

Sports

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entertainment, business inside



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Brad Emons

Cyclist Pierce gets runaround

IT'S TIME to tie up some loose ends before heading off to the Olympics in LA. Speaking of the Olympics, what's the status of Livonia cyclist/road racer Jeff Pierce?

As of Friday, Pierce was on the U.S. Olympic squad because of the suspension of Alexi Grewal, who got 30 days for using a banned substance — anabolic steroid.

But on Monday, a U.S. Cycling Federation appeals board reinstated the Boulder, Colo., native saying that the urinalysis test was not definitive enough.

Grewal, the No. 1 qualifier on the U.S. Olympic team, was the overall leader in the recently completed 10-day Coors International Bicycle Classic.

Pierce, fourth overall at the Coors Classic, seems to be a victim of USCF's selection process, which kept some riders on edge until last week.

The Livonia Stevenson and Michigan State grad performed well in the Olympic Trials, but had to go through another series of races leading up to Sunday's road race in Mission Viejo, Calif.

It seems the USCF can't tell anybody no, while most of the other U.S. squads were picked over a month ago.

AS FOR ANOTHER Livonia Olympian, hockey player Al Iafraite, it's been a rough month.

The 18-year-old, picked fourth overall in the recent NHL draft by Toronto, was charged with careless driving in a single-car accident July 7 near Brighton, Ontario, after falling asleep at the wheel. Meanwhile, one of Iafraite's ex-terminators and passenger in the car, Mike Vellucci of Farmington, wound up in the hospital for 1 1/2 weeks with back and chest injuries.

Then on Monday, July 16, Iafraite and "three friends" were arrested by Windsor Police for mischievous behavior, breaking street lamps. The young defenseman, yet to negotiate a contract with Toronto, was fined \$150 for the careless driving charge.

In the Windsor incident, Iafraite was put on probation for 30 days.

Although I'm confident young Al has finally learned his lesson, I feel sorry for his mother, Mrs. Alice Iafraite, who's been in his corner ever since he started playing the game.

I've gotten to know this "classy woman" a little bit during the past six months — always cooperative, appreciative and fair. She deserves better publicity.

WHICH LEADS ME to another Olympic-bound group, the 7-Up National Select basketball team which held its training camp this week at Schoolcraft College.

These young men, who have the potential to make our Olympic basketball team in 1996, have shown nothing but class during their stay.

Not only are these talented basketball players, as the Michigan AAU squad found out, but they're a collection of outstanding individuals.

After spending some time with the group, I found them to be bright, personable, polite and respectful of authority — good ambassadors for our country.

Monday night at Wing Yee's Restaurant, the 7-Up squad went to a delicious dinner. During the course of the meal, Keith Pickett, 7-Up's Public Relations man from St. Louis, Mo., saluted Schoolcraft AD Marvin Gans and gave him two tokens of appreciation.

Gans, who spearheaded the drive to bring the 7-Up squad to the area, has surely made the team feel comfortable during their stay.

As Gans received a digital clock and pen and pencil set, the entire team stood up in the restaurant and applauded loudly. I'm sure it made Gans feel good and forget about the long hours he's put in this summer.

AS FOR WHEN I get back, let's hope rhythmic gymnast Michelle Berube of Rochester has a medal in hand. Brother Rice hasn't "acted" more than 7-footers, Eastern Michigan and Redford Thurston have football, Michigan is ready for the Hurricanes, Mike Marchese is the Lions' quarterback instead of Gerie Hippleson, Peris is really more than "Frank" and that Dave Yarema comes back to show "Notre Dame form."

But the summer has been fruitful — Craig Payne putting Tyrill Biggs on the ropes, Redford Caesars making the Livonia Collegiate Baseball League fun again, Livonia Adray beating the Canada Olympic team and subordinated Thurston winning the Class B state baseball title.

I'm sure I forgot something. But the thing I really want to see settled is the Western Lakes/Northwest Suburban League mess.

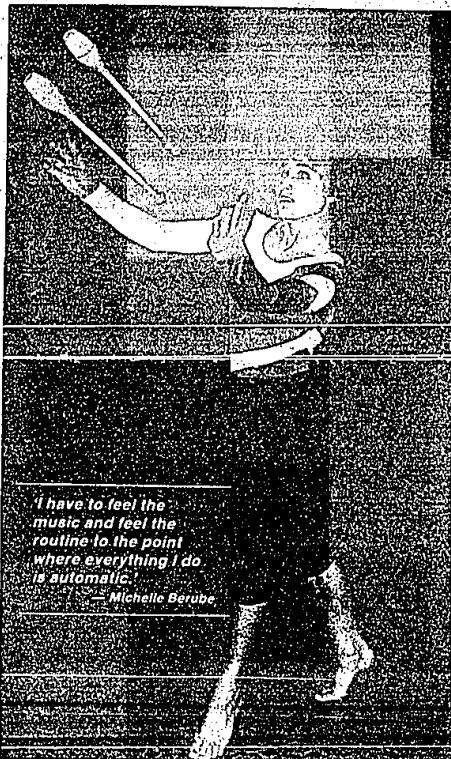
I wish the Western Lakes people would see the light and either include Redford Union or Garden City, or keep the leagues separate with a little jockeying around.

GARDEN CITY has one alternative, join the Wolverine A League with the likes of Dearborn Fordon, Wayne Memorial, etc.

But schools such as Thurston and Redford Union will still have to scramble to find leagues because some of the Western Lakes big wigs, such as Plymouth-Canton's Mike Hoben, don't have a clue about how this affects the area in terms of sports.

