Wolverine's Gamble On Mile Strip Starts Tonight

The thoroughbreds bowed out of the Detroit Race Course Saturday with alltime high marks for attendance and wagering and the pacers and trotters take over Wednesday for 60-night session that Wolverine Raceway officials hope will erase all Michigan standards for turnstile and mutuel machine action for a harness racing meeting.

Wolverine held all state records for handle and attendance until the highly sucessful Hazel Park campaign last spring. Never in Michigan annals had a standardbred operation climbed to the heights of the Hazel Park meeting.

It shattered every previous wagering mark several times over and ended the session with a nightly average of more than $640,000. Attendance also was at a record level, ending with an increase of almost 20 per cent.

With late summer and early fall dates for the first time in several years, Wolverine's official family entertains hopes that it will continue the tremendous business surge of the Hazel Park season.

The hopes are based on the success of the DRC program which ended with wagering and attendance higher than any previous time in the track's history.

DRC patrons wagered $88,922,301, second only to the Hazel Park Racing Association meeting of a year ago. The daily parimutuel average was $988,025 an increase of eight per cent over last year.

Attendance at the Livonia track climbed eight per cent from an average of 10,677 to 11,453 for a 90-day turnstile count of 1,030,794. It was another first for the DRC...its first millionth fan season.

Closing day on Satuday found 21,164 customers sending $1,732,082 through the mutuel machines.

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WOLVERINE has no chance of equaling those figures but Vice President and General Manager Richard Wilson predicts the meeting will be the most successful ever.

He bases his predictions on several innovations the track will try for the first time.

Taking the biggest gamble ever by a harness track operation in the area, **Wolverine will drop the half-mile racing strip and operate over the big mile racing strip. It marks a first for Michigan, first time the pacers and trotters will compete over the once-around track instead of twice-around.**

The changeover actually was started last spring when the mile strip was stripped and a clay base for standardbreds installed under the soft cushion for the thoroughbreds.

As a result the track crew began the task of converting the surface to the hard base for the trotters and pacers Saturday night and Track Supt. Jim McPhee had the project completed Monday noon.

Hundreds of horses were moved into the barn area starting Monday afternoon and the racing strip was available for morning workouts Tuesday. That was the fastest changeover ever at the DRC and was an indication that the shift from the half-mile to the mile has resulted in less time needed for the shift.

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THE DECISION to change was hailed by drivers, trainers and owners who expressed opinions that fans will see the best racing ever presented in Michigan. They are expecting faster times, horses pacing and trotting truer to form, better performances and some of the closest finishes ever viewed in the state.

Racing Secretary Bill Connor will have nine horses in every race due to the wider strip and the opening program lists eight events with fields of nine and only two with less.

There'll be many new faces among the drivers and many new names on horses during the meeting--all because of the shift to the mile track.

Lighthill checked in with 22 from the east and Bob Williams and brother Jack asked for and received space for 40 stalls for their two public stables.

Dick Buxton, one of the top reinsmen in Ohio, will have his powerful string of trotters in for the meeting and Del Miller, Stan Dancer and Billy Haughton plan to send many of their standout horses to compete over the big mile strip.

Wolverine will have three betting pools in addition to the 10 races. It will have the nightly double on the first and second events, the Big Perfecta on the fifth and seventh races and a Perfecta on the 10th and final.

More than that, General Manager Wilson has made a strong point of the fact that 8:30 p.m. is the post time of the first race and that the field will be at the post each evening at that time.

The traditional Ladies Night programs, with a mink stole for the winner of a contest, will be held each Tuesday evening during the meeting. Moms may bring the kids along on that same evening if they desire.

Senior citizens will be admitted to the grandstand on every night of the meeting with presentation of medicare identification cards.

Livonia Mayor Edward McNamara will be an honored guest on opening night when he will join with Wolverine President Frederick Van Lennep in a ribbon cutting ceremony officially opening the mile track to harness racing.

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THE INITIAL card is headed by the Inaugural Pace, the eighth race on the program, with a field of eight going postward, including several newcomers from Chicago, Ohio and the Atlantic Seaboard.

From Chicagoland comes Jereo, a speedster from the Harold Fisher stable, who was rated as one of the better pacers there. Accompanying him to Wolverine are: Denzil Berry's Grand Entigrity and Bobby Williams' Mr. Jack. Joe Lighthill, who was a regular in the Detroit area for several years, is back again to compete over the mile track and will have Sterling Adios in the Inaugural.

