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Eddie's still king of the diamonds



Eddie Feigner lets fly during a softball lesson taught at the Southfield Civic Center last week.

PHIL RASHEAD said it best. "I'd like to say Eddie Feigner is a real professional. (Feigner) probably came expecting to find a fast-pitch team. We were a group of slo-pitch players. But, they did their best to put on a good show."

Rashead, a West Bloomfield resident, was one of a group of slo-pitch softball all-star players who served as bait late Wednesday afternoon for Mr. Eddie Feigner — the self-proclaimed king of softball.

Before 1,500 fans at the Southfield Civic Center, Feigner provided the ditty-doodle, fancy wind-up pitching that he's become so famous for more than the 37 years that the "King and His Court" has been on the road.

He threw sinkers, sliders and risers from pitcher's mound and second base. Advanced in age but forever the master, Feigner pitched balls behind his back, between his legs and even while blindfolded.

"I FIND it amazing that the man, at his age, can still throw that hard," said Rashead, who plays from the Birmingham Fisher Foods/Wesley Drugs softball team.

"I've seen him before, and I've always admired him. It's his longevity that's absolutely amazing. The man's a great showman."

"But, I wouldn't be surprised if he was giving us a break because he knew we were slo-pitch players. I've seen him before when he's thrown harder. He pretty much threw the same speed and elevation to me while I was batting."

Rashead, a former infielder in the Kansas City Royals farm system, got a couple hits off Feigner and his talented three-man Court. Actually, the all-stars mustered enough hits to score four runs.

The King and His Court, however, scored eight and won easily. It was just another road victory for Feigner's team.

EDDIE FEIGNER still sports that familiar crew-cut. But, his face has a few more lines, his stomach is a little larger and he stunts in a slow, semi-crouch — like he's wearing ski boots — because of a pair of gimpy knees.

His body definitely shows the strains of constant travel. Here are some figures:

- 7,121 games pitched (5,878 wins, 980 losses and 283 ties).
- 110,010 strike outs.
- 793 no-hit games, 1,698 shut outs, 225 perfect games, 11,948 exhibition games.
- 3,719 cities played in (including a record 57 games won over a 41-day span).



Marty Budner

It's a gruesome schedule. Wednesday, for example, after entertaining in Southfield, Feigner received a police escort to the north side of town to go to East Detroit for a 9 p.m. show.

FEIGNER PITCHED 18 games last week in eight days — enough to make even Arnold Schwarzenegger's arm weary. His caravan often travels from state-to-state in less than 24 hours.

Later this year, Feigner said he plans on entertaining in the heat and sands of Saudi Arabia and Africa. How does he do it at his age?

"Age is relative," said Feigner, who

'I find it amazing that the man, at his age, can still throw that hard. It's his longevity that's absolutely amazing.'

— Phil Rashead on Eddie Feigner

played before his largest crowd ever (16,000 fans) last year at the Pontiac Silverdome.

"It doesn't matter how old you are — you just get out and do your job. But, sometimes it's like any job — it gets tedious and you get tired of it. The best part about it is the people — I really enjoy the people."

"The only time it really gets to me is when I play a triple-header," he said. "You're bound to get tired after that."

THE KING is totally in charge of his entourage. He's the producer, director and programmer, all packaged into one aging body.

After sauntering to the middle of the gravel-coated infield of diamond No. 1 on the Civic Center's north side, Feigner, still bundled in his heavy warm-up jacket, was greeted warmly by his admirers.

Feigner told the audience what to expect — blindfolds in the fifth inning, pitching from second base the next inning and a pitching exhibition after the game.

In the top of the first, Feigner ordered two runs and he got them. First baseman and team comedian Gary West, catcher Eddie J.R. Feigner and shortstop Dave Barnett ran and hit with authority.

The all-stars came to bat and quickly scored a run on back-to-back doubles.

THE COURT scored two more runs in its next turn at bat, and the King asked for some quick outs over the next few innings so they could get to East Detroit on schedule.

The Court obliged. West was caught sliding into second base on one occasion, and young Feigner hit an infield grounder — then threw his bat at the ball after the fielder threw it toward first base.

Late in the game, the all-stars picked up a run on a play which had the King steaming — proving he still retains that inborn competitive flair.

