

'Court'-ing the stars

Faulkner brings major-league men's tennis to Detroit

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I began to talk to him about five years ago as to why we had never had a major tennis tournament in Detroit. They have them everywhere else — from Buenos Aires to Bogota to Tokyo to Johannesburg. But there isn't one in Detroit and there should be. At the time I wasn't thinking so much of personal involvement, but I just wanted to see it happen.

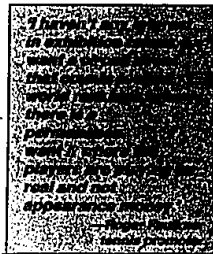
A month after I left the Express, the first thing I did was to fly down to Dallas to begin to pursue (getting a WCT tourney to Detroit) seriously. By that time, obviously, I began to think of more personal involvement. Detroit should have an event of this nature. It's never happened, and one of the

reasons why is you have an established circuit — just like the golf circuit — where it's very difficult to break in and get a new city to have an event. Those events are scheduled every year — it's the same tournaments the same week. The golf circuit's fixed and the tennis circuit is pretty much fixed. You can't just say we're going to have an event.

So, you were fortunate there was a cancellation of one of the tournament's regularly-scheduled sites.

Yes, this tournament was scheduled to have been in Zurich. The irony of it is that we started talking about it five years ago and the decision to bring it here wasn't taken until two months prior to this event taking place. We started to talk in October. They (WCT officials) were saying: "It looks as if we may have a problem in Zurich. If we had to move the tournament to Detroit, could you do it?" We were talking of doing one in '83 anyway, but that would have been a regular event. When he said this was the WCT Winter Finals — which is more than just a regular event, people who qualify get to play in the finals — then I said yes. Even if we only have two-and-a-half to three months to do it, we'll do it.

You've seen the old Detroit Loves of Team Tennis and the Virginia Slims



women's professional players. They've been pretty well attended here. Why does this city have such a fascination — almost an infatuation — with professional tennis?

The women's event is one of the best drawing events in the country. There's a very great tennis interest. There's upwards of 100,000 people playing tennis actively in the Metropolitan area — maybe more. This city supports any major professional sport, provided it's the top names and it's major league.

What about the difference in the



women's game and the men's game. What do you feel are the basic differences?

With the men's game you have better depth. In the women's game you have four or five superstars. In a sense that's true — where you have four or five superstars — in the men's game too. But, the top men can't beat the lower-rated players 6-love, 6-1 in 40 minutes. That doesn't happen. So, when you see a (Ivan) Lendl play a (Balazs) Taroczy or (Kevin) Curren, even though the chances are that Lendl's going to win, the chances are also that you're going to

see a fairly long battle. Men's tennis is better balanced. The quality is better.

And this WCT tournament . . . you have to be pretty excited about it. Lendl won over the weekend (at a tournament in Chicago) and that has to help publicity for your tournament. He's got to be a big draw.

On the basis of last weekend, he's the number one player in the world. He won more money than anyone did last year — he won two million dollars. He won something like 80 or 90 percent of the tournaments he played in. He didn't win Wimbledon because he didn't play last year, and he lost in the finals of Forest Hills to (Jimmy) Connors, although he beat (John) McEnroe in the semis in three straight sets. He beat McEnroe six straight times last year. He's very close to being the number one player in the world. The thing people forget about him is he's only 22 years old and he's still maturing. Having him gives enormous credibility.

Bjorn Borg, Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe will not be playing in this tournament. Does that bother you? Do you think that will hurt attendance?

The depth of our tournament is tremendous. We have eight of the top 28 players in the world. Guillermo Vilas

has been a brilliant player over the years. You can only bring players like Borg, Connors and McEnroe to one tournament) on an exhibition basis. I haven't any interest in exhibition tennis. I want a circuit event that counts toward world rankings, where there is a permanence, where you establish it that there will be the same players year in and year out. I want it where the players are playing for real and not appearance money. That's important to me because I regard it was a sport and not entertainment. I mean it's both, but it should be competitive sport as well as entertainment.

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Franklin sets junior net tourney

Singles and doubles tennis players will be able to participate in the Franklin Winter Junior Tennis Championship which will take place Jan. 21-23 at the Franklin Racquet Club in Southfield.

Competition in singles and doubles play will be for boys and girls from 10 to 18 years of age. Entrants may enter only one singles event and one doubles event.

