

# Cheerleaders tackle chants for Panthers

By M.B. Dillon Ward  
staff writer

As nighttime fell and the winter wind lashed around the windowless, abandoned bar on Telegraph in Detroit, it seemed as desolate a place as a person could find.

Little did motorists speeding by suspect that inside, in half an hour, the just-selected Michigan Panther cheerleaders would catapult the place into action, dancing, kicking and clapping to "Square Pegs" and other Top 40 songs that had Panther President Peter Spivak and admiring onlookers tapping

their feet if not shaking their booties. The 38 cheerleaders, aged 18-32 and dressed in leotards, tights and legwarmers all shades of the rainbow and basking in flashing disco lights, were performing under the scrutinizing eye of Michigan Panther choreographer Susan Topolewski of Southfield.

Among the chosen were Farmington Hills' Roxanne D'Ascenzo (Miss Farmington), Redford's Maureen Desmond, Livonia's Patti Joly, and Westland's Tina Phillips, Dee Sline and Judy May. It had been the survival of the fittest during auditions at the Pontiac Silverdome February 5 that attracted 450 would-be cheerleaders, including a 68-year-old man.

Two Wall Lake 18-year-old males made the cut, and will be apparent to fans attending the Michigan Panther's opener against the Oakland Invaders March 19.

"They're not going to dance. They'll be there to lead the cheers, do lifts and acrobats," said Topolewski.

"At first, we thought we might get some flak (from people who think we're doing a sexist thing), but with two men, I think we'll be avoiding that."

In a get-acquainted session before practice began, cheerleaders described themselves in one word. Gazing around the circle of his seated female comrades, Mickey said, "undecided."



Susan Topolewski of Southfield has taken on the challenge of being the Panther cheerleader choreographer.



Farmington Hills' own Roxanne D'Ascenzo will be one of those cheerleaders greeting Michigan's newest sports team when it takes the field at the Pontiac Silverdome.



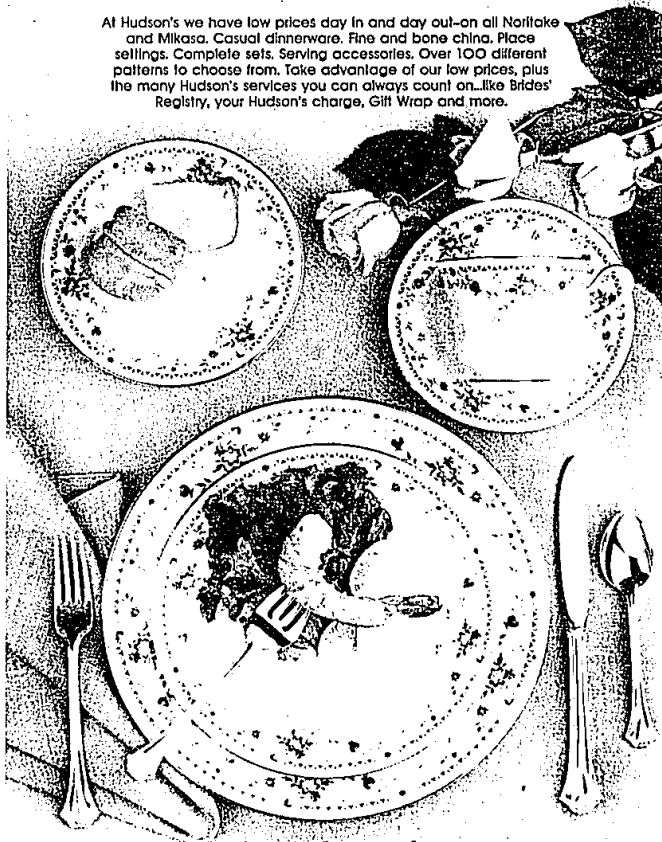
Patti Joly of Livonia steps out in fine style as she prepares for her cheerleading debut.



Practice makes perfect, and Roxanne D'Ascenzo is revving up for a big season.

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