

Thursday, September 24, 1981



M.B. Dillon Ward

Memories of that big fight

Getting inside Detroit's Joe Louis Arena to watch the "Showdown at the Palace" welterweight brawl is a fight in itself.

Midway up the steep, fan-filled staircase, we discover the formula: let your body go limp, roll with the punches — use the time to place your bets. Eventually, you get shoved through the door.

Inside, the arena is every bit as alive as the evening's pugilistic principals. Well-dressed, shabbily-dressed, black, white, male, female, young, old — they show up for the showdown.

You can feel a pulse in the place. And for us "Hit Man" fans — a three-fourths majority — Hearn's heartbeat is our heartbeat. He has us hypnotized.

No one in line at the concession stand is a stranger. Conversations include anybody within earshot. One well-fed, jovial Detroit resident is telling anybody who cares to listen how disappointed she is. "I cause I damn near went to Vegas — that Caesar's Palace is something."

"I been to every one of Hearn's fights live," she booms. West Bloomfield's Joe Savich, a Channel 4 intern, feels 98-percent sure Hearn will win. "Leonard has no chance. He likes to prance, and supposedly 'the pro boxer' has it over Hearn. But they'll slug it out, and Hearn will beat the hell out of him."

LEONARD AND HEARN finally enter the ring to the roar of 20,000 fans at Joe Louis. It is hard to imagine that probably 250 million others around the world also are watching the richest-ever sporting event.

As "Thomas Hearn, Hometown — Detroit" flashes on the screen to strains of "Rocky," whistles reach to the rafters. Who knows — the ghost of the late, great heavyweight Joe Louis may be hovering up there, pulling for this fellow Detroit.

Round one: At this point, leaving your seat to buy a round for your friends is plain crazy. You don't want to waste time blinking.

Hearn comes out looking good. The announcer, in a surprised voice, says, "Hearn is a better boxer than he's been getting credit for." Leonard must think so too; the smile has disappeared.

Round Five: It is still Hearn telling Sugar where to go and backing it up with his fists.

Round Six: "Somebody better get going," says the announcer. It seems Hearn hears him, and it is run, Ray, run.

But then comes the turning point. Sugar Ray lands a long left hook that sends Hearn to the ropes, and Leonard's legion lets loose.

"There ain't nobody saying nothin' now," scream the Sugar fans seated in front of us. "Why 'ya'll bein' so quiet alluva sudden? Good night, Tommy!"

Round Seven: They are fighting for Hearn, feigning hooks and jabs on the edge of their seats. "Dig deep, Tommy..."

Round Eight: "Who's dancing now? This match is mine!" — more Sugar talk.

"He bleeping set me back a month," complains a Canadian who senses he's put his money on the wrong man.

Round Nine: Hearn is coming around. "Why is Sugar Ray going to sleep?" asks the announcer. "Are the cobwebs gone for Hearn?"

Round 10: "Ray's beginning to realize the seriousness of this," says the announcer. "Hearn has known it all along."

Round 11: It is all Hearn. When he raises his hands heavenward, Hit Man's fans go berserk.

Round 12: Who's ever hit Leonard like this?

Round 13: Sugar hammers Hearn right out of the ring. A pall settles over the crowd.

Round 14: The fight is stopped. Leonard is the winner. Detroiters are shaking their heads. White and black, their faces are slack. Tommy is human, after all.

A stunned mob exits. It is raining. It is depressing.

At the Anchor Bar, the only tonic is a gin. Have a beer; head for home. Says a woman in the women's room: "I feel stunned and bummed. I lost 50 bucks."

Says her friend, "I lost \$70. I need something to lift my spirits. I'm sniffing my last two hits (of cocaine) — saying goodbye to snow. And I could've been enjoying this at a party at the Ritz-Carlton."

A young man leaning against a pinball machine is staring into space. The Miller Lite clutched in his hand is his only grasp on reality.

Someone else is stricken, his body strewn over a chair. Dulling the pain with a good drunk is working. Fifteen minutes later, he passes out. We leave, hoping Hearn can shrug it off and have enough left to hum the Motown melody, "You Beat Me to the Punch This Time."

Tennis powers ready to collide

Two of the state's top high-school tennis teams — Bloomfield Hills Kingswood and Grosse Pointe South — will clash Thursday, Sept. 24, on Kingswood's courts.

Coach Nancy Ryan's Kingswood team raised its record to 2-0 last Tuesday with a 7-0 whipping of Grosse Pointe University-Liggett School. Megan Foster won the No. 1 singles match, beating Paula Michigan, 6-1, 6-1. All Kingswood match victories came in straight sets.

Birmingham Marian, another prep tennis power, pushed its record to 5-0 with a 6-1 win over Harper Woods Bishop Gallagher.

Katy Leonard won the top singles match for Marian, downing Shelly Ficarra in three sets, 6-3, 4-6, 6-4. Marian's top doubles team of Mary Sue Emmons and Colleen Convas beat Beth Nowak and Mary Trevlar, 6-1, 6-1.

Birmingham Groves stopped Southfield-Lathrup, 6-1. Groves' matchless came in No. 4 singles, where Lathrup's Hedi Kravis downed Trang Hayes, 6-1, 6-2. In No. 1 singles, Pam Osterland of Groves overcame Melanie Garfield, 6-1, 6-0.

