

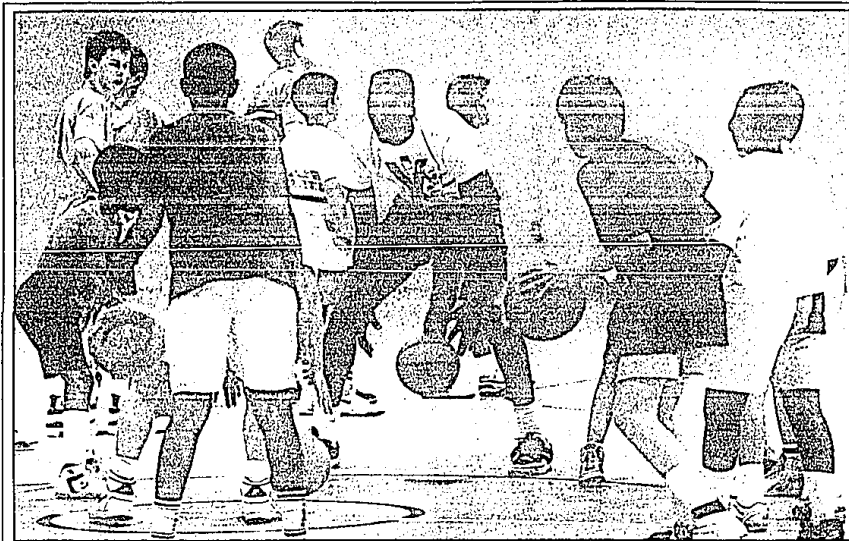
Sports

Dan O'Moara editor/591-2312

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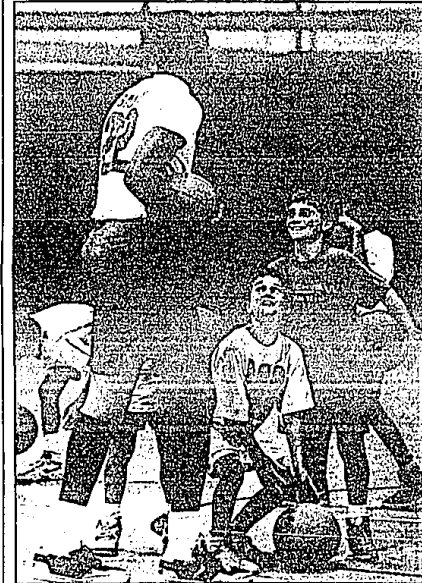
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RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Spider Salley

John "Spider" Salley of the World Champion Detroit Pistons made a scheduled appearance Thursday at a week-long basketball camp at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus. Salley (above) demonstrates dribbling techniques to his pupils, a pair of youthful admirers (left) are captivated by the star's presence and Selley (below) signs an autograph for 8-year-old Samantha Joslyn of Novi.



Walter's takes LCBL title

By Brad Emons
staff writer

"Wallyball" isn't just a cute slogan anymore. Walter's Appliance capped an impressive three-game sweep of the Livonia Collegiate Baseball League playoffs Friday night at Ford Field with a 7-2 victory over Hines Park Lincoln-Mercury.

Pitcher Randy Buchler made his 45-minute ride to the ballpark from his home in Grass Lake a memorable one, winning his second playoff game on a two-hitter. The right-hander went the distance, striking out 12 in nine innings, while allowing just two hits and five walks.

But probably the happiest member of the Walter's brigade was manager Mike Keller, who after 10 years in the league will be making his first trip to the prestigious All-American Amateur Baseball Association Tournament, beginning Friday, Aug. 11, in Johnston, Pa.

"This is great, and I'm still shaking inside," said the Livonia manager. "I felt it was 'meant to be' after our last (regular) season game when we beat Little Caesars 1-0. That's the point where we wanted to be. It made us believers."

BUCHLER also made believers out of Hines Park, mixing a variety of off-speed pitches with a lively sidearm fastball to handcuff the opposition.

Buchler is no stranger when it comes to winning the big one.

In 1987 he and Walter's catcher Tim Crabtree led Grass Lake High to the Class D state crown. As a freshman this past season at Hillsdale College, he was voted the Great Lakes Conference's most valuable pitcher.

