

Chris McCosky

Gymnastics: Will fad fade?

H, THE POWER of the media.
Once again, thanks to television,
(newspapers and magazines helped too)
the country has made a new discovery. Gymnastics.
Thrust onto television screens every night for a

Thrust onto television screens every night for a solid week, America got a crash course in the sport. They saw the imperceivable force of 18-year-old Mary Lou Retion as she bolked down the runway toward her vault. America watched in awe as the up girl transformed that power into smazing grace, spinning, twisting, filipping in mid-sir. Then they saw the grace change back into strength, as she landed on the mat, holding her spot with pointstaking determination.

Who could look upon that and not see the beauty?

LATER THE nation was gripped with drama — what better yeone for drama than Hollywood? — as Mary Lon tabled the gold. She needed back-to-back perfection. She reached deep into a heart twice the size of her body and found poles belitting a prima ballerina. And she did it, pulled off back-to-back 10s.

Who could look upon that and not be moved? Americans had known something of the power, beauty and drama of women's gymnastics. They remembered Olga Korbut and Nadia Comaneci, foreigners who won over American hearts in

foreigners who won over American hearts in Olympics gone by. This time, however, American were winning over American hearts. But, the nation made another discovery via the television in 1984. Americans discovered men's

television in 1984. Americans ouscovered means gymnastics. Peter Vidmar, Mitch Gaylord, Tim Daggett and the rest of America's gold medal men's team proved to the machismo American male population that gymnastics was not, in any way, a stay sport. What American male this alde of water pole team capital Terry Schroeder wouldn't want to trade bodies with any of them?

Trace oones with any or teem.

LIKE IT ON NOT, we were given a crash course in gymnastics thanks to ABC and the "Games of the XXIII Olymplad". And, eccording to early tabulations, we liked what we saw.

"The media has been tremendous," said Doug Rowe, who heads the Michigan Academy of Gymnastics in Garden City. "Channel 4 was just here. Channel 2 just left. The Pree Press has been here."

here."

Everyone wants to know one thing: What effect has the Olympics had on the sport in this area?

The answer is obvious. Rowe had 60 new inquiries in the first three days following the Olympic overgage of symmatics.

Olympic coverage of gymnastics.

"The phone has been ringing off the wall," he

O'Amplie Coverage.

The phone has been ringing off the wall," no said.

Same holds true over in Farmington, as Dennis Spencer's Farmington Gymnastics Center has gotten 20 new people in a day since the coverage. The Steve Whitlock School of Gymnastics in Bloomfield Hills has also been besieged.

The phones started ringing a week ago and haven't really ite up, "Spencer said. Where we've picked up is in the men. The concern has been, up mill now, that men's gymnastics was sort of a sizsy sport — not really that, but — now they realize that it's a pretty nice sport to do.

Spencer said his club currently has 400 people on rotter — 100 of whom are men. He said he bopes that soon, the program will increase up to 600-700 with 200-300 being men.

with 200-300 being men.

THE OLYMPICS may well launch gymnastics into an age of popularity similar to what the sport of tennis experienced with the emergence of the professional circuit in the early 1980s.

But, will the popularity last? It could all be a fad, you know. Who says that a year from now anyone will remember the name Julianne McNamara? Who would've remembered Cathy Rigby It it weren't for her fight for feminine protection? My buddy John Cunningham thinks the gymnastics rage will indeed last. And his is an opinion I have grown to respect. After all, the Canton High School gymnastics coach has been an ardent fan and student of the sport pre-Olga Korbut.

ardent fan and student or the sport pre-vige.

Korbut.

He more or less took me by the arm last year and showed me, a sportswriter covering gymnastics for the first time, what gymnastics was all about. He, with unbellevable patience and enthulaism, opened my eyes to the artistic blend between strength and grace that is percequisite to the sport.

"I don't think so." Cunningham answered when saked if this current rage was just a passing fad. "We've had this in the past. First with Olga, then with Nadia. Now we're having it with the men and Retton. Each was a step in a progression — each step a bigger one. I don't think it will die ont."

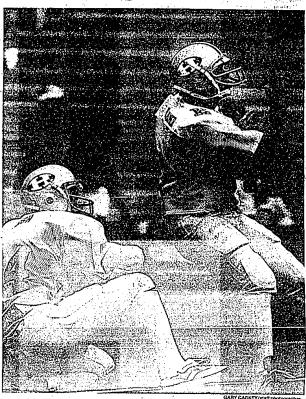
ROWE, WHO is heavily involved in the nations

ymnastics movement, says plans are underway to cep the sport before the public eye. "We want to make sure this thing carries on," he aid. "To do that, a Gold Medal Tour has been

gamzed. What that'll be is Retton, Vidmar and all the

Say what you will about television. But, every, ow and again, it does something to totally redee a worth in our society. It brought before us and actions acknowledge the brute strength and

Waiting over for Blackmer?



Dave Blackmer kicks this 44-yard field goal through the uprights in last year's coaches association All-Star Qame. The

ox-Hawk will be trying to regain the magic for the University of Wisconsin in the fall.

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HEN DAVE Blackmer graduated from Farmington Harrison High School in 1983, his coach John Herrington said it would take three guys to replace him.

It's easy to see why, Blackmer was an outstanding feilback and linebacker on the Hawkar Class A state champlonship team that year. On top of that, he was the state's premier prep placelicker. He converted 13 of 20 field goals his senior season, 24 of 25 certra points. In this pindry year, he tied a state record by nailing a 55-yard field goal.

But things have not been easy for the oppolar young man since.

Central Mchigan. University of Michigan, Michigan State, and Purclus were those that Blackmer seriously considered.

