

Longshot Wins To Uphold Mile 'Jinx'

On the turf a world record holder was beaten by a whizzer for the richest purse in Michigan history, while in the stands 26,494 patrons turned the 1970's Michigan Mile Day into the greatest afternoon of pari-mutuel wagering thoroughbred racing ever has seen in this state.

That was the record setting atmosphere which prevailed Saturday at the Detroit Race Course in Livonia as the fans themselves tried to steal the show from one of the finest, thoroughbred fields that ever went to the post here.

They failed only because of a hair-raising, head-to-head stretch duel between two

champions. Fast Hilarious and Figonero.

AFTER THOSE two horses reached the wire in front of their season rivals, it took the judges five minutes to determine from the official photo that Mrs. Dorothy Rigney's Fast Hilarious had triumphed by a nose over Clement Hirsch's Figonero.

The latter had set the existing world record for this same route of a mile and 1/4 last Labor Day at Del Mar.

In contrast, Fast Hilarious, known basically as a sprinter, had won only once at a mile and 1/4, but that was in the \$100,000 American Derby at Chicago. His pattern was the same in both victories—go to

the front immediately, build up as big a lead as possible and then hang on to the best of his ability during the thundering charge of the stretch runners.

In the process of this climactic race, and the nine which accompanied it on the best program of the year, records fell as though they were being shot at with a scatter gun.

AMONG THE MEMORABLE chapters written into Michigan's thoroughbred racing history at the DRC Saturday were these:

1. The 16-race pari-mutuel handle of \$2,146,231 topped the former high mark by a shade over \$10,000. The old record had been set on Mile Day in 1968. Saturday's action marked

the fifth time the DRC has gone over the \$2 million mark, the only track in Michigan ever to do so.

2. Both the gross Mile purse of \$126,000 and the winning owner's share of \$81,500 were all-time highs for Michigan racing. Previous record for a winner was \$81,770, set in the 1967 Mile.

3. Fast Hilarious' winning time of 1:47 2/5 matched the DRC track record for the distance, the mark first having been set by Colandriello when he won the 58 Mile. While this is one and a fifth seconds off Figonero's work record, the DRC racing strip is not considered as fast as the famed tracks of California.

4. The wagering combine called the "big perfecta," which requires a bettor to pick the one-two finishers in both the fifth and sixth races, in exact order paid the biggest price since instituted at the DRC, a whopping \$72,115.60. Only two fans had the correct 106-1-10 combination.

5. And finally tradition stood the test of time. Since its initial running in 1946, the Michigan Mile has seen only one favorite score a victory, and no thoroughbred ever has won the race twice, although several great ones have tried.

VERNA LEA FARM'S No-doubt Mile winner in '69 over the famed Damascus, had the role of 11 10 favorites as he came back to the DRC's possession of seven victories in \$100,000 races and hailed as the handicap champion of the nation. He wound up fifth, beaten 7 1/2 lengths by the winner.

Even with all these developments, the DRC's successes for the year seem far from over. Eight major stakes with purses ranging up to \$40,000 remain to be run before the curtain falls on the 90-day season Aug. 1. In particular, more holiday records may fall over the July 4 weekend.

For sheer brilliance of racing, however, nothing is likely to improve on the 70 Mile. Jockey Carlos Mardet had Fast Hilarious out on front by four lengths down the backstretch with Figonero and Pleasure Seeker in closest pursuit.

The Argentine-bred Figonero, third in last year's Mile, began eating up ground in the far turn, pulled even along the top of the stretch and even seemed to gain a head advantage.

On again, however, came Fast Hilarious despite his reputation as a sprinter, and when they reached the wire the 4-year-old Rigney colt had his third victory in seven starts this year.

It brought his career winnings to more than \$340,000. Pleasure Seeker was third and King of the Castle fourth.

observing sports



Only the early birds, who show up at Tiger Stadium, get a chance to see him in action.

He's there only when the Tigers are taking batting practice about an hour before game time.

