



(P.1C)

# Rematch: Rocky vs. Apollo

## Strong Observerland team favored in O&E kick classic

By Jim Hughes  
staff writer

**Y**OU CAN CALL this Classic II, and draw an analogy with the plight of box office drawing card Rocky Balboa.

Friday evening the girls All-Area soccer team from the Observer News-papers will host the Eccentric's All-Area squad in a 6:30 matchup at Livonia Stevenson High School, and the team from the east side wants nothing more than to make up for last year's lopsided game.

In the inaugural Observer & Eccentric Girls High School Soccer Classic last year, the Observer team posted a 7-1 victory over the Eccentric unit. Eccentric coach Terry Dilworth says things may be different this time around.

"It should be — unlike last year — more of a defensive battle," the young and eager Marian coach said. "Both All-Area teams have included more defensive players, and better ones."

"I think the players are better than last year. A lot are the same, but they've definitely improved. The east side is not going to get blown out like they did last year."

THE ECCENTRIC team has a bit of the Rocky characteristics from the first of the three movies — the underdog just looking for a shot at the title. The Observerland unit, on the other hand, is the champion and the favorite.

"I think we have an extremely talented team," said Livonia Stevenson coach Norene Divens, who, along with Merry coach Gene Fogel, will direct the Apollo Creed-type Observer squad. "I think we're stronger than last year, because last year a lot of the first-team players were missing."

"All of them play together in the off-season, and they know each other. Twelve of the players are part of the FLIP Rowdies who are playing for the Midwest Regional (girls under 19) championship this weekend."

Divens, like Dilworth, expects a closer contest than last year's game.

"We're looking forward to a tough match," Divens noted.

"We may be a little more controlled this year," said Dilworth. "We're not going to be as desperate as it seemed they were last year. The east side should be able to move the ball around and use all of the field. It should be a

**WHAT:** The Second Annual Observer & Eccentric Girls High School All-Star Soccer Classic.

**WHEN:** 6:30 p.m. Friday, June 22.

**WHERE:** Livonia Stevenson High School, 33500 W. Six Mile, west of Farmington Road.

**WHO:** Featuring All-Area soccer players from Oakland and Wayne counties. It's the Eccentric All-Area team against the Observer All-Area Team.

**WHY:** To showcase the best high-school girls soccer players in the area.

**ADMISSION:** Tickets, priced at \$1, are available at the gate before the game.

controlled game, but with a fast tempo."

The game features some of the most-talented players in the state. Eight of the teams represented finished in the top 10 of the final Michigan High School Soccer Coaches Association poll.

THE OBSERVER team includes Mary Kay Hussey (Stevenson), Annette Ruggiero (Merry), Lisa Rigstad (Bentley), Lisa Russell (Canton), Jennifer Huesli (Churchill), Dorene Dudek (Churchill), Kim Paterson (Bentley), Cheryl Galindo (Stevenson), Sue Bartram (Farmington), Sheri Wolfe (Bentley), Margie Wangschiller (Canton), Doreen Deagle (Stevenson), Daisy Eads (Merry), Lisa Broccardo (Stevenson), Beth Frigge (Canton) and Jennifer Flowers (Churchill).

The Eccentric players include Lori Nicley (Athens), Debbie Wojtaszek (Marian), Lisa Leonard (Laher), Karen Bednark (West Bloomfield), Shannon Bessette (Marian), Stephanie Scott (Seaboard), Lisa Saitte (Troy), Carol Green (Troy), Katy Andrus (Seaboard), Joanne Blake (Troy), Sue Lormin (Athens), Julie Bessell (Athens), Katie Perle (Country Day), Cindy Wess (Athens), Joanna Marquardt (Troy) and Shaghi Brett (Athens).

The following is a summary of some of the Observer players:

• Hussey, a junior all-star, scored 40 goals and added 28 assists this year to bring her career total to 62 goals and 50 assists. Hussey, the MVP in last year's all-star game, had 11 game-winning goals this past season.

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C.J. Risak

## There's no quit in Yellens' life

**T**HERE'S NOTHING Mike Yellen would like more than to win the pro racquetball championship.

And he's done that twice in the last two years.

Does that sound greedy? Well it's not as greedy as the fella who ruled the sport over the last decade — Marty Hogan, who won five consecutive national titles until Yellen intervened.

