

The world stands still for this 'cup'

By Larry O'Connor
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World Cup, you say?
Yes, that's right. Maradona, Gullit, van Basten, Robson — they all will be there representing their respective countries in what is the grand international showcase for the game of soccer.

Who, you say?
Maradona, Gullit, Van Basten. Uh, we'll get to that later. Here are some facts.

The World Cup takes place every four years, this year starting Friday, June 8, in Italy. Some 24 countries will be represented, having spent the past two years qualifying, some as small as Costa Rica and others as large as the Soviet Union.

For the first time in 40 years, the United States will be there. Though playing against the likes of Italy, Czechoslovakia and Austria, the upstart U.S. contingent has been given about as much of a chance as a six-pack staying cold on a foundry plate. Favorites in the monthlong round-robin tournament include host Italy, Holland, Brazil and West Germany. Teams to watch out for are England and Argentina.

When, Got all that? Good, because this World Cup thing is big potatoes.

"THE REST of the world stands still when football matches are played," said Roger Faulkner, a longtime promoter of soccer in the area.

Faulkner will be in Rome and Florence, Italy, watching the American side. He's on the U.S. Soccer Federation's National Budget Committee, which oversees the financial affairs of the national team.

Faulkner will also provide radio reports to WJR-AM's J.P. McCarthy in the morning during his two-week stay.

Some of us, though, won't be as lucky. Fortunately, Turner Network Television plans to carry a package of games, including the final match at 2 p.m. Sunday, July 8.

PREVIOUS FINALS have been classics. One such match was the 1986 final, in which host England beat West Germany, 4-2, in extra time thanks to a three-goal performance by Geoff Hurst.

Faulkner remembers listening with glee to the match on Canadian radio on his way to Niagara Falls. But the World Cup that followed four years later really sticks out in his mind.

In 1970, Faulkner helped put together closed-circuit telecast at the Masonic Temple of the final from Mexico. Advance tickets didn't sell because no one knew who would be in the final.

When Brazil and Italy made it, twice as many people showed up as there were tickets available. Added to the hysteria was the television feed from Mexico that went out a minute to kick-off.

"I thought we were going to have a riot," Faulkner said. "Fortunately, the picture came back on."

When Brazil won 4-1, fans danced in the streets outside the Masonic.



Nick O'Shea, owner of Soccer Store & More in Livonia and a former professional player, is pulling for Ireland in the 1990 World Cup competition.

SOME 20 years later, the number of Americans playing the game has exploded. They are only starting to get the fever of the world game. Places such as the Soccer Locker in Farmington Hills and Soccer Store & More in Livonia are well-stocked with 1990 World Cup memorabilia, such as T-shirts, shorts and soccer balls.

"Interest in their favorite country picks up," said Nick O'Shea, who is owner of Soccer Store & More and is a former professional player. "We'll get people coming in asking for T-shirts for Ireland, England or whoever they're rooting for."

O'Shea is pulling for Ireland, which is in the same group as arch-rival England. He also hopes the United States does well, as does Sal Malek, owner of the Soccer Locker.

BOTH SEE this year's World Cup — not to mention the fact the United States hosts the international specta-

cle in 1994 — as a great boost for the game here.

"What it will do is give the game recognition," Malek said. "Without the U.S., the only people watching would be soccer people. Kids are becoming more aware of it. We need American heroes to promote the game."

American heroes who, it is hoped, will become as synonymous with the sport as Argentina's Diego Maradona, Holland's Ruud Gullit and Marco van Basten and England's Bryan Robson.

U.S. players such as goalkeeper Tony Meola and forward Paul Calliguri are starting to get recognition. Bob Gansler's team is also charged up by a 3-1 win over Poland in a recent World Cup warm-up match.

"Obviously I'm not picking the United States to win it all," Faulkner said, "but they'll do better than expected."

Facts from the far post

Did you know:

- India qualified for the World Cup in 1950, but withdrew after the team wasn't granted permission to play in bare feet.

- Pope John Paul was a goalkeeper with the Polish amateur team Wistula, singer Julio Iglesias played for Real Madrid's youth team, tennis standout Boris Becker for Bayern Munich's reserves and rock star Rod Stewart for Dundee United.

- The head of state for Liberia threatened members of his national team with execution if they didn't perform well against Gambia in an African Cup match Nov. 9, 1980. The game ended in a scoreless draw and

the players lived to tell about it.

- A dog named Pickles sniffed out the original World Cup prize, the Jules Rimet Trophy, after it was stolen from an exhibit window in Westminster, England. The persistent pooch found the hardware under a bush in south London. Dog and owner collected a 6,000-pound reward.

- In the 1930 World Cup, a trainer for the USA ran out on the pitch to tend to an injured player when he tripped. A bottle of chloroform broke in his bag and knocked him cold. He was carried off the field while the injured player went unattended.

Tate makes life's dream into a reality

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Tate's been around boats since before he could talk and was cleaning them and learning about them before he could drive them. And along with all of his driving accomplishments, he's paid his dues . . . paid the reaper his dues, if you catch the drift.

"I've blown over four times, been spit out, barrel rolled, and I stuffed it once," said Tate as he hit the slow-motion button on his VCR remote and reviewed a crash in which he was attempting to set an outboard speed record (112 mph in a 13-foot boat).

