowed seven hits, struck out five and walked six to earn his second win.

FRIDAY'S GAME with Clarkston Coaches Corner turned into a thriller when Lynch and Sons blew a 5-0 lead in the seventh inning. Coaches Corner tied the game and sent it into extra innings where Petrella won it with a homer in the ninth.

Tim Scheerer led Lynch at the plate with four hits in six at bats. Maloney was 3-for-5, and Cullen, Petrella and Jeff Maher had two hits each.

Bill Nolan started on the mound for Lynch and worked the first six innings. Brian Young came on in the seventh and worked an inning and one-third before giving way to Joe Wissing who closed Coaches Corner out.

Lynch outpitched Jason's Jalopy 11-7 on Thursday, but lost 5-4. Maloney and Price had two hits each.

The Birmingham team wanted a brilliant pitching performance by Ed Lynch on Wednesday, losing in eight innings to league leader Spencer's Floor Covering, 3-1. Lynch threw a six-hitter at Spencer's, striking out six in a losing effort.

Polo club hosts tourney

The Detroit Blues stayed undefeated in the Midwest 8-Goal Polo League over the weekend, edging Grand Rapids Kenture 7-5.

The Detroit Blues team consists of members of the Detroit Polo Club. The team has a league record of 5-0.

In other league action, Detroit-Paragon beat Toronto Vlahovic 9-5, and the Midwest Vagabonds lost to Toronto 8-7 and to Greater Grand Rapids 9-8.

The Detroit Polo Club will host the Jack Glazer Memorial 8-Goal Tournament this weekend. The Detroit Blues and Detroit-Paragon will square off against teams from Columbus, Ohio, and Beaver Valley, Pa. The tournament starts at noon Friday, with a second game at 2 p.m. The consolation game is at noon Sunday, and the championship game is at 2 p.m.

For game-day information, call 665-9920.

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12th-of-a-mile oval are banked 20 degrees out of the horizontal with the curves rearing up at a sheer 50 degrees.

From the track's infield, the oval looks like an elongated bear pit.

The track looks fast and it looks dangerous. Yet, said Hughes, it's very safe and easy to ride — even the impressive curves.

"The curve," said Hughes, "is the easiest part to ride because the centrifugal force keeps you right in."

THINGS DO GET a little hectic, however, in a race. Hughes said that while riding the track is fairly simple, "racing it is a whole different story."

He said racers carry a force of 2 1/2 Gs going into the corners. In other words, a cyclist weighing 100 and working down the straightaway at 32-miles-per-hour would find himself or herself carrying an effective weight of 250 pounds going into the corner at the same speed.

Racing on the velodrome track is limited to a select few by design. Hughes and his partners have formed a National Indoor Cycling League. They invite the top 10 percent of the 10,000 licensed bicycle racers in the country to participate in races ranging from sprints to pursuits to team event.

A race took place Friday, and Hughes said the arena was sold out. Another race has been scheduled for Aug. 1.

Among the races contested on the track is the flying lap: a single rider on the track is given four laps to warm up, then is timed on his last lap. The track record for a 12th-of-a-mile is 7.77 seconds.

Racers also participate in sprints. In a sprint, the

winner is the first of a pack of four-eight riders across the finish line.

But the most exciting event contested on the track, the event for which velodromes were originally designed, is Madison racing, so named because it was developed in the old Madison Square Garden in New York.

MADISON RACING is a team event contested over a specified time period. One member of a four-man team circles the track near the bottom while his teammates rest near the top. When the bottom rider tires, one of his teammates drops down into the bottom lane. The bottom rider grabs the relief man by the seat of his pants, then slings him into the race.

The first team across the line wins in Madison racing, but there are sprints within the race where points are awarded to the winner. Those points are used to break any ties.

Because of the sprints, strategy enters into the race. And because of the strategy, Madison racing is "a high-speed chess game on wheels," Hughes said.

That high speed chess game is played out on a closed track right in front of the spectators, not out on a course where only the birds can see it.

"We think this aspect of it is going to be something for the spectator," said Hughes.

"The major difference (between Madison racing and other forms) is that this is a game."

"The name of the game is how fast you can recover."

THE GAME REQUIRES some special equipment. Velodrome bikes are a little unusual — the first thing one notices is their lack of brakes.

The bikes also have direct drive gears — you

have to keep pedaling, you cannot coast. There is only one size of sprocket allowed, so equipment doesn't make as much a difference as it might in some other form of bicycle racing.

A person can't come in off the street with a 10-speed and expect to ride it on the track. But on Tuesdays and Saturdays, anyone can come in off the street, sign a release, listen to a clinic on how to ride the track, then take a spin on bicycles provided by Schwinn.

Clinics are from noon to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday. They will continue through July 19 and may be expanded past that date depending upon demand.

All clinics are free.

"We just want interest," said Hughes. "We want to get a grassroots movement going."

He said each session averages 30 people and that many are first-timers. There are those, however, who get such a kick out of riding that they keep coming back.

JOHN NATOCI, 14, of Southfield has ridden the track three times. He calls riding on the banked track "more of a challenge — you have to keep concentrating on what you're doing."

Natoci sported a scrape on his left knee which resulted from a tangle with the concrete surface of the Civic Center Arena. Another rider fell in front of him, and Natoci went off the track to avoid him. He left the track, however, traveling too fast to control on level ground and "wiped out."

That accident didn't keep him away from the velodrome.

"People try to compete in what's the craziest thing they can do," said Natoci. "When I first saw this, I thought it was real crazy, but it turned out to be pretty easy."

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