



Jim Hughes

Big weekend for sports fans

Just killing time... What do Chicago's Comiskey Park and Livonia Stevenson High School's soccer field have in common? Both are sites of All-Star games, where a collection of some of the biggest stars in the sport battle in a fun, yet still competitive contest.

Like the Major League Baseball All-Star game scheduled last night in the Windy City, the Observer & Eccentric's Prep Girls' Soccer Classic will feature outstanding talent Saturday morning in the Winning City — Livonia, which houses the reigning boys and girls state champions from Stevenson.

GIRLS REPRESENTING the All-Area teams from Oakland County and Wayne County will meet 11:30 a.m. Saturday at Stevenson (see related story).

This event is a first of its kind by this newspaper — pitting honor squads from the two counties in the O&E coverage area. It promises to be an exciting game, especially when you consider the brand of soccer played in such cities as Livonia and Troy, just to name two of the perennial powers.

Even if you're only slightly interested in soccer, this is the game you want to see. Every girl who will step on the field is a top-notch player. It should be entertaining, and a good instructional tool for the youngsters. See you there.

• Is it my turn to jump on the Michigan Panthers' bandwagon?

Isn't it nice to have a sports team in this town that nobody boos. Even the Tigers — who have played as well as any team in the league the past month — give reason to stir up the boo-birds occasionally.

Sure, the Panthers are on a roll and winners of the Central Division of the United States Football League. But that's not what has me turned on and tuned in. Win or lose, this new club is simply exciting. They do things offensively their NFL counterparts only think about.

The prime example took place at Chicago in the second-to-last regular season game with the Blitz. After the Panthers built a seemingly insurmountable lead, the Blitz stormed back and pulled to within eight, 27-19, midway through the fourth quarter. In lieu of running the ball in an attempt to eat time off the clock, the Panthers — with quarterback Bobby Hering passing like darts in practice — went back to work. The long drive was culminated on a 32-yard TD pass to Anthony Carter.

That's exciting football.

In addition to having a team that's fun to watch, we have a winning team that is fun to watch. And the team is run by management which cares for its players and fans. When the team was floundering in the early going, the Panther brass went after players who could turn it around.

So the team turns it around and qualifies for the playoffs by winning the division, and what does team owner Alfred Taubman do? He lowers ticket prices for the playoff game. A nice touch to a nice season.

But the Panthers' season is far from over, so says my top sports source. My private source — "Mike the Spike" — figures the Panthers are the favorites at home against the Oakland Invaders Sunday. Then, assuming Philadelphia takes care of Chicago as "The Spike" predicts, Michigan will beat Philly on a neutral site — Denver's Mile High Stadium.

Now "The Spike" has been wrong before, but he also predicted Leonard over Hearn, the American League over the National League in 1971, Curran over Connors, and Mexico over Lebanon in straight sets in volleyball preliminary action at the World University Games.

Spike, who sat on the 50-yard line in the sweltering Silverdome Sunday, told me beforehand that the Panthers would outdraw the Tigers, which they did, 31,995 to 28,703.

Surely the Panthers will outdraw the Tigers Sunday, even though the football game will be televised. Wouldn't it have been something if the Tiger game was televised, though? Then you'd have the Panthers on Channel 7, the Tigers on Channel 4, and Thomas Hearn's fight with Murray Sutherland later on Channel 4.

• Speaking of Hearn, the former KO king, has been the subject of criticism due to events since his canceled bout with the destructive Marvelous Marvin Hagler last summer.

Although Hearn had just one fight since then, it was for the WBC Super Welterweight Championship, which he won in a 15-round decision from Wilfred Benitez. The Motor City Cobra had two other fights — both with puncher James "Hard Rock" Green — canceled.

WHAT'S HAPPENING is that Hearn is losing his credibility. And remaining inactive is doing nothing to change that. Assuming his right wrist and hand are 100 percent, Hearn should be fighting as often as possible. He should accept big paydays for steady workouts so he can stay sharp enough to take on Hagler — if that day ever comes.

Then, he won't need to work another day in his life. If he starts knocking out all the challengers he faces, interest will be stirring for the Hearn-Hagler bout, just as it was for Hearn-Leonard. And that's just what boxing needs around now — a championship fight between two champion fighters. If I see Roberto Duran fight one more time, I'll be crying "No mas."

Soccer

'All-Star Classic' a dream matchup



photos by GARY CASKEY/staff photographer

Liz Suttle, a standout performer for Troy High, heads the ball during an Oakland County practice session.

By Jim Hughes
staff writer

Talk about a dream matchup — Oakland County vs. Wayne County in a girls' high school soccer game.

Both counties are rich in soccer tradition, and when the conglomeration of all-stars representing the two Observer & Eccentric All-Area teams take the field 11:30 a.m. Saturday at Livonia Stevenson, some of the best talent in the state will be showcased. Of the girls on the two teams, five earned first-team All-State honors while seven others were selected to the second team.

The O&E Prep Girls Soccer Classic, the first of its kind, also will feature two of the best coaches in the state. Noreen Divens, who guided Stevenson to the state championship this spring, will lead the Wayne County team while Mike Ruddy, who took Troy to the state semifinals, will direct the Oakland County squad.