He pitches to Al Kaline, Willie Horton, Jimmy Northrup, Bill Freehan and all the rest...

They frequently sock his deliveries out of the ball park. But Manager Mayo Smith never comes storming from the dugout to take him out.

He's the one pitcher—wearing a Tiger uniform—that Mayo doesn't mind seeing getting belted around.

The "he" in particular is Ray Herbert, who lives in Livonia and works for Montgomery Ward there in the Wonderland Shopping Center.

In the summer, Herbert sells swimming pools; the rest of the time he's assigned to toys.

In his free moments, when the Tigers are home, Herbert is one of the batting-practice pitchers.

IT'S QUITE A CHANGE for Herbert, who once pitched for the Tigers and can talk about a career of 14 years in the major leagues.

He'd like to pitch in the Greater Livonia Class A League for a team like Wonderland Lanes or Hubert Realty, but there's "a waiting out" period any man who's been in the big leagues, must serve until he can return to amateur baseball.

Herbert says the way will be cleared for him to pitch around Ford Field in Livonia next year.

But, he enjoys tossing those pitches to the Hortons, Kalines, Freehans, Stanleys, etc.

"It keeps me in shape," Herbert said the other evening after he had completed his chores on the mound.

Often, he's gone from the stadium by the time the game actually starts; sometimes, he sticks around to see a few innings.

He's never quite certain what uniform he'll wear. It just depends on what's available when he reaches the ball park.

"I GET A KICK OUT of mingling with the fellows on the team and then going out there and pitching to them," Herbert declared.

To most batters he serves up fast balls. A few like curve balls.

"They like what I throw, because I get the ball over — (which is the prime objective of a batting-practice hurler) — and I put a little something on the ball. This gets them sharpened up for the pitcher they'll face later in the game."

Herbert used to grin when he pitched and the batter slammed the ball out of the park.

"Now I know I've done my job... given the guy something good to hit at."

Herbert's day or night at Tiger Stadium usually lasts around 15 minutes. He is a rubber-type arm. He warms up for a few moments and he's ready.

Paul Foytack, another ex-Tiger, always is around to pitch to the batters, too. Foytack, like Herbert, specializes in getting the ball over.

The Tigers have treated Herbert well since he bowed out as a regular player.

"When they won the pennant two years ago, they took me to St. Louis with them to pitch batting practice," he said.

HERBERT DOESN'T think that when he gains his amateur status again next year it will stop him from pitching batting practice for the Tigers.

While baseball still is very much in Herbert's thoughts, there's another sport that interests him, perhaps as much.

It's ice hockey.

"I'm now a director of the Livonia Hockey Association," Herbert declared. "We have some big plans cooking for teams in all the area for next season and I'll let you (the Observer) know about it in due time."

Herbert knocked a story we did here last winter about one team which played 40 or 50 or was it 80 games in one season?

"That's not the true picture of amateur hockey for kids," Ray declared. "In most cases, the schedules are far more realistic. But let's wait until the fall and we'll talk about it more."

HERBERT DID SAY that there are plans in the works for an "older" man's league...for players upwards of 30 to play hockey once or twice a week.

"That's where I come in," he laughed. "I'll be out there playing with some of my neighbors."

Hockey, of course, is a flourishing sport for youngsters, especially in a community like Livonia which has built two magnificent indoor ice-skating arenas.

It's still a sport which has not entered the high school program, although there are many who'd like to see that happen.

But, it'll take many more arenas like those in Livonia before the schools can make it a full-fledged event.

That's something which may take a long time becoming a reality.

Thurston Unbeaten In Mack Play

Success has carried over-at least 150 fans from a high school to the sandlot diamond for coach Emil Majeski and his Thurston High baseball players.

During the spring campaign, Thurston shared the title in the Northwest Suburban League.

Now, competing almost intact, in the Greater Livonia-Connie Mack League, Thurston was 3-0 going into this week's action.