Tate's boat took off out of the water like a jet lifting off a runway. But instead of soaring off into the sky, the boat violently flipped over 2 1/2 times in the air, sending Tate skipping across the water, before it smashed itself into several large pieces.

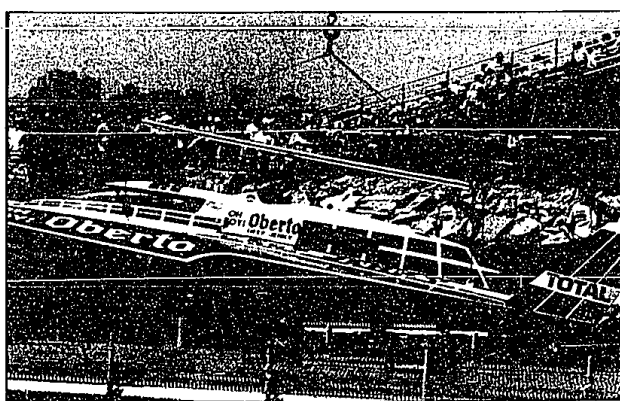
"Look, I was making bigger splashes than the boat," he said, reliving the moment for the umpteenth time on video tape. "When it was over (he had skipped 'like a stone' four to five times across the water), it felt like somebody had kicked the living 'you know what' out of me."

"I'D HAVE demolished that record if I could have made it."

Now, in the driver's eye (and stomach), what's it like to ride in one of these things. For the average "Recreation Joe," 40 mph in a boat is something to remember. But 150 mph?

"I'd have to say that it kind of feels like that first big ball on a roller coaster in your stomach . . . but without a bar to hold on to," said Tate. "These things happen so fast that you don't even have time to relate to them . . . you just have to react."

One time, Tate can still relate to a particular reaction, when he "stuffed it" (nose dived) at 110 mph. "I went right through the dashboard," he said. "I



The Oh Boy! Oberto hydroplane dangles precariously from a hoist as it's lowered into the water in the pit area.

didn't think I was hurt that bad until I was eating dinner that night and lost control of my esophagus and couldn't swallow the food that was in my throat. That's the worst I've ever been injured. I had to go back to the hospital that night."

Less than two weeks later he was back at it.

ONE OF THE many witnesses at most of Tate's high-speed mishaps was his wife Sandy. A power boat driver herself when she met Mark, Sandy has since put the prop into neutral and focused her energy towards their 9-month old son Andrew. Does she still have the desire to get behind the wheel of a racing boat?

"I enjoy going to the races, but, I'm dedicated to the baby," she said. "Anyway, Mark does enough racing for all of us."

Graduating in 1978 from Westland John Glenn High School, Tate's driving skills on the water sometimes carried over to the road and his fondness for cars.

"I guess I was just as reckless as any other guy my age," he said. "I definitely had my share of tickets."

Tate did manage to attend a car-racing school to legally quench his thirst for motorized excitement, and he still follows NASCAR and CART racing ("It would be neat to drive an Indy car someday," he admitted). But it's the water and the hydroplanes that keep calling his number.

"I'm quite young for the sport of unlimited racing, so I'll have the ability to do it for the next 10 years," Tate said. "This was a big year for shake-ups with unlimited owners and their drivers. I was fortunate enough to get one of the rides."

Gold Cup race draws a crowd

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The Spirit of Detroit Association, the organization that stages the race, expects at least 12 unlimited class "thunderboats" for this year's Gold Cup race. And around two dozen Grand Prix boats are expected for the Silver Cup event.

Originating in 1915, the Gold Cup race exists much in the same way today as it did 75 years ago. Boats still travel clockwise around the course's 2.5-mile loop.

JUST FOR your memory banks, a hydroplane boat rides on three points. Two points are known as the "sponsons," which look like pontoons underneath the boat. The other point is the propeller.

So, "hydroplane" actually means that the boat is riding on a cushion of air above the water . . . really fast.

OPENING THE show for the unlimited hydroplanes will be the Grand Prix hydroplanes.

Powered by 500-cubic inch, supercharged Ford and Chevrolet engines, the Grand Prix hydroplanes will reach speeds in the ballpark of 150 mph on the shorter 1 1/2-mile course.

And in the past two years, the Grand Prix race was decided on the final lap. Race experts this year predict that there won't be a 5-mph difference separating the finalists.

Michigan will be well represented in both the Gold and Silver Cup races. In the Gold Cup, keep an eye on veteran driver Tom D'Eath, Fairhaven, two-time winner of the Gold Cup, piloting the Miss Budweiser unlimited entry. And rookie Tate.

THE GRAND PRIX class will showcase a father/son battle, as Bob and Jimmy King go at it with their boats, Alternative Joe Block. Defending national champion Jimmy will drive against his dad, Bob, in another King boat called Defiance.

West Bloomfield driver Paul Smith also will be right in the middle of the hunt for the Silver Cup title, with his boat, Square Wall Construction.

Tickets for the event range from \$5 to \$90 and are available at TicketMaster outlets (Hudson's and Harmony House) and most Manufacturer's Bank outlets. For more information, call 331-3872.