



Esprit de corps

'Gung-ho' tradition lives at Rochester

By Jim Hughes
staff writer

TO LOOK AT Max Hasse, it's not difficult to conjure up an image of a G.I. sergeant, complete with green battle fatigues and a spit shine on opposite ends of the physical spectrum.

His stature reflects authority. He would make Sgt. Carter from the Gomer Pyle series look like a pussy cat as he counts cadence while the wet-behind-the-ear "boots" march in unison. Hasse, despite his Marine Corps appearance, does not mold recruits at Paris Island. He makes his boot camp at Rochester High School, and, in lieu of counting cadence, the coach of the Rochester Marine Fitness Team counts numbers — which add up to championships.

Since 1973, Hasse has coached the Marine Fitness Team at Rochester with esprit de corps, and the results have been astounding. His men's teams have won four national championships and 13 state titles. Saturday's team title at Rochester was the 13th straight under Hasse.

MARINE FITNESS, which began on the east coast in 1957, consists of a series of rigorous tests — pushups, situps, pullups, a long jump and a shuttle run. A maximum of 100 points is earned for reaching the optimum in each event. The top five individual scores are added to determine the team score.

In order to qualify for the national meet — which will take place this year the first week of May at Camp Pendleton near San Diego — men's teams must score a minimum of 1,850 and the women's teams must score a minimum of 1,275 at any state invitational.

At Saturday's Rochester Invitational, the men scored 2,348 while the women scored 1,779.

This whole concept was started in Long Island, N.Y., by Capt. John Dowd, who was later killed in Viet Nam, and the competition now is a living memorial to Dowd. Up until 1956, the competition was exclusive to the east coast. Now, it's nationwide.

"There are so many benefits with this," Hasse said. "It teaches self-discipline and self-pride. There's a great deal of individual challenge incorporated in a team concept. It serves as a measuring tool to find out where you're at and what you have to do to progress. "It really teaches loyalty. It takes a team effort. Everybody is an important link to the chain. Everybody realizes they have to work their hardest so they don't let the other members of the team down."

TO UNDERSTAND the work in-



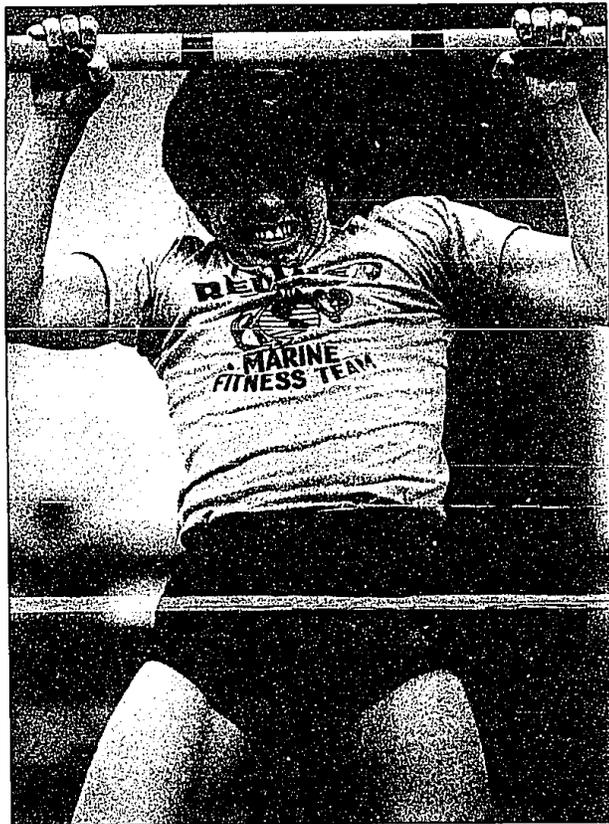
'There's a great deal of individual challenge incorporated in a team concept. . . It really teaches loyalty. It takes a team effort. Everybody is an important link to the chain.'

— Max Hasse

involved, you have to look at the criteria. To earn 100 points in each event (a 3-minute rest separates each event), competitors must:

- Execute 100 bent-leg situps in a 2-minute time span.
 - Execute 60 non-stop pushups with no more than a 1-second stop at the top position.
 - Jump at least 9-foot, 10-inches in three tries during a 3-minute time span.
 - Execute 30 pullups in a 2-minute time span.
 - Complete a shuttle run around cones — 5 lengths of 60 yards — in at least 44 seconds.
 - Accomplish that and you get 600 points. Sound easy? As successful as Rochester has been, it has yet to have an individual score 500. That's why the team concept is so vital. At Saturday's meet, Rochester's men averaged 468.6 points — the top being a 482 and the fifth being a 455.
- It takes a special type of athlete to excel in the competition. Ironically, the competition was formed for non-athletes — those who did not participate in sports.

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DAVID FRANK/staff photographer

Doug Marcum, a ninth grader at Rother Junior High School in Rochester Hills, struggles to complete his pullups during Marine Fitness competition Saturday at

Rochester High School. Marcum was one of 77 men tested in the competition, which also includes situps, pushups, long jumping and a shuttle run.

Half-Marathon course changed

Runners tackling the fifth annual West Bloomfield Half-Marathon this month will encounter a few minor changes in the course layout.

"We changed the course this year to improve the safety of runners," said Sally Pierce, coordinator for the Sunday, April 21, race sponsored by the West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation Department and Henry Ford Hospital-West Bloomfield Center. "For example, the runners will not have to cross Walnut Lake Road in the middle of the race."