TWO OF THE big reasons for the Thurston start are pitchers Steve Kreager and John Munson.

Kreager has hurled a three-hitter and a one-hitter while Munson has chalked up a shut-out. It was Kreager's one-hit gem that blanked Garden City West 4-0.

He fanned 13, giving him 26 in two games, and walked three.

Thurston scored once in the fourth when Dennis Benedict singled in Gordon Ezses, who had walked and moved from first to third on a bunt.

In the fifth, Thurston scored three times to put the game on ice. John King doubled, Munson was safe on a fielder's choice, Ezses walked and Benedict doubled.

Kreager had company in chalking up shutout victories in Saturday night's Mack action.

Warholak Unifort Tires, representing Redford Union, came up with a four-hit white-washing job in beating Northville 4-0, as Kirk Taylor, the All-Observer 1970 pitching pick along with Munson, went the route.

Dave Martin knocked in two runs for Warholak while Bill Herbert singled in one and Taylor scored the other on the front end of a double steal. R.J. LaRoux had two hitters for the winners.

ONE OF THE DAY'S finest battles was between the Livonia Optimists and B.J. Ratigan (Franklin High) with the Optimists emerging a 1-0 winner.

Brian Dinsmore scattered six hits for the winners to beat Ron Nison, who allowed seven safeties. Nison fanned six, one more than his rival.

The two pitched scoreless ball until the last of the seventh when Dick Boehm singled, went to second on a sacrifice and scored on Joe Kearney's single.

Boehm had two hits for the winners. So did Doug Morels.

One game produced no winner. Darkness forced the Plymouth Optimists and American Century (Stevenson High) to halt operations in the seventh with the score tied at 3-3.

Plymouth took a 2-1 lead when Ken Rocco doubled in two runs, but American Century came back with two more in the top of the seventh to go in front, 3-2.

Back came Plymouth to beat the curfew and tied the game when Doug Nay singled, went to third on a walk to Dan Hees and an error and rushed home when Dave Hees dropped a perfect squeeze bunt.

John Owens pitched for Plymouth while the American Century pitcher was Garis.

GATES REAL ESTATE of Plymouth counted once in the sixth inning to nip Chesley Industries of Farmington, 5-4.

Ron Wollum singled in Dale Robinson with the deciding run. Robinson was the winning pitcher and beat Ross Patton, who starred during the high school season for Catholic League champ Our Lady of Sorrows.

Paul Kupferschmidt delivered the big blow for Chesley a two-run double.

Three hit pitching by Bob Bialy enabled Livonia's Hubert Realty to top Churchill, 4-1. Bialy fanned 10 and walked five.

All Hubert runs were scored in the sixth inning when Randy Hickerson and Steve Kuhlman singled. Jim Crom tripled. Gary Croskey walked and Jerry Boom's second single chased in the winning run.

A two-run single by Pendlet

was the key hit for the losers.

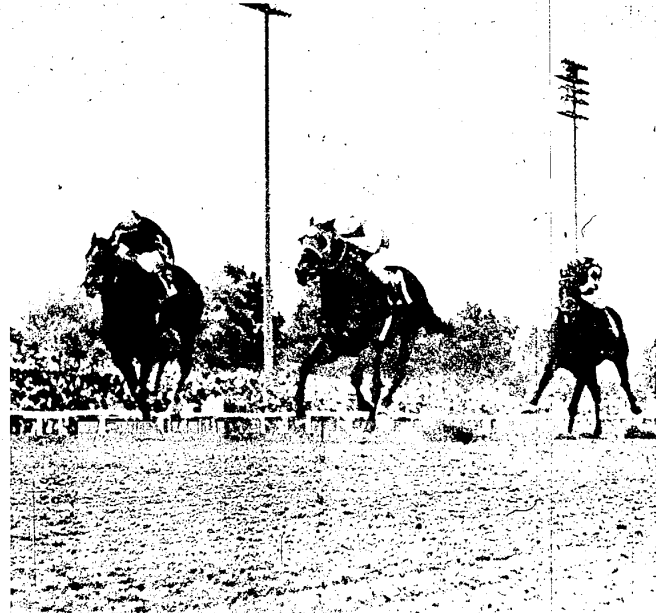
Tom's Service crushed seven runs in the fourth inning and

went on to down Garden City East, 10-2.