"This is a good idea, and I think it will be a good game," Divens said. "It doesn't matter who you put out there (from the All-Area first and second teams and honorable mention), they are all very good players. We have some very strong players on every line."

"WE SHOULD have a very competitive team," Ruddy said. "I think one of the things that will be different is the style of play between the two teams. We'll try to control the ball, and I think Wayne County will use more strength and power. I have a pretty good idea of what Wayne County has, and if they have an idea of what we have, fine. If not, that's fine, too."

The Wayne County roster is made up of seven first-team players, six second-teamers and a pair of girls who made honorable mention. The players are Lisa Broccardo, Andrea Bokos, Mary Kay Hussey and Leann Kils of Stevenson, Dorene Dudek and Jennifer Huegill from Churchill, Kathy Greig and Lisa Rigstad from Bentley, Colleen O'Connor and Shelly Stassel from Plymouth Salem, Margie Wambacher from Plymouth Canton, Karen Fells and Dawn Sullivan from Garden City, Heather Brda from Franklin, and Shannon Bowler from Ledywood.

Oakland County has seven first-team All-Area players, six second-teamers and one honorable mention. The players are Renee Eichholt, Trish Lally, Lori Nicley and Cheryl Kusza from Athens, Liz Suttle and Ericka Johnson from Troy, Karen Bednark from West Bloomfield, Debbie Wojtaszek and Chris Nagy from Marian, Lisa Leonard from Lahar, Beth Forterfield from Grove, Sue Ferguson from Farmington Hills, Stephanie Scott from Seaholm, and Ilka Warsbawsky from Southfield.

The following is a brief rundown on the first-team All-Area representatives from Wayne County:

• Broccardo, a sophomore, won all-conference

honors and Stevenson's MVP award for her defensive play. She scored six goals and added five assists.

• O'Connor, a junior defender, was all division and all-league for the second year in a row. A captain for Salem, O'Connor was noted for her tackling skill.

• Bokos, a senior midfielder, was a co-captain for Stevenson. In three years, the all-stater tallied 27 goals and 37 assists.

• Dudek, a junior midfielder, was Churchills MVP who scored 17 goals and added 17 assists. She was named to the all-state first team.

• Rigstad, a junior forward, was a co-captain for Bentley, and the school's leading scorer the past three seasons. She was all-state and all-conference.

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Troy coach Mike Ruddy offers instructions to the all-stars.

Rice gears to kick off season at Silverdome

By Marty Budner
staff writer

It's not too early to think prep football — especially for Catholic League foes Birmingham Brother Rice and Detroit Catholic Central.

The Warriors and Shamrocks open their 1984 schedules Saturday, Sept. 10, at the Pontiac Silverdome for the third consecutive year as participants in the Prep Kick-Off Classic. The football double-header featuring the two popular Detroit-area schools has attracted a combined total of 27,000 the past two seasons.

This year's slate opens with Brother Rice against the Chicago city champions — Mt. Carmel High School — at 5:30 p.m. In the nightcap, Catholic Central, defending champions of the Detroit Catholic League, plays Traverse City.

According to Rice coach Al Fracassa, Mt. Carmel has lost only two games the past three seasons. The school from the city's south side won the state championship in 1980.

"THEY'RE A sound Catholic school with a good tradition," said Fracassa. Rice's veteran coach who has twice rejected offers from Michigan State University to become an assistant coach.

"They'll be bringing down a few thousand people who'll get a chance to see the Silverdome for the first time. It will be a very competitive game and the kids are looking forward to playing

them. It should be very exciting.

"I've been watching some of their films from last year and that's all I really know about them," he said. "I've invited them to attend one of our scrimmages and I'm going to see one of theirs."

Catholic Central is undefeated in the Prep Kick-Off Classic while Rice split its games.

The Shamrocks defeated Eaton Rapids in 1981, 27-0, then came back for a fairly easy 24-16 victory last season over Traverse City.

Rice lost to Youngstown Cardinal Mooney in overtime in its first game, 15-13. The Warriors then needed overtime to get past Dearborn last fall, 17-14.

BROTHER RICE logged an overall 5-4 record last year. This year's squad was hurt by graduation, but there will be 22 returning players.

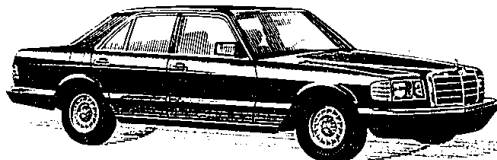
Meanwhile, Catholic Central mustered a 7-3 overall record last fall. The Shamrocks, who lost powerful running back Jeff Gait, shut out Rice two times last year (in the boys' bowl, 7-0, and the Catholic League finale, 10-0).

The Prep Kick-Off Classic drew 12,000 people in 1981 and some 15,000 people last season. Officials from both CC and Rice, which co-sponsor the event, are pushing for a crowd of at least 20,000 this year.

Tickets, priced at \$5, are now on sale at all of the participating schools.



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