

C.J. Risak

Fitness really can be such fun

IN THE RELATIVELY short span I've spent on this planet, one of the many things I've observed is that people like to have a good time.

For many that goal becomes a lifelong pursuit. And yet I'm always shocked by the extremes people go to.

"Nothing in moderation" has become the battle cry for fun-lovers everywhere.

Sports were always intended, basically, to be fun. The thrill of competition, the joy of a well-played contest — that's what sports are all about.

WINNING? That isn't so important. As long as you play well and have fun. Look how much fun Tommy Hearns had when battered senseless by Marvellous Marvin Hagler. And everyone knows that all true Detroit baseball fans would have overturned cars and set them ablaze even if the Tigers had lost the World Series.

No, winning isn't so important.

Anyway, you get the idea how much people like to have fun and how much they like to have fun in sports.

Anything goes. That became clearly evident to me when I realized someone was convincing large masses of people that self-inflicted torture can be so enjoyable.

Fitness that's fun? Impossible, I said. No one's going to submit to the grunts and groans, the sweat and anguish, the pain and fatigue that accompanies physical labor for fun's sake — are they?

APPARENTLY THEY are. Witness the growing number of exercise salons popping up all over. Vic Tanny's, perhaps the most popular of this genre, just opened its 18th club in the metro Detroit area. The latest is in Southfield, with other openings scheduled for Troy and Sterling Heights later this year.

These are not like the workout gyms of yesteryear, those single-room sweatboxes with a few mats scattered on a cement floor and barbells stacked in the corner. These beauties cost big bucks. The Southfield club carries a \$2 million price tag. The Troy Vic goes for \$5 million.

What's more, there are more than 2,000 Vic Tanny's nationwide. That makes it a very big business indeed. Prices vary, but a basic single membership to Vic's runs \$598 for the first year and \$198 renewal every year thereafter.

AND THE WHOLE operation is contingent on convincing people that getting in shape is joyous.

I wouldn't believe it. I mean, I like working out, but I don't go running around a track for a couple of hours, giggling all the way.

To me, fitness is a necessary evil. Sort of like having to work for a living, or raising children — you get out of it what you put into it. Work hard and maybe you'll become a millionaire. Work your kids hard and maybe they'll become millionaires and share their wealth with you.

Work out hard and maybe you'll live long enough to enjoy any wealth you might have accumulated.

That's not what these exercise places are selling, though. They're selling fun.

I HAD to investigate. This was utter madness — even when the moon was in. I visited the Plymouth Vic Tanny's. Got the grand tour — 25-yard swimming pool, saunas, whirlpool, dozens of weight machines, a running track, racquetball courts, etc. But, most importantly, I found an answer to my query.

Vic's has an aerobic dance room.

Now understand, the aerobic dance room has done for Vic Tanny's what the plane has done for travel: revolutionize it. If you've ever seen aerobic dancing you'll understand why. It's dominated by females.

Girls love to dance. And guys love to watch girls dance.

THE AEROBIC dance room is conveniently located in the middle of the running track. The room is open on just one side, so you've got to run pretty fast to get a glimpse of two dozen girls bouncing about to some Kool and the Gang tune.

And some guys do run pretty fast. That puts them a step above the "perchers." Those are the characters who hang out by the weight machines, located on the other side of the track from the opening to the dance area.

Some work on the machines for a little while, at least pretending to be interested in their fitness. But then there's that bunch that just perch themselves against a railing, staring unashamedly.

Only their eyes get much of a workout. I saw guys leave the place after an hour and they never even broke a sweat. The perchers have an argument, though. Their aerobic conditions must improve, considering the pounding they put their hearts through.

I saw a poll last week that listed the most common places women go to meet men. Ranked near the top of the list were sporting goods stores and fitness clubs, which seems to reaffirm what mankind's favorite sport truly is.

So where do I sign up?



NANDY BORST/Staff photographer

North's Mike McBoth hopes to be able use his home run trot Saturday in district play against city rival Farmington Harrison.

Hawks, Raiders battle in district

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

Count on one thing this Saturday at the state Class A District Baseball Tournament, at Walled Lake Western: the scouts, both professional and collegiate, will be out en masse.

The main attraction, of course, will be Dan Gabriele — he of the 90-plus mph fastball and one state title already at Walled Lake Western.

But, the attentive scouts will get much more out of Saturday than another peek at one of the best pitching prospects ever to come through these parts.

At 10 a.m., North Farmington (12-9) will play city rival Farmington Harrison (12-10). Then, at 12:30 p.m., Observerland's No. 1-ranked team Plymouth Canton (22-5) will take on Gabriele and Western (14-9).

PERHAPS THERE aren't any Gabriele's on the other three teams, but there are some bonafide prospects:

• North Farmington: Tom Colter, a right-hander, throws a fastball consistently in the low-80s. Bob Chwalki, a 6-4 lefty, throws equally fast. Offensively, catcher Mike Rudin and shortstop Eric Engel have been the most dangerous hitters. Mark Dillman has been very consistent, as well.