Since the course was changed, Pierce said a decision was made to have the new route measured and certified by The Athletic Congress. "The distance was correct in the past but it was never certified," Pierce said. "Now, if you set a record on the course it will be official. We just want to offer the runner a little bit more every year."

Pierce expects more than 800 runners for the race, down from 987 runners in 1983.

"BUT RACES, in general, are all down," Pierce said. "I'm not sure how many will run, but things are coming along fine."

The race started as a full marathon in 1977 when it was run in West Bloomfield Township and Orchard Lake Village. The race was moved to Belle Isle in 1978 and 1979 because of problems associated with the township course, Pierce said.

"We came back to West Bloomfield

in 1980, but we didn't have a good course," she said. "The roads were unpaved and rugged."

The following year organizers decided to switch to a half-marathon and the number of runners jumped from 250 to 700 in the first year, she said.

The 13.1-mile course covers scenic, rolling terrain with minimal traffic. Almost all of the course — 99 percent — is paved.

The race starts at 12:30 p.m. in front of West Bloomfield High School.

The route travels north and then south before meandering westward through the township toward Halstead. At Halstead, runners will jog north before heading east to the finish at Holy Spirit Church across from the high school.

THE FIRST 475 finishers will receive key chains. First- and second-place prizes will be awarded in the men's junior division (18 and under) and the men's veterans (50 and older) classification.

First- through fifth-place finishers in the men's open (18-39) and men's sub-master's (50-59) will receive prizes while first- through fourth-place finishers in the men's masters division will earn awards.

First- and second-place finishers in the women's divisions will receive awards and a husband-wife finish will be honored.

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C.J. Risak

How an expert dodges an issue

IF ONLY . . . If only I could make decisions the way the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) does.

Just imagine. Get up in the morning and have to figure out what to have for breakfast. "First," I'd say to myself in keeping with the spirit of the MHSAA, "I have to recognize all the far-reaching implications of my decision. Heavens, all the people that are affected!"

Organizing myself with true-blue bureaucratic efficiency, I would dissect the problem and examine it piecemeal. Of course, I wouldn't make a move without the full support of those involved. "Well, dear wife, what do you think I should have?" I would ask my dear wife. All answers would be duly recorded.

"Well, dear cat, what do you think I should have?" I would ask my dear cat. Any discernible answer would be duly recorded, then forwarded to Ripley's Believe It or Not.

AFTER TABULATING the results, I would then announce my monumental decision, if I could come to one. Of course, by then it would be lunchtime anyway.

Imagine trying to decide something really important, like what color underwear to wear! "Well, okay, so I sound a little silly. But I won't admit to exaggeration."

For instance, see how the MHSAA has treated the most controversial matter put before it: the football playoffs.

"Let's take a poll," was their reply to the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association, which requested an expanded playoff format for the second time in 2 years.

Remember last year. The football coaches association thought it had a good plan and presented it to the MHSAA's Representative Council, a noble body of 19 that professes to present the wishes of the high schools of Michigan. The coaches wanted to expand the football playoffs to include 32 teams per class, instead of eight.

THE COACHES obviously didn't realize what they were asking — or from whom. A change that severe was far too drastic for the MHSAA. Not too surprisingly, the Representative Council turned them down flat.

There were problems with that plan, to be sure: longer playoffs, shorter regular season schedules, the possibility of playing two games in 1 week. Radical changes, far too radical for the MHSAA even to consider.

So the coaches put together another playoff plan. This one is far different from the first. It's reasonable, logical and fair. It certainly seems better than the present format.

That makes it dangerous to the MHSAA. It could even result in — Heaven forbid! — a change!

THE PLAN calls for expanding the playoffs to 16 teams per class. That would add one game to the playoffs, but, according to the coaches plan, teams would be selected after 8 games. The first playoff game would be played on the season's ninth week.

Schools could still schedule opponents for the ninth week and switch for the playoffs. For example, if Farmington Harrison and Plymouth Salem were to meet in the opening round of the state playoffs, the team they scheduled for their final games would play each other instead.

The MHSAA has answered this threat with its normal dodge-the-bullet strategy: it conducted a poll. Know what it found? Nearly 70 percent of the schools that replied (713 received questionnaires, 560 answered) favored expanding the playoffs.

OF COURSE, as the MHSAA might point out, more than a quarter liked things just the way they are. And the poll results didn't convince some people, like MHSAA assistant director Warren McKenzie.

McKenzie told O&E sports editor Chris McCosky that some school principals gave the survey to their football coaches and let them fill it out.

"Many superintendents, we understand, are upset with their principals for voting to expand the playoffs," McKenzie said.

If you think that sounds like the makings of a dodge, you're not alone. The MHSAA is supposed to make a decision on the matter May 5-8 at its annual meeting in Cadillac.

MY PERSONAL poll on what that decision will be revealed the following:

- 10 percent figure the MHSAA will favor the new playoff format;
- 30 percent figure the MHSAA will can it;
- 50 percent figure they'll find some way to table it for another year.

• 10 percent figure they'll ignore it altogether.

What are the MHSAA's true feelings on the subject? Here's what one MHSAA insider told McCosky:

"I think the whole playoff thing is a problem. It's not good for the sport, and it's not good for the kids. If it has any value at all, it's to satisfy the whims of adult coaches' egos."

With an attitude like that, I can't see the MHSAA ever expanding the playoffs. Their perception is dismal: the bigger the playoffs, the bigger their headache.