

Better Crowd And Wagering Marks

2 Records Fall In DRC Opener

By DOC MINARD

The question of how Detroit area racers would accept late winter thoroughbred racing was answered to the satisfaction of all when the Detroit Race Course opened a 120-day meeting with the largest opening day turnout and a record opening handle.

And Detroit Racing Association officials learned to their dismay that the loss of 1,200 parking spaces due to the construction of the new highway along Schoolcraft Road could hurt.

The parking lot gates were closed some 30 minutes before post time for the first race. Where the overflow cars parked is still a bit of a mystery but it is believed that many fans used the Ramo-Hill Forest City, Cloverlane Bowling lots and some even parked at the two supermarket lots at Schoolcraft and Inkster Roads.

With tongue in cheek, track officials had predicted a

crowd of 17,500 for the earliest opening of the runners in Michigan history. Most expressed amazement when the final gate count was 19,240 and the mutuel handle \$1,285,256.

BOTH FIGURES were records, bettering the previous highs of 17,170 for a Saturday opening in 1962 and the \$1,211,030 wagered on nine races in last year's Monday opener.

"We knew we had lost 1,200 parking spots," said Richard S. Wilson, vice president in charge of public relations, "but we didn't think we would need space for such an early opening."

"We have been waiting for warm weather to slag our other parking areas; we'll start work on them immediately after such an opening reception."

With snow on the ground and the air still a bit chilly, there was some question in the minds of those who profess to have a finger on the public pulse about how racing fans would accept such an early opening.

True enough the DRC had installed additional heating units and had glass enclosed several areas but most fans like to step out on the apron to watch the progress of the races.

The horses, many of whom shipped in from the Toledo Raceway meeting, were

largely an undistinguished lot.

But, then, the first 30 days of the meeting supposedly was planned to take care of

such horses. The higher class stake type animals aren't expected to ship in until the meetings close in the southland.

Then all of the major stakes will ship north and most of the familiar names to local fans will be on the scene to compete.



SNO' USE. Racing fans don't care whether it rains, snows, sleet or hails, when the runners start they start running to get to the track. This shows a small portion of the 19,240 who turned out for the season opener at the Detroit Race Course Saturday. It was a record opening day crowd and the handle was another record with a total of \$1,285,256.

Find Use For Christmas Trees

By LEM MESESE

Outdoors Writer
If you have a bunch of kids-in a school class, a scout troop or "Y" group-here's an ecology project they can handle in one day. It will not only make our towns cleaner, but will help

nature and outdoor sportsmen.

The project is building wildlife shelters from old Christmas trees.

The men who coordinate at the work are Hartley Thornton, naturalist at the Proulx Lake State Recreation Area near Wixom, and Hank Chrusciel, 1945 Brentwood, Livonia, of the Western Wayne County Conservation Assn.

Both men handle speaking engagements to explain the program and set up work.

BURNING OF unsold trees after Christmas, like burning of leaves in fall, causes air pollution and irritates many sensitive lungs. Thus, it's becoming an unacceptable

even prohibited-practice in many municipalities.

It's better, say Thornton and Chrusciel, to make use of the trees by constructing wildlife shelters.

"It's ideal cover for rabbit, woodchucks and chipmunks," says Thornton. "Red Squirrels use it to store food. Rattles, like blue racer snakes, can take cover there."

Many patches of woods, they point out, are clear of ground cover (note the openness of the ground around the shelter in the picture).

If there is no cover, hunters may decimate the population of (say) rabbits in a single season. But with adequate cover, fewer rabbits will be flushed when a hunter pokes around the pile, and the total rabbit supply will be increased.

And so the shelters benefit

both wildlife and the hunter.

SHELTERS LAST four or five years, says Thornton, and there's more to constructing them than you would think.

"A good shelter should be up to 15 feet high. You start with a tree that's already down, if one's available, and stack Christmas trees on that. You criss-cross them into a maze pattern. Then it's not, so easy for a hunter to run the animals out."

Small groups are best to work on these jobs, he adds. They're easier to teach and more careful on the job. It's better, too, if a small group builds only one shelter in a day and does it well than to half-finish several shelters or do shoddy work.

Says Chrusciel: "We've even had girls work on these."

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Ski Heil
By **BILL CAMERON**
St. Christoph, Austria
It's been snowing for two days. Some diarches are out on the slopes, but the great majority are confining themselves to indoor activities. No one is complaining though. The first three days of the week were magnificent. The sun, snow and temperature were the most ideal I've seen in several years.
St. Christoph is a small station situated in the Arlberg region, province of Tyrol, Austria. It is five kilometers up the mountain from its more famous sister, St. Anton. Three other ski sta-

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