

Suburbs to vie for stadium?

DEMOCRACY IS DEAD. Let's face it. If it weren't, we'd be in deep — well, trouble, spelled in four letters.

That's because people are crazy. Always have been. If sanity were a human standard, our presidential candidates wouldn't be eight nobodies and Gary Hart, whose greatest claim to fame is he cheated on his wife and she didn't mind.

Democracy, for the record, is government by the majority. Can you imagine?

This is the same majority that would rather sit in the current Tiger Stadium instead of a new ballpark.

My solution? I say let 'em. Just don't put the Tigers on the field. Most of the crazies insisting on watching won't notice anyway.

WHAT THIS CITY needs is a ballpark in the suburbs. The Lions are here. The Pistons are here. I say bring the Tigers out here, too.

Next question: Where? You can play this two ways. One is to sneak them out of town, like the Colts departure from Baltimore.

That, as you may recall, was a PR disaster. Opt for plan No. 2.

Parade. Call the people who run the lottery. Call Monty Hall. Call Richard Dawson. Call Vanna White (please).

I figure this could be the biggest thing to hit Detroit since Hulk Hogan vs. Andre the Giant.

Well, almost. I can see it now. Suburbs competing for the right to be the site of the Tigers' new home.

THIS COULD spawn a whole new type of game show: "Who's the Host?" or "Ballpark Bonanza."

Course, the actual competitions would be the key to keeping audiences riveted. Preliminary rounds could feature city council members from various towns competing against each other in such gripping competitions as an egg toss or pin the tail on



C.J. Risak

the Coleman. Maybe even a combination of the two (God knows, Mayor Young deserves it).

You can pare the competition down to semifinals — a Final Four, if you will — and, finally, the championship round.

The last round could be a two- or even three-hour TV special. Divide the competition into three events. Something like, No. 1: Guess the number of average-sized people you can cram into a space the size of a 60,000-seat ballpark on a scorching day in August.

No. 2: Guess how many hot dogs and gallons of beer those people could consume on the same day.

No. 3: Guess how many three-point baskets those people could make afterwards.

THAT LAST question may seem somewhat contrived, but it's a great excuse to bring in Larry Bird for a clinic on how to shoot a basketball from 22 feet.

What fun. Birmingham mayor Dante Lazzetta vs. Livonia's Bob Bennett. And with such huge stakes. Get the lottery people involved, too. Start a betting pool on who would win, with a certain percentage of the take going toward funding the stadium.

Throw in a few side bets. Like, how many of those average-sized people who drank beer and ate hot dogs all afternoon on a steaming day in August could heave a basketball 22 feet and even hit the rim?

How many could even see the rim? How many could find the three-point line?

How many would just heave from the effort?

An extravagantly staged affair like this would defuse this nonsensical effort to keep the current stadium. Who needs it? We can build another one just as good — even better. In the suburbs.

A certain amount of mediation could make everyone happy. Like no-parking signs everywhere, so people would have to park a mile or so from the stadium and walk.

AND MORE poles to block views. That's a must. So is a lower upper-deck overhang, so fans in the lower deck lose sight of even more fly balls.

Precious few restrooms and refreshment stands would help retain the flavor of the old park. And burns could be banished in spray on the sidewalks and garbaged, incomprensible questions.

Stick in a bigger bleacher section to appease the rowdies, and the picture is complete. Almost. Sanctions more special-event days, like a free beachball giveaway, or a roast-a-car jamboree. Maybe even a Kirk Gibson lookalike contest — whoever wins gets to play infield.

Fans love this kind of stuff. How do I know? Simple mathematics: There are maybe 5,000 decent seats in the current Tiger Stadium, which means about 90 percent of the biggest crowds can't see the game that well.

Still, fans are clamoring to save Tiger Stadium. Obviously, it's not the game, it's the show surrounding it that matters.

So call Monty. Have him bring Richard and Vanna (definitely), too. And — what the heck — maybe convince Hulk and Andre to be guests of honor. They can put on a tag-team exhibition against president-to-be Hart and whoever his partner might be at present.

On with the show!

sports shorts

COACHES NEEDED
Merry High School is in need of coaches for various sports and activities for the 1988 fall season. Teachers are seeking in various areas: Basketball, Soccer, Football, Tennis, Golf, and Track. Applicants should send a letter of application and resume to: Athletic Director, Merry High School, 11 White Farmington, White, Mich. 48116.

THINK SOFTBALL
Farmington Hills Baseball Club is accepting registrations for its softball teams. The club has 10 teams and 140 players. Softball season runs from May to September. For more information, call 582-2660.

GOLF SHOW
The Golf Show is being held at the Sheraton Hotel in Detroit on March 12, 13, and 14. The show will feature a wide variety of golf equipment, including clubs, bags, and accessories. For more information, call 582-2660.

Rioux has Olympic hopes on her mind

By C.J. Risak
staff writer

Three years ago, Jennifer Rioux transferred from the University of Michigan to Wake Forest, where she received a track scholarship. She's been waiting ever since to prove she was worth the investment.

Rioux, a Livonia Ladywood graduate and now a senior, has excelled athletically for the Deacons. It just hasn't been in track. An All-American at U-M as a freshman in cross country, Rioux duplicated that feat by again earning All-America honors for Wake Forest.

In cross country, that's not her sport of emphasis, supposedly; track is.