The cast also includes: Bob Kalish's Patch Pride, Shiaway Adios from the Wally McIlmurray string, John Langford's Sweep Up and Rangeway Farm's Peppy Releo who won the featured preferred pace Saturday at Northville Downs.

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10. EASY-TO-GET-TO BY CAR... BY BUS ... CAB. BIG 1 MILE 'O FUN is located at Schoolcraft and Middlebelt in Livonia. Plenty of parking—with over 10,000 spaces on the DRC grounds. General parking is just 50c.

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• *Ladies Nite every Tuesday Ladies admitted free to Grandstand. Gorgeous Mink Stole given away every Ladies Nite.*

• *Every Nite Senior Citizens admitted for ½ price to Grandstand with presentation of Medicare Card.*

Fair Beats Redford's Anderson

Joy Fair added another victory to his total at Flat Rock Speedway capturing the top spot in the ARCA Late Model Mid-Season Championship 50 lap feature.

The Pontiac garage owner had the toughest competition of the season from John Anderson of Redford Township, with Anderson making repeated bids to get around Fair throughout the last 20 laps.

Fair passed Joe Ruttman, of Whitmore Lake, after Ruttman had led the first 26 laps and Ruttman retired to the pits with mechanical failure on the 28th lap. Anderson made it apparent that Fair would have no runaway with the event.

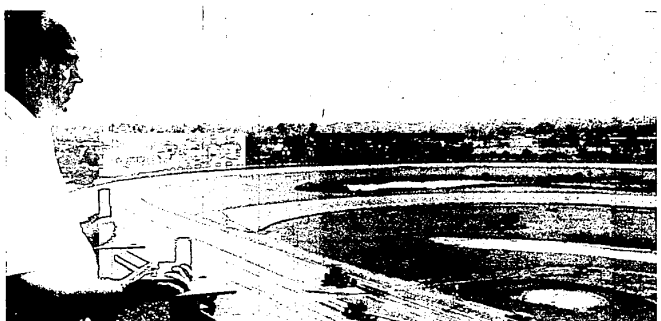
On the 29th lap, with Anderson running alongside Fair and about to pass, Bill Jernigan spun in the fourth turn causing a caution flag.

When the cars restarted from single file Fair opened a two car length lead over Anderson only to have John close to within inches of Joy for the last six laps. When the checkered flag was waved at the end of 50 laps Anderson was again running alongside Joy, with fair crossing crossing the finish line a scant ½ car length ahead.

Jerry Makara, of Westland, finished third; Fran Harden of Westland, fourth; and Ray Barnard, of Ann Arbor, fifth.

Dick "lil Richard" Simmons, the Plymouth, veteran, led the Figure 8 drivers picking up the big share of the purse money with a win in the feature and dash. He also had fast time of 15:02 in qualifying.

Next week the ARCA Late Models return for a 25 lap feature, and the Figure 8 drivers will be going 25 laps for their Mid-Season Championship, with over 100 drivers expected to compete in the 15 event program. Time Trials at 6:45 and racing at 8:15.



READY FOR RACING. That's what Wolverine Raceway Vice President and General Manager Richard Wilson said as he watched the track crew complete the task of converting the DRC mile racing strip from the soft surface for runners to the hard base for trotters and pacers. The shift was made in less than 18 hours and the track was pronounced perfect Monday afternoon. Wolverine's 60 night campaign opens tonight (Wednesday).

Wonderland Lanes In Playoff With ITM For Class A Flag

"Bring on ITM!"

That's the cry of Redford Township's Wonderland Lanes, which wrapped up the second-round title in the Greater Livonia Class A baseball league by beating Livonia Hubert, 7-6 and 10-5.

So, now it's into the playoffs and a best-of-three series for Redford against ITM, which took the first-round flag in the Livonia League.

The playoff begins Thursday night at Livonia's Ford Field.

THE SERIES winner moves into a playoff against the Wyandotte area champ and from there the winner shoots into the State American Baseball Congress tournament at Battle Creek later in the month.

ITM is one of the state's amateur baseball powers.

They won the United Baseball League title and presently are in the semifinals in the state National Baseball Congress tournament.

But manager Rick Berryman of Wonderland Lanes is confident that Redford can beat ITM in the playoff.

"We have come on strong in the second round, losing only once," said Berryman. "We have the hitting now, plus good pitching."

Certainly, Redford showed hitting might in taking the two games from Hubert.

The Redford bats rattled out 12 hits in the first games and then slugged out 16 more in the nightcap.

The first game went down to the wire with Wonderland showing over a run in the bottom of the seventh and final inning to gain the verdict.

Livonia had started with a two-run thrust in the first inning when Paul Portney singled and came home on Jeff Peck's homer.

