

C.J. Rlsak

## Soccer path: No easy road

**W**HO DOESN'T LIKE rain? I like rain. I like rain on weekends. Late in the weekend, on Sunday afternoons.

Maybe not every Sunday. But last Sunday's rain was nice. I settled myself in front of my TV set as the rain pelted against my window, and watched the Tigers and Panthers and any other animals that happened to roam across the screen.

It proved very beneficial. Not only was it relaxing, it allowed an additional week of healing from my "Wounds of War."

NO GROANS are necessary — this is not intended to rival Herman Wouk's (and ABC-TV's) lengthy epic. It is intended merely to teach a lesson to all the readers out there who figure they still possess the athletic skills of those they read about in these pages.

This is the story of a lamb being led to the slaughter. Of winning and losing. And of surviving. Survival — that's the first lesson I should have learned. It's the first one the coach of my soccer team tried to teach me.

That's right. I've joined the ranks of the recently insane. Soccer, the sport of the decade. Average-size guys running up and down a field kicking a ball. Sounds like fun, eh? Good exercise and all that rot?

Besides, I'm experienced. I played intramural soccer in college. Forward. Team's leading scorer one season.

Never mind how many years ago that was. Forget the painful thigh injury that kept me from walking it capably for nearly a week. That's the thing about memories — they fade.

**MINE SURE DID.**

The group I joined is the Canton Adult Soccer League. When I signed up, I was assured by one of the organizers that "it's just a fun league."

So this is your idea of fun? My coach called two weeks after I called to tell me about practice. Practices? For a fun league? So I asked him about the level of competition.

His answer remains clearly etched in my memory: "Well, let me put it this way. We've never had anyone who couldn't go to work the next morning. But some of these guys are out there trying to relieve their youth."

Uh-oh.

I'm no great athlete. I found that out when I appeared for my first game. So did my teammates. And some of the guys on the other team, too.

I was the only player on either side without some kind of spiked shoe (metal isn't allowed, thank God). I was also the only one without shin guards. Both proved to be painful errors.

**BUT THAT WASN'T my mistake.** Survival is the lesson I failed.

I played fullback first but, after offering my services as a forward, I was inserted into the lineup at left wing. In the space of one 30-minute period, I missed three easy chances at goals.

Actually, the last of the three opportunities I did put into the net. But I was whistled for offside.

The second part was the encouragement and support I received from my teammates at halftime after the three misses. The worst part was the encouragement and support I received from our opponents at halftime after the three misses.

It was at the intermission that my coach said something to me that I mistook for a compliment. "You're a kamikaze out there," he said.

I should have realized that running up and down the field kicking people in the shins, ankles and, once in the thigh, is no way to make friends. Opponents' curses grow louder as my kicks became more errant.

Of course, they can kick back. And they have spikes, while I wore tennis shoes. The three-kick gash on my shin, compliments of the opposing goalkeeper, was the final part of my lesson.

**"FIRST THING tomorrow I'm buying spikes,"** I recorded in my memory as I dragged myself to my feet. "And shin guards."

Pain. I never thought, or at least remembered, it being so persistent. Not intense. A dull, muscular ache that lasted the better part of a week. It concentrated in my out-of-shape legs, but other parts were also affected.

"I'll never walk again," I moaned to myself late that Sunday evening, three hours after the game and 30 minutes after a long, hot bath.

But, in keeping with the adult soccer player's creed, I made it to work Monday. Walking gingerly, but I made it.

I did survive.

I also bought my spiked shoes. The salesman suggested labeled "Official soccer shin guards." Too small, I said. I wanted something more like the kind Lance Parrish wears. The salesman assured me the soccer shin guards would suffice.

"They'd better," I warned. Or else I'll be back, and I'll be wearing my spikes.