Gary Sobkiwak was the win-

ning pitcher, allowing three hits. Pat Welch and Mickey Crom each had two hits for

Tom's which took advantage of 11 walks to build up its huge score.



MOVING UP in the final 50 yards to take the lead after losing it a few strides earlier, is Fast Hilarious (A) who went on to win the \$100,000 added Michigan Mile.

at the DRC, Figonero (6) at left, had the lead but lost it and finished second. Pleasure Seeker (right) was a distant third. (Observer photo by Vince Witke)

Sandlot Schedule

CONNIE MACK AMERICAN LEAGUE

THURSDAY—Chesley Industries vs. Churchill, Plymouth; Dinsmore vs. Thurston; Garden City West vs. Gates Real Estate; Bentley, E.J. Ratigan vs. Hubert Realty, Franklin; all games at 6 p.m. Coleman and Moss vs. Optimists, Ford, 8:30 p.m.

FRIDAY—Herbert vs. Dinsmore, Plymouth; Churchill vs. Coleman and Moss; Optimists vs. Thurston; Dinsmore vs. Chesley Industries vs. Garden City West, Garden City Park, games at 6 p.m.; Ratigan vs. Dinsmore, Ford Field, 8:30 p.m.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

THURSDAY—Northville Reef vs. Tom's Service, Northville; Plymouth Elks vs. Garden City East, Garden City Park; Novi B and V vs. American Century; Stevenson; Franklin vs. Redford Heels, North Farmington; Livonia Royals vs. Warholak Unifort Tires, Ford Field; all games at 6 p.m.

SATURDAY—Warholak vs. Novi B and V, Northville; Northville Reef vs. Franklin, Franklin; Royals vs. Garden City East, Ford Field; Keating vs. American Century, Stevenson, Plymouth Elks vs. Tom's Service, Bentley; all games at 6 p.m.

ADRAY LEAGUE

WEDNESDAY—Westland vs. Hubert Realty, Bentley; Plymouth vs. Northville Reef, Thurston; Holcomb Industries vs. Garden City East, Garden City Park; all games at 6 p.m. Redford, live.

FRIDAY—Redford vs. Northville Reef, Northville; Westland vs. Garden City East, Garden City Park; Plymouth vs. Farmington High, Plymouth; all games at 6 p.m. Hubert, live.

SUNDAY—At Redford vs. Holcomb, Ford Field, 6 p.m.; Garden City East vs. Hubert, Ford Field, 8:30 p.m.; Westland vs. Plymouth, Plymouth, 1:30 p.m.; Northville Reef, live.

CLAN A

WEDNESDAY—Garden City vs. Sober, Ford, 6 p.m.; Hubert vs. Wonderland Lanes, Ford, 8:30 p.m.; Northville vs. ITM, Bell Creek, 8 p.m.

SUNDAY—Garden City vs. Hubert, Garden City; Sober vs. ITM, Coo-Benton; Wonderland Lanes vs. Northville, Hagerly; all games at 1:30 p.m.

AMERICAN LEAGUE

WEDNESDAY—Farmington at Warholak, 6 p.m.

FRIDAY—Waterford Mott at Farmington, 6 p.m.

SUNDAY—Farmington at Auburn Heights, 2 games, 1:30 p.m.

Area Athletes Win Letters

Three area trackmen were among 22 receiving varsity letters as members of Western Michigan's Mid-American Conference championship squad.

Tom Elias, of Plymouth, starred for the Broncos in the shot put; Ken Jackson, of Livonia Bentley was one of the top hurdlers and Dave Evald, of Southfield High, sparkled in the high jump.

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