

table talk

CHILI COOKS who think they're hot stuff can register through April 16 for "The Great Chili Cook-Off" held annually in Saline, Mich.

Last year's first-place winner was Robert Vargo of Beau Jack's restaurant in Bloomfield Township.

Contestants are permitted to use any ingredients except beans or spaghetti in their chili recipes. The winner in the Michigan contest May 1 will receive air fare for two to the national championship in California.

The contest is a benefit for the National Kidney Foundation. For registration, call the Kidney Foundation in Ann Arbor toll-free at 1-800-452-1455.

CONFETTI'S restaurant in West Bloomfield puts the accent on pasta and fresh seafood.

The new eatery is open from 11:30 a.m. to 2 a.m. Mondays-Saturdays and from 4 p.m. Sundays. Food service continues till 11:30 p.m. weekdays and 12:30 a.m. weekends.

Pianist Kenny "Pancho" Hagood, who entertains in the bar, provides a musical backdrop for dining. Confetti's is at 6480 Orchard Lake Road.

BENNIGAN'S Tavern in Bloomfield Township, scheduled for a mid-May opening, will recreate the look of a 1930s tavern and British pub.

Circus prints, old photos and a billiards collection are among the eye-catching decorations that will adorn the new tavern. The menu will run

the gamut from quiche and burgers to steak and seafood.

Bennigan's is at 2555 Woodward.

CIRO'S Italian restaurant in Keego Harbor recently marked its fourth anniversary.

Brothers Gino and Jerry Ciro, who came to the United States from Italy, run the restaurant, with their mother and father helping to make rolls and soup. A specialty at Ciro's is Italian seafood.

— Ethel Simmons

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Mariel Hemingway as Chris Cahill clears a hurdle at the Olympic Trials in "Personal Best."

the movies
Louise
Snider

A 'caring' camera examines world of women runners

What Michelangelo did for the athletic male body in his Sistine ceiling frescoes, Robert Towne has done for females in "Personal Best" (R). This is a movie that glorifies the female body — playing, resting, working, loving.

Towne, the director, producer and writer, and his cinematographer, Michael Chapman, have turned the cameras with a lover's delight on a group of women athletes. The camera lingers, circles and glides over the forms, as it records each turn, curve and variation of surface. At one time, a figure may be bathed in a golden glow, at another time, covered with droplets of perspiration. "Personal Best" is a story about women pushing themselves to their physical limits in athletic competition. The focus of this story are two women who, over a four-year period, become friends, lovers and competitors.

If the movie appears exploitive in treating their homosexual relationship, that aspect is far outweighed by the movie's freshness and vitality. More important than that is the atmosphere established.

THE FILM CAPTURES the easy-going camaraderie of the whole group of athletes and their coaches. It shows them through the lens of a "kind" camera. No one is ever made to look bad. No one is ever ridiculed.

One of these delightfully fresh scenes is when the women work off their high spirits in a football game. In another scene, a woman, in a burst of enthusiasm, runs over and picks up her male coach.

The two central characters of this romp are Chris (Mariel Hemingway) and Tory (Patrice Donnelly). Tory is slim, dark, a little older and a lot wiser. Chris is a statuesque blonde with a little girl's voice that hasn't caught up with her body.

They notice each other at the Olympic track trials in 1976. Henry has given her usual winning performance, and Chris has failed miserably. Tory consoles Chris, and their friendship and love follow. Tory then inveigles her coach (played with lots of energy and humor by Scott Glenn) to let Chris train with the other members of the team.

The two women live together and train together. As Chris' athletic potential develops, she changes from a whiny, submissive person to one with growing confidence and assertiveness. The change in Chris also marks a change in her relationship with Tory. The growing competitiveness between them leads to quarrels and a final breakup.

THESE ARE healthy young animals, very aware of their bodies and very sensual. There is a childlike simplicity and candor about Chris that lends an innocent quality to all her actions. However, she and Tory, and the others on the team, display a singleness of purpose that is fascinating.

Looking at these attractive young people, you wonder what they would be like if their thoughts embraced other things besides liniments and lap times. Still, it's their narrow focus, perhaps, that makes them winners because they concentrate so completely on what they do. They stretch their muscles, not their minds.

Hemingway began training for her role with twice-daily work more than a year before principal photography started. She very convincingly performs each of the pentathlon events seen in the movie — the 100-meter hurdles, shotput, high jump, long jump and 800-meter race.

Donnelly was an athlete before turning to acting. She was a member of the U.S. Olympic Team in 1976, and at one time, she was the fourth-ranked hurdler in the world. "Personal Best" is her movie debut and a sensational one.

The authentic look of the movie is further bolstered by many other real-life athletes who have supporting roles. Kenny Moore, who plays Chris' boyfriend, is a former Olympic marathoner, and Jodi Anderson, who plays a member of the track team, is the current American pentathlon champion.

Together with Hemingway, these actor/athletes, as well as others in the film, present graceful and dynamic images of that most magnificent of all machines, the human body.