**THIS GAME MAKES you mean.** But I did learn some valuable lessons. I'll pass them on to you, free of charge.

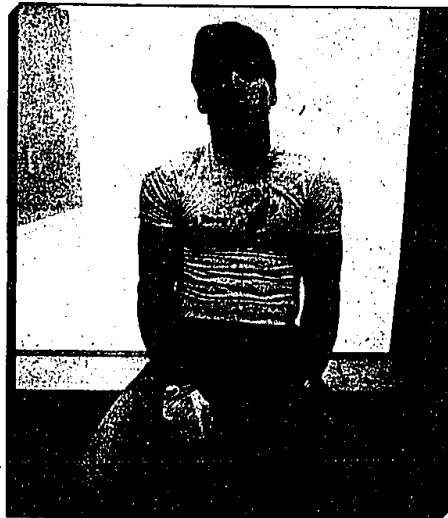
• "Face yourself, because you're not 18 anymore. You're not even 23."

• "Protect yourself. Unless you enjoy the pain of a bleeding leg."

• "All you do kick somebody on the other team, guess yourself and help them up. 'Cause paybacks are hell."

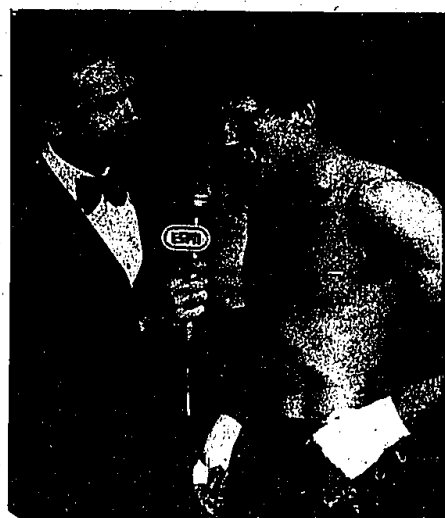
• "Survive. Winning is great (we won our opener, 4-1), but it's no fun if you're too torn up to appreciate it."

And, after all, this isn't the big-time. This is recreation. You know, just a "fun league."



*'I believe I can be as successful playing racquetball as I am at kickboxing. I find the way I play right now is exciting to watch. What I do to return is amazing to me.'*

— Kerry Roop



## A change of pace Former kickboxing champ finds new racket

By Jim Hughes  
staff writer

**K**ERRY ROOP's first experience playing racquetball can be likened to the 98-pound weakling who kept getting sand kicked in his face by the king of Muscle Beach.

You know the story. The wimp gets humiliated to the point where he starts pumping iron, and miraculously, six weeks later he comes back to the beach and retaliates by carving up the walking dead of beef jerky.

As far as Roop is concerned, the storyline is where the analogy ends. He is far from a cream puff. In fact, he's quite the opposite.

Roop, instructor of Nature's Way Martial Arts Academy in Rochester, is the former Professional Kickboxing Association world lightweight champion. He recently retired his title and moved up in class to the heavyweight division.

**BUT ROOP** currently is taking a break from the sport which brought him fame and little fortune. He wants to take a break from kickboxing, yet stay in shape before he hooks up for one last bout.

Enter the sport of racquetball. Roop began playing racquetball in January and has continued despite an inauspicious start. After having little trouble against his wife, Roop searched for stronger competition — which he received in a hurry.

"I got this guy who played a lot, and he killed me," Roop recalled. "The first couple of weeks, I don't have a chance."

When you consider this is coming from a guy who dishes out

punishment as one means of livelihood, it's understandable how taking lumps would be a humbling experience.

Roop is not one to take a beating lying down — no doubt something instilled in his karate and kickboxing training — so he diligently worked at the game. The results were akin to those of the 98-pound weakling, who's weight training manifested into Popeye-type muscles.

**"SOME GUYS** were spotting me 10 points and they still beat me, but now, I'm beating them. And I'm even spotting them 10 points," Roop said.

Because he's found prowess in the sport of racquetball, Roop has decided to put his kickboxing career on hold. The 33-year-old wants to see where racquetball will take him before he puts on the gloves and padded shoes to stage the famous final scene.

"I'm going to pursue it (racquetball) the next six months and see what I can do," Roop said. "I know how to dedicate myself and I know how to practice. I know what it takes to get where I want to go with it."

Roop, who won the PKA light heavyweight title from Dan Macaruso last June at the Premier Center in Sterling Heights, recently relinquished the crown to pursue a bigger payday in the heavyweight circuit. He's hoping to land that bout later this year.

The heavyweight title currently is vacant. Brad Hefton and Tom Hall, two heavyweights in their early 20s, are scheduled to square off May 13 for the crown. Roop plans to fight the winner within six months after that bout.