• Farmington Harrison: There are few teams that can surpass the Hawks in terms of pure athletic ability. The Hawks' major weakness is lack of a pitching depth. Although, Mike Inch and Vince Ensign have come on strong over the later half of the season. One of the brightest prospects in Observerland is junior shortstop Brian Smolinski. He is currently hitting .435 and packs a good deal of power. Catcher Mike Colovos, second baseman Ken George and center fielder John Miller have also played well both offensively and defensively.

• Plymouth Canton: Pitchers Bucky Blako and Mark Coburn have attracted a good deal of attention this season from college scouts, as have catcher Dwayne Bennett and pitcher-infielder Mike Clark. A bit unheralded, yet most productive, are juniors Chris Siler and Mark Stevens. The hottest hitter of late in the Canton lineup has been senior John Lenders. First baseman Pete Morman, a senior, may be Canton's most consistent hitter.

NORTH AND HARRISON met a week ago

Softball teams subdued in state tourney action

The season came to an abrupt close for the Farmington public school softball teams last week.

North Farmington lost its state Class A pre-district contest with the state's No. 1-ranked team Waterford Mott, 8-1, on Friday.

Farmington Harrison was blown from the state tournament Friday by Bloomfield Hills Andover, 11-7.

Harrison (6-16) erupted for five runs in the second and two more in the third to take a 7-3 lead. However, Andover scored eight times over the course of the last three innings to take the Hawks out.

Kim George had a pair of hits including a solo home run for the Hawks. Dana Dinkins had two hits with a bases-loaded double. Anne

Hesano and Sandy Turquist each delivered a pair of hits.

Sophomore Dawn Culbertson (5-5) absorbed the loss despite striking out a season high seven batters.

North (12-9) could mount little offense against a strong Mott team. Suzette Greenberg, plagued by some sloppy defensive work by the Raider outfield, took the loss.

N. FARMINGTON 8, HARRISON 5: Patii Kozicki knocked in two runs with a pair of hits to help North keep its Farmington city softball title last Wednesday.

Farmington Harrison contributed to its own demise with four errors and eight walks.

The Hawks did have the long ball going in their favor. Danna Raddate blasted two solo home runs and Collette Cashin added another.

All-Area cager tries for comeback at U-D

By C.J. Risak
Staff writer

Mary Kay Whalen is coming back. To what? To basketball, the game that earned her all-state recognition at Livonia Franklin and made her one of the top centers in the Big Ten by the end of her sophomore season at Michigan State University.

From where does she return? From a year-long, self-imposed exile, a sabbatical she took to marry — hence the change of her surname, from McNeill to Whalen — and to have a child.

And to where does she return? Not to MSU. Whalen will attempt her comeback at the University of Detroit.

WHALEN'S SWITCH from MSU should not be interpreted as a defection made necessary by hard feelings after she dropped out following the 1983-84 school year. Nor should it be thought of as a sudden rekindling of academic interest.

"I always knew I was going to finish school," said Whalen. "But I wanted to stay in the (Detroit) area. The distance (to MSU) was just too far for me to travel."

The distance became an overwhelming problem when Whalen considered her family. So she started shopping around for a local college to attend but "not to play basketball."

That changed when U-D coach Dewayne Jones telephoned. The two were in a situation where each might help the other. For Whalen, U-D could offer a computer science program and a scholarship.

AND FOR U-D, Whalen could offer proven ability at the NCAA's Division I level. At MSU, the 6-foot-3 Whalen averaged 13.4 points and 7.8 rebounds in her sophomore season. That followed a freshman year in which she scored

11.1 points and grabbed 7.1 rebounds a game.

Jones has molded a solid Titan team, lacking only a true center. If Whalen is to be the Spartans, then this new arrangement will benefit both.

But that "if" still must be overcome. Whalen has missed a year of competition, and she's had a child. The comeback won't be easy.

"I've been working out all along," Whalen said, "but I just started playing again. I don't think I'm any worse, but everyone else will be a lot better. They've got a year more of experience."

WHILE AT MSU, Whalen said she preferred to play forward rather than center. Her outside shooting touch and the physical pounding centers absorb in the Big Ten made that request logical enough.

Now Whalen is again projected as a center. But she's not arguing.

"At MSU they wanted me to play forward, they just didn't have anyone to play center," she said. "Playing center doesn't bother me. I'll play anywhere, I just want to play."

U-D has recruited a center, 6-3 all-star Cammie Maki from Warren Lincoln. Whalen could be added to power forward should Maki develop quickly.

FOR WHALEN, the events of the past few months have helped her reaffirm previous goals.

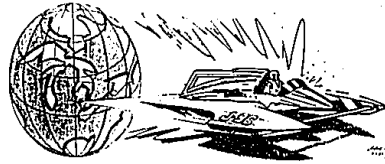
"When I first look off last year, I thought, 'Who knows what I'm going to do?' But it's working out pretty well now."

"I'm just going to have to find the time. It will be tougher but I'm going to do it."

Whalen will have two years of athletic eligibility remaining.

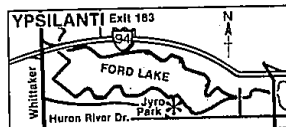
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