Redford countered with five runs in its half of the inning on swings by Mark Carrow, Reg Barringer, John Hornyak, Terry Rothwell and Gary Schaffer, along with a walk to Bob Holmes.

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THE LEAD didn't last long...only until Livonia batted in the second and scored three times on a double by Dave Woloch, two walks, a single by Portney and an error.

Hornyak shot Redford back into the lead, 6-5, with a homer in the fourth, but Livonia tied it in the fifth when Gary Krupinsky singled and eventually scored on Woloch's sacrifice fly.

That's the way things stood until the seventh when Rothwell was hit by a pitch. Holmes sacrificed him along and Schaffer walked.

Then Gary Smiegielski lofted a long fly over the centerfield's head. He was credited only with a single as Rothwell scored. Under most conditions, Smigielski would have wound up with a triple or a homer.

Bill Smoot was the winning pitcher while Jay Schwalm was tagged with the loss.

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REDFORD STAGED a pair of four-run innings in the night cap as Rothwell, Carrow, Holmes, Lee Bjerke and Schaffer all slugged out two hits.

Rothwell had a homer in the first with two on, while Bjerke's efforts included a pair of triples, one with two mates aboard.

Livonia's big inning was the fourth when Chip Rose singled, Roger Frayer doubled and Bob Chilister doubled in a three-run uprising.

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observing sports

The athlete has become powerful — maybe too powerful.

What's been happening in professional football these past few weeks hardly is something "new."

It wasn't too many years ago, the best of the National Basketball Association almost refused to play in their annual All-Star game as more than 13,000 fans waited in the arena and millions more stood by to see the action on national television. They insisted certain demands be met first.

Professional baseball at the major league level has had its strike threats.

Hockey has **squirmed — the big wheels of pro golf** have done some **popping off and battling against their "brothers" who stay home and teach at the various courses.**

There have been some touchy moments in tennis and in other sports where the renumeration is dollar bills for performing.

The pros aren't alone in having made — and, of course, still making major demands.

College athletes have put in their licks, although, of course, not openly for money. Mostly, the collegians have demanded better treatment from school officials, from coaches, etc.

And, to a degree, there have even been instances in the high schools where the athletes have grouped together to claim they have to practice too much, or play too often, or aren't getting fair treatment from the coaching staffs.

* * *

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE to sit wherever we do and predict what all this "unionization" is going to mean to sports.

How it ultimately will affect the professional and the amateur leagues — whether it could be that sports as we know them now won't exist in the years to come.

One can't totally blame the athlete for trying to get as much as he can for his services. We all make the same attempt.

But it seems that the athlete has made far greater strides than the guy who works elsewhere for a living.

It could be the athletes have taken advantage of the "big" money sports now collect from television. It's no secret what the various leagues, and the colleges get from putting the games on the tube.

In pro footfall, each team collects upwards of a million dollars. Baseball teams, too, pocket a sizeable sum in six figures. It's the same in hockey and basketball and for each college football game carried on TV, the participants along with the NCAA receive a substantial bundle.

This, being true, the athlete contends: "If it weren't for us, there'd be no television of sports and none of this big money. So, we have a right to share in the loot."

* * *

TRY AND ARGUE differently with him — except maybe when you read about the pensions a five-year pro athlete receives at age 55 and how much more it'll be if he waits until 60 or 65 to start collecting.

One gent, for whom his working career probably will cover some 40 years and his pension will amount to peanuts, declared.

"The irony of the pension demands by the pro athletes from our standpoint is that nine out of 10 of those guys can work at something else, too, during the year — and he's all wet to say that his career is a short one — just five or 10 years. Maybe for sports, yes, otherwise, no.

The fact that the National Football League has battled the players a little harder this time might signal a new stand by the various leagues for the future.

Obvilusly, as we have pointed out here before, management can go only so far — and already Mr. Fan has started to feel the pinch.

But what do the colleges and high schools do when their athletes "team up" and issue some demands?

How do you treat them? Do you toss them out of school or do you fire them from the team? Some schools have. But this doesn't necessarily quiet things and solve problems.

* * *

IT SHOULDN'T surprise us that athletes — at all levels — have banded together.

With unions so much a part of our lives nowadays, most of us have grown up touched in one way or another by what these giant organizations do.

When the UAW has struck one of the Big Three auto giants, it's hit close to many of us. If we haven't been tossed directly out of work for a while, it's led to increased prices for cars.

When kids at home or on TV hear so much about unions they themselves think it's the proper thing for them to become involved in.

Who's to say differently?

But. . . .