

Departments pull away during 1st tug-of-war

By Bob Sklar
Staff writer

Are you ready, fire.
Are you ready, police.
Man the rope.
Take the strain.
Pull!

With that command from police Chief William Dwyer, a team of police officers and a team of firefighters participated in Farmington Hills' first tug-of-war competition between the two public safety departments Sunday.

The eight-man teams dug in at the first Farmington Hills Police Department Open House. The setting was a grassy knoll behind the 1-year-old police facility next to the City Hall.

"Tug-of-war competition is one of three sports you can win by going backwards," said announcer Tom Costello, a retired officer who coached the Detroit Police Department's tug-of-war team for 20 years. Under sunny skies, spectators rooted for their favorite team and the coaches coached their crews to pull in a best two-out-of-three competition.

A five-minute rest break separated the pulls.

When the teams gathered for the second pull, police Lt. Richard Murphy shouted to team coach Charles Hubbard, a detective: "Come on Charlie, get 'em tough!" Fire Chief Richard Marinucci shouted to team coach Denny Hughes, a fire technician specialist: "Come on Denny, hold 'em off!"

The fire department team showed more weight and brawn during each pull. But each time, the smaller police team parlayed technique to victory.

In a post-pull ceremony, Mayor Jody Sorenson presented Hubbard and his police teammates the traveling championship plaque.



THOMAS ARNETT/staff photographer

"I'M PLEASED, but I'm not surprised by our victory," Hubbard said. "Our guys did what they were told: to follow technique."

To hone that technique, the police held about a dozen practices. In contrast, the firefighters practiced only three times.

"They were quite a bit bigger than us. But nobody gave up," Hubbard said.

Hughes acknowledged that the police were better prepared.

"We thought we'd sneak by on our strength and weight. But obviously, technique paid off for them," Hughes said.

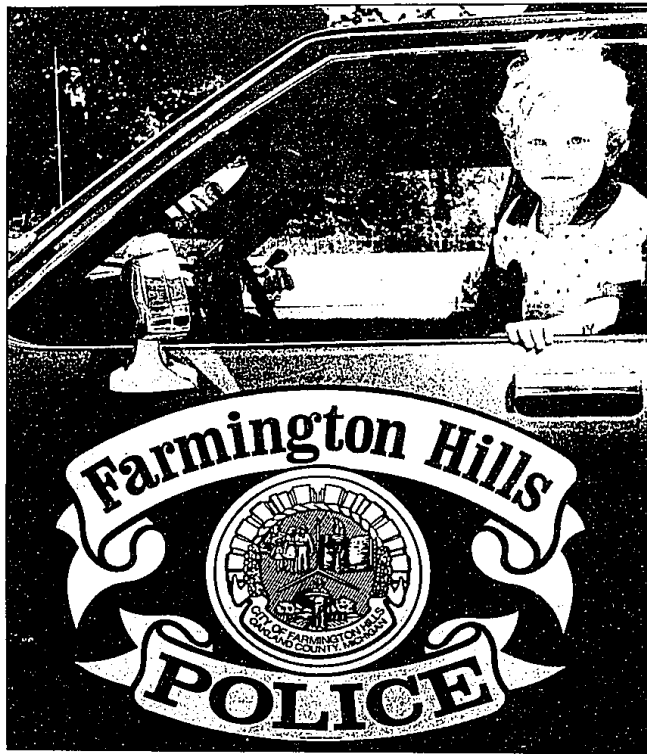
He also acknowledged the police probably took the competition more seriously. "But we'll give them a tougher run next time," he vowed.

HUBBARD HAS no doubts that'll be the case.

"Being an ex-firefighter, I know those guys have a tremendous competitive spirit. We know they'll be a lot tougher in October."

A rematch will take place at the Farmington Hills Fire Department Open House during National Fire Prevention Week in October.

Above, coach Denny Hughes of the fire department strains during the tug-of-war. Below, Melissa Seaver, 10, of Farmington Hills, and her brother, Aaron, 7, got the Oakland County Mounted Division horses ridden by Sgt. Chuck Carpenter and officer Ralph Williams.



THOMAS ARNETT/staff photographer

Scott Braun, 3, of Farmington Hills, feels what it's like to sit inside a patrol car.

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