"He was on the money all night long," Keller said. "But we also played real good defense."

"We made some excellent plays. It was a team effort. That's the way it's been all season long."

Shortstop Ken Dropliewski, a Wayne Memorial

High graduate and a member of the Henry Ford Community College team this past spring, made three sparkling defensive plays on the night to propel Walter's to victory.

And as the Walter's players like to refer to, they hit "plenty of seeds."

The first outburst came in the second inning when Walter's produced five runs.

JOE STURTZ, the left fielder from North Farmington High headed for Indiana University, started the surge with a double and scored on Crabtree's single.

Dropliewski then reached base on an infield hit and advanced on a Hines Park infield error.

With the bases loaded, Jeff Pendell walked to make it 2-0. Marty Wolfe followed by sending a hard smash past Hines Park first baseman Derek Humphries, scoring two more runs. John Gottis then earned credit for an RBI on a ground out.

Walter's made it 6-0 in the fifth when Dave Houghby and Sturtz pulled off a double steal with runners at first and third.

Damian Hull then scored Walter's seventh run when Pendell, a Livonia Churchill grad, singled.

That was more than enough cushion for Buchler, who said he was "pumped up" for the finale.

"Their pitcher (starter Brett Loomis of Siena Heights) gave me my only loss in college, and the last time out he beat me on a no-hitter," Buchler said. "It gave me added incentive. I felt great out there tonight, although the last inning I got a little tired."

BUT HINES PARK failed to take advantage. The bats were silent all night long.

Hines Park snapped Buchler's shutout bid, however, in the seventh when Chris Sliser singled and lured scored on a wild pitch. They added one in the ninth, but it was too little, too late.

"It would have been nice to have gone to

Johnstown," said Hines Park manager Dave Racer of the LCBL's regular season champions. "Sliser and Loomis had their hearts set on going."

"Our game is pitching and defense. Our pitching really didn't let us down. We haven't been playing defense the way we're capable of during the past week, and Walter's (the third-place team) got hot at the right time."

"I expected it to be us and Caesars at the end, but they got hot and that's what it takes."

On Wednesday, Walter's handed Hines Park its first loss of the four-team, double-elimination playoffs, 9-3.

But in the first game of the doubleheader Friday at Ford Field, Hines Park bounced back for an 8-4 win over Duffy's Plumbers, earning a second shot at Walter's.

Sliser, the ex-Canton High standout now at Kansas City Community College, hit a homer and double to send fourth-place Duffy's packing.

SHORTSTOP STEVE Michels and Mike Slawick each had two hits for the losers.

Both teams have qualified for the National Amateur Baseball Federation regional tournament, which begins this weekend at Ford Field.

But the night and the LCBL season belongs to Keller and his Walter's crew, who dedicated the 1989 campaign to the late Bob Foust, a former player and Westland firefighter who drowned last spring.

Foust's jersey, No. 21, was draped along the fence inside the Walter's dugout during the playoffs.

"From the beginning of the season our goal was to go to Johnston," Keller said. "Tonight we had the chance, and it became a reality."

"Now we can give Bob's jersey to his parents."

And Keller could not forget John Mestak, the team's sponsor.

"He's the backbone of this team," said Keller, who is also known as "Stuck."

"John always said, 'Stuck, whatever you need, we've got it.' Without 'Wally,' we wouldn't be out here."

Mercy junior sets sights on winning it all

By Dan O'Moara
staff writer

He's quiet and reserved. She's bubbly and outgoing.

He lives in Cleveland. She lives in Canton Township.

Despite their differences, Tiffany Tyra and Phillip Beuch have become a successful team. What the teens have in common is roller skating.

The 15-year-old Tyra, a junior at Farmington Hills Mercy, and 16-year-old Beuch are Midwest champions in their junior level class dance and will attempt to add a national title when that competition begins Friday in Fort Worth, Texas.

The two have dedicated themselves to that goal and are recognized as one of the nation's outstanding dance combinations in their age group. The extent to which they and their families have gone to make that possible is impressive.

FROM LAST September to June, Beuch's parents saw that he got to Michigan nearly every weekend for practice, dropping him off on Friday night and returning Sunday night to take him home.