Chances are, it will be his last professional kickboxing fight.

so he wants to have something to fall back on other than his martial arts teaching, which has been part of his life for seven years.

**ONE OF THE** reasons Roop took up racquetball was to break up the monotony of the rigors of training in his pro kickboxing career. During his six years of fighting and training, he was pretty much on a rigid schedule.

"For six years, I really didn't take any time off other than maybe a week or two," Roop explained. "I just got stale. I thought what I'd do before my last hurrah — as they say — is take six or eight months off and get fresh and give them one big fight. I want to give it my best. I want to come back fresher, stronger and better than I've ever been. I want to be super strong and super ready. I want to be ready to take on anybody in any division."

That Roop came across racquetball and the fact that he's found success in the sport is really no great surprise, as he explains:

**"A lot of** players from other professional sports use racquetball to keep in training and stay in shape, and I can see why. Athletes need competition," Roop said. "I'm getting a kick out of it because it's something that keeps me competitive."

"My karate and fighting training has helped me be successful in racquetball."

**ROOP, WHO** will play in a racquetball tournament this weekend and stage one later this month, has plans of turning professional in the sport made famous by Marty Hogen and Mike Yellen. If he can't compete on a professional level, he hopes to become adept enough to teach as a professional.

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## AAU stars 'unkind' to Ontario cage team

By Brad Emmons  
staff writer

The event was called "Operation Kindness."

But what happened to the Ontario Provincial All-Star basketball team last weekend suggested anything but that.

The Ontario team dropped two straight games in the two-day tournament which was won handily by the Michigan AAU squad, comprised of state's top prep players.

Michigan, led by the play making of Flint Central's Barry Johnson, defeated the Suburban AAU squad for the championship, 124-99, on Saturday night at the University of Detroit's Calihan Hall.

In the consolation game, Detroit AAU blasted Ontario, 111-80.

Johnson, headed for Michigan State, appeared to have a lock on MVP honors, but AAU chairman Ron Hall changed his mind at the last minute and awarded Detroit Southwestern's Antoine Joubert the award, much to the dismay of the crowd. The Michigan-bound Joubert was also for 23 for the hour, but led all scorers with 22 points. Johnson had 16.

Johnson, a steady and fundamentally sound guard, led Michigan on Friday night with 19 points as Michigan walked Ontario 129-99.

**JOUBERT** and Benton Harbor's Quincy Turner added 18 points each. U-D signees Bryan Doss of Benton Harbor and Brian Hames of Saginaw tallied 14 and 12 points, respectively. Meanwhile, Redford's Catharine's Mike Malenka and Kevin Smith of Lansing Everett led all rebounders with 10 each.

Tony Douglas, a 6-foot-5 forward from Assumption, racked up 51 points during the two-day event, which drew a total of \$1,000 fans. He may have walked away with MVP honors, but his Ontario teammates faltered badly.

"We just didn't have the people to take care of the ball like we did last year," Ontario coach Gerry Brumpton said. "We had trouble in the backcourt."

Ontario, which battled Michigan down the wire last season, was missing its top front-line player, David Kipler, who was playing last weekend with an Ontario men's squad.

The Suburban AAU squad earned a berth in the final with a 112-109 victory over Detroit.

**INSTEAD** George Davis, bound for Ferris State, scored 34 points for the winners. Redford Bishop Borgies' Lewis Scott added 18. Livonia Franklin's Bob Stebbins and Redford Thurston's Jim Wells were also members of the Suburban squad. Tim Haynes of Bloomfield Hills' LaSalle, Southfield's Ray Kaleer and Stan Heath of Catholic Central represented the Detroit squad. Haynes had 13 points on Saturday.

In the championship game, both teams played evenly for the first five minutes, but Michigan began to take charge behind the play of Turner, Doss and Johnson, grabbing a 68-42 halftime lead.

The Suburban AAU squad cut the deficit to 14 points early in the second half but couldn't get any closer.

Joining Joubert and Johnson on the All-Tournament team were Davis, Douglas, Turner, Clayton Hinesley of Detroit East Catholic and Tony Goldson of Southgate Aquinas.

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