Maybe somebody should step forward and become commissioner.

How does Peter Uebberoth sound?



I have to feel the music and feel the routine to the point where everything I do is automatic.

— Michelle Berube

Waiting game
Berube anxious for beginning of 'Games'By Jim Hughes
staff writer

IT'S ONLY A matter of time before Michelle Berube separates her current stay in California from previous stints. As one songwriter put it, the waiting is the hardest part.

Berube, a rhythmic gymnast on the United States Olympic Team, has been to the Golden State so many times, the novelty has worn off. This time, she's in Los Angeles for the XXIII Olympiad, but that magic feeling has yet to hit the 18-year-old from Rochester.

Now, she's just a bit worn out from two weeks of workouts.

"I'm exhausted," she said from her hotel room last week. "It's not too thrilling right now because there's not much to do. Once we move into the Olympic Village, it will probably get more exciting."

THE ATHLETES moved into the village — dormitory rooms at UCLA and the University of Southern California — Sunday. The move, along with the anticipation of the Games' opening ceremonies, should stir up the emotions which have been missing the first two weeks.

"Right now, nobody's really in the Olympic spirit. It's the feeling is hard to explain. We really don't know what it's like because we didn't go (to the Olympics) in 1980," said Berube, whose sport returns as an Olympic event this year after it was dropped following the 1956 Games in Melbourne.

"I think when we march in for the opening ceremonies, then it will sink in — I'm here and I'm competing."

What Berube has experienced the past two weeks is the isolation akin to the life of a prize fighter — the portion void of bright lights, media attention and constant fan adulation.

About the only highlight came when the athlete received some clothing from Lerf Strasser, the "Official Outfitter" of the Olympic Games. It was reported the blue jean company gave \$12 million worth of clothing to U.S. athletes and the 30,000 Olympic staff workers. A total of half a million articles of clothing were donated.

"We got lots of apparel from Lerf," Berube said. "It was like Christmas Day."

ASIDE FROM that, most of the day involved around a four-hour per day

Rhythmic gymnastics differs from the common form of gymnastics (or artistic gymnastics) in that participants work with apparatus instead of on apparatus.

The sport combines ballet-like movement and some tumbling while performing with hand apparatus. The four events are routines with a 10-meter ribbon, a hoop, two clubs and a ball.

Participants compete on a 12-by-12-meter mat. Six the routines are by artistic gymnasts in free form exercises. The 90-90-second routines require at least two maneuvers of superior difficulty and six of medium difficulty.

Scoring is based on a 10-point scale. Each performer starts with 10 points, and points are deducted for flaws in the routine. Judges look for execution, competition and originality while making sure the competitors use both hands equally in handling the apparatus and whether the routines fit the music and cover the entire mat.

training schedule, leading up to competition which begins this weekend.

"I've been doing well with my routines," Berube said. "I need to do consistently well. I have to feel the music and feel the routine to the point where everything I do is automatic."

"I have to go out on the floor and not be nervous. If I drop something, I have to make sure I don't go to shambles. I want to be calm and collected. I have to think like it's an exhibition like it's no big deal. But I know it will be."

Berube, who earned a spot on the Olympic Team with a second-place all-around finish behind Valerie Zmurina in the trials, was the 1988 National Sports Festival all-around champion. She also won the national championship that year, with gold medals in hoop, ribbon and club, and a silver in the ball routine.

She said the pressure factor is at a minimum for two reasons: The United States is the host, and some of the powers in the sport are boycotting the Games.

"I'M HAPPY I made the team, now I just want to perform well," she said. "I've gone against higher caliber competition at the world championships and international competitions (than the

Ice skating show
cools off July heatBy Marty Gudner
staff writer

Just, for a refreshing moment, think winter. Forget about the summer Olympics. Pretend the "dog days" of scorching temperatures and lazy temperaments aren't here. Imagine that December is sliding into January instead of July quickly steaming into August.

Lighten up. Let's throw around names of winter Olympians like Peggy Fleming, Dorothy Hamill and Elaine Zayak. Isn't it nice to think ice?

If you're now in the mood for some real cool entertainment, how about the third annual Skate Detroit '94, to be held this weekend at the Detroit Skating Club in Bloomfield Hills?

The show — free to the public — will feature some of the Midwest's top young skaters in both freestyle and figure competition. Skating starts 8 a.m. Friday and continues until noon Sunday at the club, located at 888 Denison Court (off Franklin Road near the Telegraph and Square Lake road intersection).

But, why in the name of Janet Lynn and Johnny Johns, is the club hosting an ice skating competition at this time of the year?

"THIS IS A perfect chance for the kids to start showing their new winter programs," said Bob Bolton, president of the Detroit Skating Club.

"The regular (competitive skating) season starts in November with the winners going to the regionals and those winners going to the sectionals and nationals. During the summer, generally, the kids get a chance to work on their programs and this is a good opportunity for them to try their programs out."

"The competitors get to show their stuff. And, there are a lot of skaters who don't make it to the national level of competition," he said. "This provides them with a chance to win prizes and medals at the local level."

Bolton said he expects close to 300 skaters from Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Canada to compete.

"We started out three years ago with 100 skaters and we'd like to get it up to 300," he said. "That's about as many as we can handle in a three-day competition."

Most of Friday will be devoted to freestyle competition in all the different classes, ranging from novice to senior. Figure competition will be Saturday morning and freestyle will again take over during the evening hours.

There will be a special skating exhibition held after Saturday's regularly scheduled competition.

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Jill Atkinson of Birmingham will compete in the Juvenile Ladies division this weekend.

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