First-round matches will be at 8 a.m. Friday, Jan. 21. All finals will be played Sunday, Jan. 23.

All singles and doubles entrants must call 352-8000 on Wednesday, Jan. 19, between 1-6 p.m. for their first-round check-in time.

To be eligible, players must show current United States Tennis Association membership cards or purchase the card at tournament headquarters before the first match is played.

Entry deadline is at 6 p.m. tomorrow. There will be no phone-in entries.

Entry fee is \$20 per person for singles and \$8 per player for doubles. Entry applications are available at the Franklin Racquet Club. The event is open to the public.

SHRINE NIGHT

The University of Detroit will sponsor "Shrine Night" at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 22 at Calthan Hall for the Titans' game with Xavier.

All Shrine alumni, students, parents and friends are invited to attend the game, which will have a halftime salute to coach Don Slick, who formerly coached Shrine's basketball team.

Slick, a former University of Michigan assistant who's in his first year as head coach at U-D, led Shrine to Catholic League and Detroit City championships in 1978.

SKI RACES

Blue Cross/Blue Shield will sponsor its cross country Soow Rush Ski Race Jan. 22 at the Springfield Oaks Golf Course, which is located in Davisburg on Anderson and Hall roads.

Novice races for new skiers begin at 2 p.m. Call 858-0915 for registration information.

Another Blue Cross/Blue Shield cross country race will take place at Glen Oaks Golf course. Glen Oaks is on 13 Mile and Orchard Lake in Farmington Hills. Call 474-4115 for more information.

MOONLIGHT SKI TOUR

Moonlight skiing will be available at Independence Oaks County Park on from 7:30-9:30 p.m. Jan. 28. Participants should bring their own cross-country skiing equipment and meet at the clubhouse.

Park entry fee for county residents is \$2.50 per car, \$4 for non-residents. Independence Oaks is on Sasabaw Road, 2 1/4 miles north of I-75 in Clarkston. To register, call 858-0903, from 8:30 a.m. until 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

BLIND SKIERS

Blind people of all ages can enjoy cross country skiing at clinics from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. Jan. 15, 29 and Feb. 5.

Clinics take place at Glen Oaks Golf Course in Farmington Hills. Participants may attend one or all clinics but must preregister by calling 858-1441. A fee of \$1 per person, per clinic covers transportation from designated pick-up points, equipment rental and ski instruction.

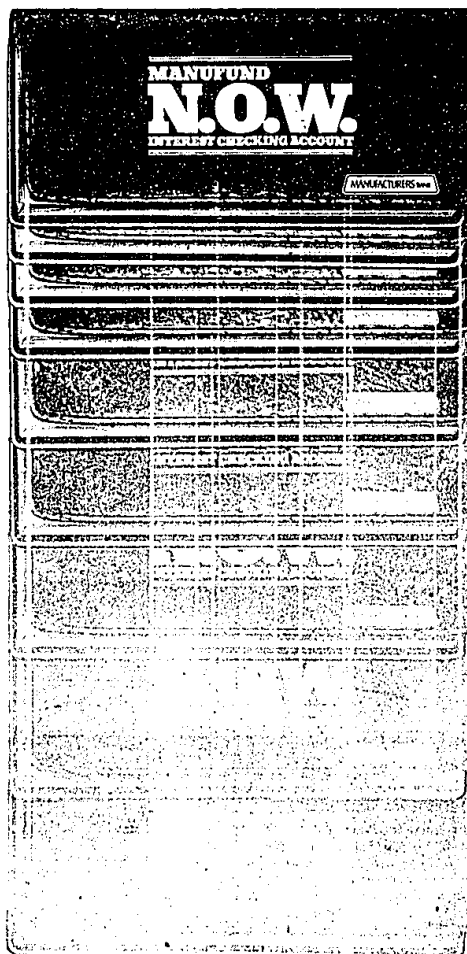
MIAMI TANKER

Susan Pickett, a 1982 graduate of Farmington Harrison High School, has been selected as a member of the Miami (Ohio) University swim team.

A diver, Pickett was a three-year varsity letter winner and senior captain for Harrison. She also was a two-year state champion and semifinalist, and, as a senior, was named the most valuable member of the team.

Pickett, a resident of West Bloomfield, is majoring in zoology and pre-medicine.

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