

Durbin born out of boredom

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Out of twiddling thumbs and impatient sighs, the Durbin Gymnastics Meet was born.
Too many times, Bloomfield Hills' Renee Durbin would be at her daughters' gymnastics meets, which were supposed to be over at 2 p.m. but would drag on until sometimes after 8 p.m. At one Saturday meet, afternoon turned evening in the bleachers, and something clicked in Durbin's mind.
"We used to go to gymnastics meets on a regular basis," said Durbin, whose two daughters are no longer competing. "They didn't start on time and they didn't finish on time. They were very disorganized, and something clicked in Durbin's mind."
According to meet host, Steve Whitlock of Steve Whitlock's School of Gymnastics in Bloomfield Hills, preparation and planning add up to a smooth-running event.

"It's sort of a challenge to run it more efficiently than the year before," said Whitlock.
Punctuality is just one feature of "The Durbin," which takes place Friday and Saturday at Whitlock's school and at Ferndale High School. In its ninth year, the meet has grown from 18 teams participating in its inaugural outing in 1977 to 550 teams from around the country this year.
THE COMPETITIVENESS generated with that many teams enhances The Durbin's reputation as one of the most interesting meets in the country, headed by Renee and husband Mel, is the meet's only sponsor.

At first, it was just the Durbins working on the meet, which took six weeks to organize. This year, work started in October with an array of people to help put the annual February meet together.

gymnastics

The Durbin showed a profit after only its first outing — an unusual occurrence for gymnastics meets. The money raised helps support the Acronauts, a group of young gymnasts who compete around the country.

Durbin estimates more than \$40,000 has been raised for the Acronauts over the past nine years.
Whitlock is the head coach of the outfit.
The group also receives help from the 80-family-member Acronauts Parents Club.
Whitlock's school, as in the past, is the host for this year's Durbin. The competitive nature of The Durbin is something Whitlock can relate to.

THE ILLINOIS native was a standout at Southern Illinois University, which won NCAA national championships in three of his four years there (1963-67). The experience, he later found out, would have an indirect impact on the way he would teach the sport.

"It's changed pretty much since I came out of competing and into teaching," Whitlock said. "I thought everyone wanted to be a national competitor. When I got into teaching, I found that only a few people have that type of desire."
Whitlock still caters to those with the yearning to be competitive. Four of his pupils, including West Bloomfield's Heidi Brady, compete in the elite division that includes performing internationally.

But his program, which even includes instruction for 2-year-olds, is geared more to the physical-edu-

cation aspects of gymnastics.
"Our philosophy is very developmental," said Whitlock, who's also a member of the U.S. Olympic Gymnastics Coaches Association. "It's based on a program of skill progress."
Whitlock said philosophical differences are not what sets his school apart from most, the size of it does. Whitlock's school, which covers 12,000 square feet, has 10 sets of bars and 18 balance beams. And a larger facility comes in handy when hosting a meet the size of The Durbin.

"IT'S A GIGANTIC undertaking," Whitlock said. "It's probably the largest meet held in our region. Most meets have around 40 teams competing. With over 500 teams, it's the equivalent of running 10 separate meets."

Most gymnastic clubs in Michigan will be there, along with teams from Ontario, New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana and Massachusetts. Some of the local clubs competing include the Borge Sisters of Birmingham, Michigan Academy of Gymnastics in Garden City and the Farmington Gymnastics Center.

Durbin, herself, has noticed the impact of the meet.

"The kids at the meet will come up to me and say, 'There really is a Mrs. Durbin,'" said Durbin. "When somebody talks about The Durbin, people know what they're talking about."

Beginners (class 4) competition is slated for Friday at 6:30 p.m. at Whitlock's School of Gymnastics, (795 Industrial Road, off Franklin Road behind the Miracle Mile Shopping Center). On Saturday, intermediate and advanced rounds are at Ferndale High (881 Pinescrest Ave. between Eight and Nine Mile roads and west of Woodward).

Admission is \$2 for adults and \$1 for students and senior citizens.



Steve Whitlock offers some advice to Kelly O'Rourke on her balance beam routine. Whitlock's school will host the ninth annual Durbin Gymnastics Meet this weekend.

By Chrla McCosky
staff writer

Being labeled "the favorite" can be most unsettling to a team.
Few root for the favorite. Everybody loves the underdog. If the favored team wins, well, they were supposed to — no big deal. If the favored team loses, it's headline news.
In reality, the favorite never completely wins.



Dan Parillo, Farmington senior, is favored to win the league title at 188 pounds.

wrestling

Meet the Plymouth Salem wrestling team.
The Rocks are a perfect 8-0 in Western Lakes dual meet competition and champs of the Lakes Division. They have won four tournaments this season. They are two-time defending Western Lakes champions.

The Rocks will be favored to win their third straight league meet Saturday at Westland John Glenn.

"HOLD ON a minute before you go naming us the favorites," Salem coach Ron Krueger said. "There are three weight classes where we're not scoring points. There were years where we won by two and three points, and that's with us scoring at every weight. Now we're not getting points in three weight classes, that'll be a killer."