Hogan's name remains the most recognizable in a sport that has few recognizable stars, even though Yellen has been the dominant player in the past two years.

THE 24-YEAR-OLD Southfield native proved it Sunday in Atlanta, storming back from the brink of elimination to whip Hogan in a five-game thriller to clinch the championship.

Yellen's season, capped by his victory over Hogan in Sunday's Diversified Products (DP) Classic, made him the No. 1 player on the tour in every category. He topped the moneywinning list, the points standings and became the first player ever to win the "grand slam" of racquetball: the Ekstalon Nationals, the Catalina Nationals and the DP tourney.

Yet, ask the average racquetball player who the best player in the world is and the name given in response most likely will be Hogan's — despite Yellen's two-year domination, including four wins over Hogan in five meetings this season.

WHICH IS a bigger problem for Hogan than Yellen. Because Yellen loves to compete, and there's no one he likes to beat more than the legend.

"Definitely," Yellen agreed, "particularly in major tournaments. He's won every major there is, and he has the most recognizable name in the sport."

Their rivalry was never more evident than in Sunday's tournament. Hogan took the opening game 11-6, but Yellen blasted Hogan in the second 11-1. Then in the third game, Yellen weathered what might have broken other players: an 11-10 loss that put Hogan up two games to one.

"It certainly was not a position of respect for me," Yellen said. "I certainly would have liked to have won that third game."

"But one of my strengths is my mental approach, my staying up for big games. There were a couple of close calls that went against me, but I can't quit."

He didn't, either. Yellen rallied to win the last two games by 11-8 and 11-6 margins.

YELLEN'S BEEN battling to be the best in his sport since he first picked up a racquet more than a decade ago. Only Yellen's battles don't end on the court. Not in a sport that is fighting for its professional life.

For example, Yellen totalled about \$30,000 as the tour's leading moneywinner. Last year he won \$59,000. Compare those figures to the top moneywinner in tennis or golf.

Just like his on-court style, Yellen never quits off-court. If he's not playing in a tournament, he's promoting the sport, always trying to drum up interest. Like in mid-March, when it strided into a racquetball emporium only to discover a poster proclaiming a youth clinic with guest instructor Mike Yellen.

It's just another stop on the tour for the current king of racquetball, a necessary stop if pro racquetball is to survive.

It's been a shaky proposition at best. The tour has been split, reorganized, then reorganized again. Lining up sponsors has been like taking a trip to the lost and found department — you never know what might turn up.

THE LOW MONEY earnings for this season directly can be attributed to the disorganization. But a new plan is in the offing, and Yellen has high hopes for it.

"There have definitely been a lot of growing pains, partially because of administrative and sponsor changes," Yellen said. The new plan is for a tour designed by the RMA — Racquetball Manufacturers Association, a group of the five major racquetball corporations who are lining up sponsors for next season.

"Providing this thing is put together properly, it will really be the biggest shot in the arm the sport has had," Yellen said. He's optimistic, yet guardedly so. He's seen other plans fail before.

BUT YELLEN never gives up. He can see racquetball growing, spreading now to Europe and the Far East. ("In Japan there's huge waiting lists for courts," Yellen reported). He envisions foreign players joining the pro tour and mini-tours forming in other countries.

And yet Yellen may not be playing when those hopes are realized. The pro tour is not for older players. Indeed, Hogan may be considered an aging veteran — and he's 26. Yellen figures he can play "five or six more years, barring injury and if my game stays with me."

"It's hard to say. If I ever feel I'm just going to the tournament as another player, I may call it quits."

Don't count on that happening anytime soon, however. Where Yellen and racquetball are concerned, "quit" has yet to be defined.



RANDY DORR/staff photographer

The Observerland All-Star team will be even stronger this year thanks to the addition of the Farmington-area schools.

Observerland beat the Eccentric team 7-1 last year.



DILL DREBLEF/staff photographer

## All-Area Softball

Area stars like North Farmington's Amy Austin and Farmington's Karen Devine have won spots on the Observerland's 1984 All-Area Softball team. The team and Coach of the Year Vic Koo from John Glenn are featured on page 5C. Michelle Vogt of Harrison, pictured above, is among the honorable mention choices.

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