

New year, new hopes, new Tiger song

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

We're all behind our baseball team,
Go get 'em Tigers

LET'S FACE IT. We need a new Detroit Tiger fight song. "Go Get 'em Tigers" has been with us since 1969, and frankly, it's getting old. That song is, and will forever be, associated with Willie Horton, Denny McLain, Mickey Lolich, Al Kaline and the rest of our '69 heroes.

Granted, it still induces goose bumps just like the reruns of the '69 series. But, let's stop living in the past. It's 1981, and we have a new breed on Bengal on our hands. And this new breed seems to be clawing its way toward another world series.

Most post-1969 Tiger teams have not inspired, or deserved, a new fight song. With the exception of Mark Fidrych in 1976, the Tigers barely inspired notice. That changed last season as the Tigers made a serious run at the American League's Eastern Division title.

SUDDENLY, PENNANT fever gripped Tiger Country. Whenever it happens, songwriters come out of the woodwork and pen little ditties about the local team. Last season was no exception. Remember "Talkin' Baseball"? It was written by Terry Cashman a few years back. It became almost like baseball's anthem.

Well, Cashman, never afraid of making a few extra bucks, took his song and localized it. Instead of "Willie, Mickey and the Duke," Cashman sang about "Tiger baseball, the Motor City's team."

It was nice, but that was outdated even last year. He sings about Champ Summers and a bunch of other ex-Tigers.

The best Tiger song of last season was by the Dixie Bruiser Band — George Baler and his WIFE crew. It was sung by Baler's character George Swell (aka George Kell), to the tune of Police's hit "I'll Be Watching You."

That, too, has become dated. Players like John Wockenfuss, Glenn Wilson, Lynn Jones, Ernie Caselli and Rick Leach are no longer Tigers.

So, here we are, at the beginning of another Tiger baseball season and the Tigers are expected to challenge once again for the American League East title. Well, where's the darn fight song?

NOT TO worry. A couple of local fellows have taken care of the problem. By now you've probably heard the song on the radio. It's called "Tiger Tiger." The song has an upbeat tempo similar to "Eye of the Tiger." In fact, the singer on "Tiger Tiger" sounds like the guy in the band Survivor that sang "Eye of the Tiger."

Tiger, Tiger baseball team
Reaching for that pennant dream

The song was written and produced by Dan Yessian of the Farmington Hills-based Dan Yessian and Associates Inc. The lyrics were penned by another Farmington Hills man — one Ernie Harwell.

Soon we'll be hearing cheers or boos
Telling us if they win or lose
We know for certain when they score
We're going to hear those Tigers roar

'Detroit is very supportive of its team, and these people in this town have been beaten down on their heads continually. I mean you go to the ball park or any athletic arena and it's like a crowd of masochists.'

— Dan Yessian
on "Tiger Tiger"



and the Michigan Panthers "Another Cat In Town."

Harwell you know. He's the Hall-of-Fame voice of the Tigers. His voice, to those of us who grew up around here, is synonymous with baseball. He is the voice of our most pleasant memories. But there is a side to this man few are aware of. Few know about Ernie Harwell the songwriter. Harwell has written songs for such talents as B.J. Thomas, Jose Feliciano and, believe it or not, Mitch Ryder.

As for Yessian, well, you may not know him, but you probably know some of his work. The West Bloomfield man has been writing, producing and performing gag songs and jingles since 1971.

Some of Yessian's productions include "Elizabeth Taylor: Thighs," "Doughnuts Make My Brown Eyes Blue" and his latest gag hit, "Where's the Beef?" Yessian has also penned, produced and performed the Detroit Red Wings' "Come On Wings, Let's Fly"

HARWELL and YESSIAN had combined talents on a number of songs prior to "Tiger Tiger." They combined on a song for Feliciano called "Crowd

Fleaser," which was recorded but never put on an album. "There's a lot of politics involved in this business," Yessian said.

"Tiger Tiger" was put together at the end of last season. "I was really into the tail end of last season," Yessian said. "By that time, it was really too late to release it. We decided we'd go ahead and launch it in the studio, have it mastered and have it ready for the upcoming season."

The song originated in Harwell's voluminous portfolio of lyrics. Yessian took the lyrics and masterfully molded them into song.

"The real motivation for 'Tiger Tiger' came because there was this old 'Go Get 'em Tigers' thing that has been around for ages. We were looking for more of a contemporary sound."

"The song was written for the fans. Detroit is very supportive of its teams, and these people in this town have been beaten down on their heads continually. I mean, you go to the ball park or any athletic arena and it's like a crowd of masochists. Thank goodness the

lemons are finally starting to do something. There's something to get excited about."

They've put tradition on their side. Farmington Hills and hometown pride. Greenwald, Cash and Kaline too. Their period is the coming through.

"What you want to win," Yessian said, "is to win. It's sports or you want to write the best piece of music there is. You are wanting to do the best piece of music."

"We've tried to capture that feeling in a piece of music — a piece of music that says this is generic to the way one would feel about going after something about heading for the eye of the tiger."

Yes sir, I think we have a new Detroit Tiger fight song on our hands. Now let's hope the '81 Tigers prove worthy of it.

Tiger, Tiger baseball team
Reaching for that pennant dream
Tiger, Detroit Tigers,
My Tigers baseball team!

sport shorts

• WALLACE ADVANCING

Southfield's Christine Wallace has been competing in the United States Gymnastics Federation competition — the pipeline to the Olympics. Over the years at the Farmington Gymnastics Club, Wallace has advanced to the Class I level which is just one step shy of Olympic caliber routines.

Wallace has managed this progress despite a pair of injuries that left her on crutches.

Wallace was sixth in her specialty — vault — among 60 girls at the Indianapolis Circle City Invitational. At the Midwest Independent Club Championship in Columbus, her vaulting helped her team to sixth place among 15 teams.

At the Louisville Derby City Invitational, she was seventh in vault from more than 100 competitors. Farmington was third among 20 teams.

In Michigan club competition, Chris qualified to compete in the individual all-around

USGF Michigan State Championship last month. Wallace placed fourth on the option vault and tied for 11th on uneven parallel bars. She scored enough points to qualify for the Midwest Regional Championship meet in Chicago this weekend.

Wallace is a member of St. Michael's Parish in Southfield and will graduate from Farmington Our Lady of Mercy High School in June. She plans to continue gymnastics in college — either at the University of Alabama or California State Fullerton.

• ERHARDT'S RACQUET

Debbie Erhardt of Southfield will attempt to defend her Michigan State Racquetball championship this weekend at the Davison Racquet Club in Davison.

More than 400 amateurs from across the state are expected to compete in this seventh and final event of the Bud Light Super Seven Racquetball Series.

The tournament, sponsored by Anheuser-Busch and Bud Light beer, begins Friday and continues through Sunday. The championship matches start at 3 p.m. Sunday.

Players will compete for top state honors in 24 divisions and the opportunity to advance to the national finals scheduled for May 24-28 in Houston.

The Bud Light Super Seven Racquetball Series is sanctioned by the Michigan Racquetball Association and the American Amateur Racquetball Association, the sole governing body for racquetball in this country.

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