The general consensus was that

ered.

The general consensus was that Blackmer would take his talented toe to Michigan. All Haji-Sheikh, Michigan's kicker at the time, now with the New York Glants, was graduating.

BLACKMER, HOWEVER, surprised veryone by chooling the University of

BLACKMER, HOWEVER, surprised everyone by chooling the University of Wisconsin.

"When I visited there, I don't know, there was something different about it. Everyone was real nice to me, Everyone knew who I was. I don't know it they had to pirepare for it or what, but that was kind of nice. And the academical property of the state play great. They rank third in any put great. They rank third in any put great. They rank third in a strength of graduated athletes." Blackmer said.

"It's education that's important anyway, he added. Tun not thinking about professional football. I'm thinking about my eduation. Really, I just want to be rich,"

When he airrived on the Wisconsin campus, he found that there were two

to be rich."
When he arrived on the Wisconsin campus, he found that there were two sculor kickers ahead of him. He also found out that he was a kicker, period, nothing else.

The hardest adjustment I had to make was just being a kicker, he said. 'I had always been in there hitting all through high school just like everyone cise."

REVIN ROHDE, a senior walk-on kicker, waan't expected to return to the Badgers last year. But he did. That left him and Blackmer to duel it out. I kicked very poorly last year," Blackmer admitted. "My bead just

football -

wasn't on straight. People were yelling at me and I put a lot of pressure on myself."

Robde handled the kicking last year for Wisconsin Blackmer was red-phiri-

d. That left Blackmer with an cutive

That left Hischmer with sea cuttor year to adjust to his new surroundings, his new state and his new role. It was n rough year, but he curvived it.

Saturday, Hischmer returns to the wisconsin grifton. He is, truly a buw man. Leat year, his weight howered at 113 pounds. This year, he will report at 133. Blackmer says the weight keps has greatly improved his kicking.

When I was at 112 I felt lary, and I just sat around. Now, I feel great. I'm consistent from 50 yards and in. he said with confidence not apparent at his time a year ago.

Blackmer wann't even fassed by the fact that Wisconsin went out spil recruited the Athlets of the Year from the state of Wisconsin — Todd Gregolro — who just happens to be a placekicher.

HE KNOWS that the starting job be-lougs to Dave Blackmer — to keep or to lose. "It's all in my hands," he said. "I have a better attitude this year. My head is on straight. I'm kicking the ball a lob better.

head is on straight. I'm kicking the ball
a lot better.

Bothing spring drills, Blackmer started poorly shen began to hit with the
consistency led was known for at Harrison. Whence he had cosed. Dave
McCatin gave Blackmer save sets of com,
Gleece after their pring hierwise.

"He told me the pring hierwise."

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"He told me the pring hierwise."

"He told me the pring hierwise.

"That's
what they recruited me for. He told me
it was up in "I a bungy man.

"I wan! if hed. I want to be there
when we play Michigan and when we
play Michigan siate, i wunt to be there
and he jon swin. he said.

Dave Blackmer and the Wileconsin
Badgers play in Ann Arbor Saturday,
Sept. 22. They'll be in East Lanting Baturday, Nov. 17. He'll be wearing No. &
Chances are pretty good the old Hawk
will be doing the placeticking.

Official Sports wins Regional

By Marty Budner staff writer

Carl Childress believed all along his fficial Sports Senior Babe Ruth baseball team could make a return trip to the national championships in 1984.

It happened last week when Official Sports — except for one close game—dominated the eight-team Ohio Valley Regional Senior Babe Right tournament in Cross Lanes, Ww. Childress' learn outscored its opponents, 87-24, and won four straight games to defend its regional title.

Official Sports now advances to the national tournament scheduled to start Saturday in Jamestown, N.Y. Official will play the Midwest Plains Regional Tournament champion.

"I think our chances (to min) are better this year than they were last year," and Childress, whose team linkshed fifth overall at last year's national finals. "We hit better and our pitching is stronger. We're just a little deeper all the way around this year."

Official, made up of players primarily from the west side of Oakland County, won its opening game over South Charleston, W. Va., 26-12.

THE TEAM combined for 10 home runs, including two each by Eric Rabbones, Steve Sonting and Dan Gabrielle. Official had a 14-13 had a fiver four innings and Jeff Price picked up the win.

ings and Jeff Price picked up the win.
Gabrielle, who played this past
spring for Michigana Class, a state
champion Walled Labs Western beasbell team, haved a one-blinker in the
second game as Official Spring have
Wisconsin, 18-8.

Craig Mathewa of Boninfield, menug
and Rahkmon each and per phins shop
Butler and Mathema semiciated benereas.

In the winner's bracket game of the double-elimination tourney, Official Sports turned back Illinois, 5-4.

Sontag, who graduated from South-field High School, had a two-run sev-enth-luning single which eventually turned out to be the winning hit. Todd Krumm and Zac Childress both scored on Sontag's hit.

MIKE IGNASIAK was credited with the win, although Farmington High School graduate Paul Wemson got the save. Wenson, who now hurls for the University of Michigan, preserved the win by striking out the game's last batter, with the winning run at the plate.

The win lifted Official Sports into the champlonable game where it again met Illinots, which emerged from the loser's bricket with a 9-8 last-laning victory over Indiana. It was no contest as Official Sports took the tournament with a 18-3 victory.

valuable player.

"Hillines was a groot team, but we just jumped all over them in the second game," said Childrens. We had a good coursaments and we get inour swall buy like from Sening. Her a nice hall player. If Official Sports hopes to finish, but not limit just years of the antiqual bour-assingst, Saby it have to do it writtens. To work the part of the particular to the country of the particular to th

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