Since the end of the school year, Beuch has lived with the Tyra family, allowing for more practice time at Riverside Roller Rink, which Tiffany's parents own and operate.

"It's hard but I think it's really worth it," Beuch said, "because we're doing pretty well and seem to have a good chance of winning."

Furthermore, Phillip and Tiffany had to turn their schedules completely around on weekends, skating all night and sleeping days because of time conflicts with regular events taking place at the rink.

"We're at the end of the year where you don't mind it as much," Tiffany said. "This is when the bigger tournaments and competitions are coming up. But keeping up with school and getting better at skating is hard to do."

"If we had to do this year after year — the same old thing — it would be difficult. This is the first year of weird hours, and we're able to adjust."

TIFFANY AND Phillip have been a team for the last year — ever since Tiffany and her parents decided she needed a new partner.

The problem had been one of height discrepancy, Tiffany's former partner was 6-foot-4; she's 5-1, and the judges found the size difference unappealing. The Tyras knew of Phillip, who stands 5-5, from last year's nationals and approached his

rollerskating

parents with the idea of forming a team.

"When I met Phil, he was so quiet. I'll talk somebody's head off," Tiffany said. "I said 'I don't know if I'm going to be able to stand this.' Once you get to know him, he's not so quiet."

"I think that's pretty true," Phillip said. "It works out really well. I listen to her when she talks."

Though they have become good friends through their skating relationship, they maintain separate lives away from the rink.

"I stay at their house when I'm up here, but she goes and does her own thing," Phillip said. "You can get sick of a person, and then we wouldn't be able to get along and skate as well," Tiffany said.

Tiffany, who also was regional champion in sophomore ladies figures and will skate for individual honors at the nationals, and Phillip are optimistic about their chances in dance.

SOME OF THE competition will come from Riverside in the pair of Kevin Lake and Stephanie Cotton, both June graduates from Plymouth Salem and Mercy. Riverside's Shawn Jellise, who won four gold medals in the regional, is a national contender, too.

The Tyra-Beuch duo knows it will need a good performance to succeed. "Our coach, Vicki Barry, keeps telling us all the judges know about us now," Tiffany said, "and we can't make any mistakes because they'll be watching us. Others they might not be watching as closely."

Should they finish second or third, Tiffany and Phillip would move up to world class level. If they place first or second, they also will be invited to compete in the Olympic Sports Festival next year.

"I see us doing pretty well," Phillip said. "There's a couple teams we have to watch out for. We'll have to skate our best."

"So far we've won all our meets except one, which was our first one," Tiffany said. "A lot of people get nervous under pressure. We just have to skate strong and look presentable."

Competing in individual figures, Tiffany will have more to concern

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South in tight spot; Boyle wins twinbill

South Farmington needed to win three consecutive games last weekend if it hoped to capture the district championship in the National Amateur Baseball Federation tournament at Northville.

After winning its first two games, the Connie Mack ballclub suffered a 5-2 loss to Allen Park on Thursday. South was to play St. Clair Shores a second time Saturday with the winner meeting Allen Park.

Brian Traber pitched 4½ innings and took the loss, but only one of Allen Park's five runs was earned. South scored both runs when Adam Haverly's fly ball fell in short right field for an error.

On Wednesday, South won its second straight district game, beating SCS Farmington 6-3. In the bottom of the sixth — and final — inning, Supron belted a leadoff triple with the game tied 3-3.

The opposing catcher, her confidence apparently buoyed by an earlier pickoff, tried to catch Supron off the bag at third, but she threw the ball away instead. Supron scored the game-winning run.

Lisa Rockefeller was 2-for-3 with one RBI for Boyle, and Melissa Tisdale had two RBI on a single and a sacrifice fly. Winning pitcher Chris Balardi scattered six hits and walked five.

In the five-hour nightcap shortened by darkness, Boyle jumped in front 11-0 after 1½ innings, giving Shannon White, who allowed seven hits and five walks, a comfortable lead.

Rockefeller again was 2-for-3 and scored two runs. Supron, who hit another triple, and Lisa Rielenda had two hits apiece.

Misty Dossacwen had two RBI with a single and a base-loaded walk, and Tisdale and Dana Domanaki knocked in one run each.