BUT SOMETHING always seemed to happen to Rioux to keep her from realizing her goals. During her first year of track competition at Wake Forest, she had trouble with a tendon in the back of her feet. In her second season, lower back pains sidelined her.

Rioux was running out of time. She's a senior now, and she still had not made it through a full season of track at Wake Forest.

That is changing. At last weekend's Atlantic Coast Conference indoor championships, Rioux won the 2,000-meter run in 9:24.8.

Her reaction to the victory was mixed. "I was really psyched up for the ACCs," she admitted, then added, "I'm going to try and qualify for the indoor nationals at the Florida Fast-Times meet in two weeks. It's not that big of a deal, but it would be nice."

THE REASON Rioux downplayed the NCAA Indoor Championships was that her sights are set elsewhere — namely, the NCAA Outdoor meet

in June. A good performance there would slingshot her into the Olympic Trials.

Still, it was nice to win the ACC race, even if her time was far off her personal best of 9:14, which she ran her first season at Wake Forest.

"I'm healthy now," she said. "And I'm going to stay healthy if it kills me."

Success hasn't come easily for Rioux. She did make All-American in cross country last fall, finishing 21st overall in the NCAA meet, but it was an uphill struggle.

"I consider it a decent season," was her opinion. "I was coming from behind again."

Poor health sidelined Rioux for part of the cross country season. She became a non-starter in September, with an iron level so low "I was falling asleep in class."

THE PROBLEM was quickly corrected, but it hurt her performance. Rioux finished 68th at the Kentucky Invitational in October, her first competition of the season. She regained her strength fast enough and "once I got my confidence back, I was fine."

She proved that by earning her All-American status six weeks after the Kentucky Invitational.

Rioux's attention is now riveted on track, which is where she'd rather be. "I'm definitely more confident in track," she said. "It's easier for me. It's more fun, so it's easier."

First goal on Rioux's timetable is the NCAA indoor meet March 12. She must surpass the qualifying standard of 9:23.5 at the Florida meet to make it.

After that, there's the ACC Outdoor meet in April, the NCAA Outdoor meet in June and, finally, the Olympic Trials in July.

OCC host for state meet

The Girls State Short-Course Swimming Championships will take place Friday, Saturday and Sunday, March 4-6, at the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College.

The Michigan Stingray Swim Association of Farmington Hills, the defending state champion, will serve as the host club and sponsor the meet in conjunction with United States Swimming of Michigan. Nearly 60 clubs will vie for the 1988 team title.

The championship meet annually attracts some 500 swimmers ranging in age from 10 to 18 who have met established time cuts in free-style, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and individual medley (a combination of the other four strokes). Relay events will be included in the competition, too.

Michigan age-group swimmers have enjoyed success in competition

with swimmers from adjoining states by winning the Central Zone championship the last two summers.

The state meet has often been the forum for swimmers to attain fast times and advance to further competition, including the zone meet, junior and senior nationals and, ultimately, the Olympic time trials.

United States Swimming Inc., by an act of Congress in 1980, was set up to be the self-governing body for competitive swimming in the United States. USS is divided into 60 local swimming committees, one of which is Michigan Swimming Inc.

The state meet will run 5-10 p.m. Friday, March 4, and 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, March 5 and 6.

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North beats swim rivals

Continued from Page 1

The Falcons also won the 500 free-style and the backstroke with G.T. Meili and Gary Kurzer touching out at 5:13.9 and 1:04.28, respectively, in those events.

Lakes Division champion Livonia Stevenson and Plymouth Salem are expected to slug it out for the Western Lakes title when the entire league competes later this week at Salem, but North and Plymouth Capton, the Western Division winner, are aiming for a high finish, also.

"IT'S GOING TO be a real battle for first place," said Gendron of the anticipated Stevenson-Salem clash. "We're shooting for third. That's our team goal. We don't have enough depth to challenge them."

The WLAA preliminaries are scheduled for 2 p.m. Wednesday, the diving competition for 4 p.m. Thursday and the swimming finals for 7 p.m. Friday.

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the week ahead

BOYS BASKETBALL
Tuesday, March 1

Divine Child at Redford CC, 7:30 p.m.
Cassonville at Westland, 7:30 p.m.
Westland Meet at Garden City, 7:30 p.m.
Wal. Kaitling at Redford Union, 7:30 p.m.
Red. Thurston at A.P. Inter-City, 7:30 p.m.
Wayne Memorial at Wyandotte, 7:30 p.m.
A.A. Greenhills at Luth. Westland, 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 2

Red. Thurston at Taylor Kennedy, 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, March 3

Del. Northern at Redford CC, 7 p.m.
Red. St. Mary's at Cassonville, 7:30 p.m.
Garden City at Oak Park, 7:30 p.m.
Deer. Fordson at Wayne Memorial, 7:30 p.m.
Friday, March 4

Deerborn at Redford Union, 7:30 p.m.
Lutheran Westland vs. Ply. Garden at West Middle School, 7:30 p.m.
(Operation-Friendship Finals at U-G)

Catholic League vs. PSL Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.
PSL vs. Catholic League champions, 8 p.m.

Saturday, March 5
(Western Lakes playoffs at Ply. Salem)

Liv. Stevenson vs. Northville, 10 a.m.
Farmington vs. W.L. Westland, noon.
3rd-4th place teams, 4 p.m.
3rd-4th place teams, 8 p.m.
Championship game, 8 p.m.