But the consensus among league coaches has Salem clearly tagged with the "favorite" label.

"Plymouth Salem will be tough to beat," Livonia Churchill coach Mike Abdó said. "But if the kids who've been winning for us all year come through, we could shake things up a little."

The truth is there are several teams that could shake things up. Walled Lake Western, Walled Lake Central, Churchill, Westland John Glenn and Farmington, just to name a few.
"You have to consider teams like Churchill and Farmington and North

Farmington," Glenn coach Tom Buckner said. "They've got some strong kids that'll throw a monkey wrench into this thing. That's why this kind of meet gets interesting. Salem will have to have some thirds, fourths and fifths. They can't put everyone into the finals."

SAID KRUEGER: "We will have to work very hard. When you are the favorite, everyone is out to get you. They even gun for you at the seeding meeting. I remember Plymouth Canton coach Rick Menoch saying last year that he lost the meet at the seeding meeting. That's what could happen to us this year."
It is likely that Salem will go into the meet carrying four No. 1 seeds: Todd Bourlier (98 pounds), Kevin Freeman (132), Dennis Dameron (112) and Dave Dameron (126). How wrestlers are seeded determines meet pairings.

Still, there are few clear-cut favorites in any of the weight classes. Dave Dameron, unbeaten and ranked No. 1 in the state, has not been seriously challenged in the league at 126. Farmington's Dan Parillo, also state-ranked, is expected to win at 188.

All other weight classes are up for grabs.
At 98, Bourlier and Walled Lake Central's Larry Sefigny are the top two contestants.

AT 105, Western's Dave Zehnder will have to ward off challenges from Farmington Harrison's Cliff Alcantara and Livonia Stevenson's Dave Wojelchowski.

Dennis Dameron will have his hands full with Kevin Foust of Western and Dave Dunford of Canton at 112.

Salem's Freeman will be tested by Glenn's Glen Camazar, Western's Chris Kraft and Churchill's Jeff Rothley at 132.

Kirk Rantz of Salem, Mike Ilacqua of Western, Pat Pruitt of Central, Paul Cook of North Farmington and Jay Pollard of Canton are in the running for the crown at 138.

A similar logjam exists at 145. Glenn's Dan Schimansky is slightly favored over Paul Colome (Western), Darrell Thurnish (Farmington), Bryan Whible (Salem), Dave Christian (Central) and Scott Morocco (Churchill).
Ken Kehoe of Northville, Brian Clemens of Churchill and Chris Rye of Salem are expected to battle for the title at 155.

AT 167, Pat Dugas of Harrison, Chris Fryjomski of Central, Mark Kropp of Glenn, John Economou of Stevenson, Lem Yeung of Salem and Dave Zenas of Churchill are serious contenders.

Jamie Woocuch of Salem, Bill Blair of Western, Tom Farr of Central, John Augustin of Farmington, Brian Haack of North Farmington and Pat McFadden of Harrison will battle at 185.

Finally, there's a four-way skirmish at heavyweight between Bill Critcher (Farmington), Chris Zimmerman

(Glenn), Gordy Johnstone (Central) and Richard Johnson (Salem).
When 11 of 12 weight classes are so wide open and competitive, perhaps it's

unfair to select one team as the favorite. Maybe it would be best just to show up at Glass Saturday and enjoy the action. Wrestling begins at 11 a.m.

sports shorts

SOFTBALL REGISTRATION

The recreation division of the Farmington Hills Special Services Department is accepting team registrations for all mens and womens softball leagues.

Registration began Feb. 3 and will continue until all leagues are filled. A \$5 non-refundable deposit will guarantee a spot in a league.

Leagues available are Open, Residential, Industrial, 3-2, Coed and Over 35. Fees are \$340 for Industrial and Residential leagues; \$380 for Open leagues.

Call 474-6115, Ext. 288, for more information.

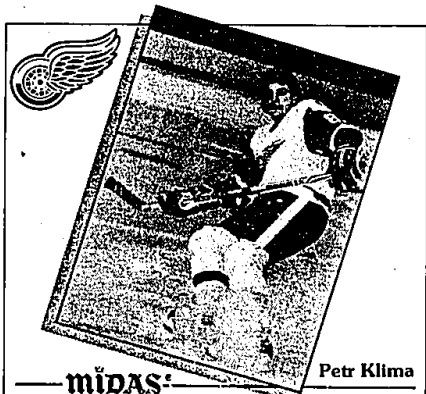
NFWB BASEBALL SIGNUP

Registration for the North Farmington-West Bloomfield baseball and softball leagues will take place on the following date: 6:30-9 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 6 at the North Farmington cafeteria.

A parent or guardian should accompany the child to registration.

The fee structure is as follows: \$40 for eight and nine year olds; \$50 for 10, 11 and 12 year olds; \$60 for those 13 and over.

A \$10 additional fee will be assessed on those registering late.



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