With an all-star on base, Barnett raced into the outfield to pick up a hit through the middle. Barnett threw a perfect line drive to home plate, only to find the younger Feigner following the runner around first base. The throw skipped to the backstop as the King watched from the pitcher's mound in disbelief.

AFTERWARDS, IN the dugout, as the fielders heatedly discussed the mis-play, the King spoke. "Let's make sure we get it done right the next time — either throw behind the runner or throw to home plate. Don't throw it if there's no one there to catch it. We're supposed to know what we're doing."

Despite the miscues and obvious 'set-ups' with the all-stars in certain situations, the crowd enjoyed the action.

"It was fantastic," said Lee Griffin of Rochester, who plays for the Birmingham Bull in the Birmingham league and was Feigner's catcher during the post-game pitching show.

"He was throwing up and down — straight drops and sometimes the ball would go straight up. He was throwing fast, but I don't think he was pitching as fast as he could."

"Everyone was saying he can really pitch the ball."

500 expected to compete in Southfield

Swimming sisters hope to shine in Long Course

By Shirlee Iden
staff writer

Every morning at 5 a.m. Anita and Nicole Rival drive a now familiar route from their home in Bloomfield Hills to the Southfield Civic Center.

For the two competitive swimmers, daughters of Dr. and Mrs. Jan Rival, it's the best time to get in their training laps for upcoming competition.

Southfield's Civic Center Pool, a 50-meter, Olympic-sized pool, is not only the site of their training this summer, but the location of the Michigan Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) long course meet.

Scheduled for Aug. 6-8 and sponsored by the Royal Oak Penguins Swim Club, the meet is expected to draw more than 500 swimmers from 40 Michigan clubs.

The Rival sisters, Anita, 18, and Nicole, 13, will swim for the Birmingham-Bloomfield Atlantis Swim Club, coached by Paul Peterson.

Other teams gearing up for the meet are the Royal Oak Penguins, the Oakland Live Y's, and the Dearborn Recreation Dolphins.

Between them the two swimming sisters have 15 years of competition behind them.

A SOPHOMORE student at Harvard College, Anita has been swimming since she was eight years old and is a member of the Harvard swim team.

An honor-achieving graduate of Andover High School, she was a member of the Observer & Eccentric Oakland County all-area girls' swim team in the fall of 1980.

At Harvard she pursues a pre-medical course which she hopes will lead to a career in sports medicine.

Last summer Anita represented the

U.S. at the Maccabiah Games in Israel, where she won silver and bronze medals as a member of the U.S. women's swimming team.

Her two medals represent 20 percent of the 10 medals won by the U.S. men's and women's teams.

Maccabiah Games is an international

competition for Jewish athletes held every four years, the year following the Olympics.

For the elder Rival sister, competing

made her an instant celebrity in Israel, where she was often recognized on the street by people who had seen the games on television.



Anita Rival (above) and her sister Nicole hope to make a big splash at the Amateur Athletic Union Long Course Swimming Meet this weekend in Southfield's Civic Center pool.

"When I went out on the street, people stopped and ask if I was the one they had seen on television," she said.

The games are a big thing for Israel, it's on nationwide TV."

Last year, Nicole Rival, went with her parents to see Israel and watch her sister compete. Next time, which comes along in 1985, she intends to be a Maccabiah Game competitor herself.

"I've been swimming for five years and usually compete in freestyle and breaststroke," she says.

NICOLE SAID her she loved her trip to Israel with "all the different people from different backgrounds, Jerusalem and Masada even watching Anita."

To prepare for the 1985 games in Israel, Nicole is one of a group of 30 area athletes competing in Youth Maccabiah Games in Memphis, Tenn. next week.

"I'm going to fly there, compete in swimming and tennis, and fly back so I don't miss any practice for the AAU meet."

Presently, Nicole plays tennis at the Franklin Racquet Club, competing in both singles and doubles. "My parents both play and now we have Anita into tennis too," she said.

An eighth grade student at Bloomfield Hills Junior High, the younger Rival carries a 4.0 honor point average.

"I'm a serious swimmer and have trained all summer," she said.

In the AAU meet she will swim in six individual competitions and three relays. For the past three weeks she has been practicing for the relays in addition to her regular workouts.

In Memphis, Nicole will compete both in the pool and on the courts with Jewish youth from six countries: Venezuela, Mexico, Canada, Australia, Israel and the U.S.

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