Earlier, Ann Arbor Pioneer edged Groves, 4-3. The deciding match was No. 3 doubles, where Dori Baker and Mini Rhodes took a three-setter from Denise Walker and Kathy Robinson, 6-4, 2-6, 6-3.

Birmingham Seaholm blanked Troy, 7-0. At No. 1 singles, Clare Slaughter stopped Tracey Farr, 6-1, 6-0. Karin Olson won the No. 2 singles match, 6-4, 6-1, over Lori Tourney.

In an earlier match, Seaholm beat Lathrup, 7-0. Slaughter stopped Garfield, 6-0, 6-7, in the top singles match. Seaholm's No. 1 doubles team of Sue Mantz and Sara Yatera defeated Jody Kane and Lisa Smith, 6-0, 6-3.

Troy Athens won its third in a row this fall with a 7-0 showing over Clawson.

Sandy Derry defeated Mary Pepp, 6-3, 6-1, in No. 1 singles, and Gail Rodman defeated Sally Pepp, 6-1, 6-2, in No. 2 singles. Amy Allison and Nancie Rowe won the No. 1 doubles match, beating Julie Gleason and Sue VanNetter.

Ann Arbor Greenhills took Detroit Country Day School, 6-1. DCDS' Suzanne Alani beat Barb Newell, 6-3, 6-1, in the No. 4 singles match.

Guides winning deaf swim team

Wieck coaches in silent world



By M.B. Dillon Ward staff writer

Every four years, Birmingham Groves boys' swim coach John Wieck travels to a different country. During his 10-day stay, he utters barely a word.

His sign-language skills get quite a workout, however.

Wieck, a Birmingham resident, is head coach of the U.S. Deaf Olympic swim team.

Since Wieck's rookie year in 1965, U.S. swim teams have enjoyed phenomenal success against international competition at the World Games for the Deaf, or Deaf Olympics — a quasi-replica of the hearing Olympics.

At this summer's 14th Deaf Olympics, held in Cologne, West Germany, Wieck's boys' and girls' teams captured 44 of a possible 70 medals — and 21 of a possible 26 gold medals — while shattering 17 world records.

The team's 21 swimmers, 15-to-24-year-old residents of states ranging from Hawaii to North Carolina, largely contributed to the United States' domination of the 38-country event.

American deaf athletes, 176 strong, captured a world-record-breaking total of 109 gold medals — more than all other countries combined.

The Russians headed home with 57 gold medals, West Germany with 29, Italy 19, Bulgaria 15, Canada eight, and Mexico none.

This year's attendance also rewrote the recordbook, as more than 20,000 spectators gathered for the opening ceremonies amidst a bevy of balloons in Cologne's 60,000-seat-soccer stadium.

KELLY SLAUGHTER of Ferndale High School represented Michigan. Competing in the 200-meter breaststroke, the 15-year-old Oak Park resident clocked 3:15.3, good for ninth place. Slaughter also participated in the 100-meter breaststroke.

West Bloomfield trackster Rhonda Abbott grabbed sixth place in the 500-meter run with a time of 2:31.47.

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Showdowns mark prep football card

By Marty Budner staff writer

It's the third week of high school football.

That means referees across the county will whistle in the start of league play tomorrow (except in the Southeastern Michigan Association that began last week). And, there will be some interesting first-week showdowns that could have decisive effects on the various league races.

For example, in the Metro Suburban Activities Association (MSAA), pre-season favorite Dondoro will host Athens. The Red Hawks are considered one of the Oaks' top challengers this season.

Athens coach John Walker says the winner of this game will definitely enjoy a quick start in the race for league title.

"I think whoever wins this game is the team everyone else will be out to beat," said Walker, whose Red Hawks, like Dondoro, are 2-0 this season.

"This will be a tough game, but it won't be the deciding game. We have to play five league games, and we have to be ready for all of them."

"This is a balanced league, and there will be other games down the road that we'll have to be ready for," he said.

A KEY Metro Conference game will pit undefeated and surprising Detroit Country Day (2-0) against Hamtramck (1-1) on Saturday afternoon.

"They (Hamtramck) worry me," said Country Day coach Joe D'Angelo.

"They have a lot of talent, and probably have one of the best defenses in the league. They are led by Dave Warren who is possibly an all-state nose guard. And, we've won two tough games so we have to guard this week against a mental letdown."

Other top games will feature Royal Oak Kimball and Southfield in the SMA, and West Bloomfield against Waterford Kettering in the Greater Oakland Activities League (GOAL) opener.

Here are this week's games (last week's predictions 9-5).

Troy Athens (2-0) at Royal Oak Dondoro (2-0) (Friday, 7:30 p.m.). Dondoro and Athens have been impressive in compiling their undefeated records. The Red Hawks have a balanced offensive attack, led by quarterback Steve Pankow who has thrown three touchdown passes so far. It is Athens' third straight road game. PREDICTION: DONDORO

Royal Oak Kimball (2-0) at Southfield (2-0) (Friday, 8 p.m.). The Knights are always one of the state's top teams, but they'll be in a real sword fight this week. The Blue Jays are on a roll. Southfield has scored 51 points in two games — led by the running trilogy of DeVoe Cornell, Reggie Hayes

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