

Track Shatters Numerous Records During '72 Meet

It will be a long time before Detroit area and outstate Michigan followers of the pacers and trotters as well as members of Wolverine Raceway's official family forget the 1972 season.

That is, it will be remembered until the 1973 campaign when the big mile plant at the Detroit Race Course hopes to shatter all of the records set a year ago.

The 1972 session will be recalled as the one in which the great Albatross won the Matron four-year-old pace in 1:58.2, fastest mile of the season, and attracted a crowd of 18,273 which wagered \$1,024,101. That was the first million dollar handle for Wolverine and the first ever for a harness racing track in Michigan.

The crowd was the state's second largest and definitely proved Michiganders wanted to see the pacer hailed as the greatest ever to race in North America.

A year earlier, The Bird had won the Matron three-year-old pace and packed the stands. His appearance sent the mutuel handle past the \$900,000 mark for the first time in Michigan with a total of \$924,444.

The season also brought the usual upsets during Wolverine's Grand Circuit week. Known as the

track where the falls star, fans saw Super Bowl, winner of the Hambletonian and hailed as trotter of the year, and Strikeout, the Little Brown Jug king, go down to amazing defeats.

All told Wolverine equaled or bettered 49 wagering and attendance marks during its 82-night season. A few were records because it was the longest meeting for the track but the majority were honest to goodness records that would have been set had the plant operated for 60 or 70 nights.

The big one, of course, was the million dollar night. It was a matter of pride for Vice President and General Manager Richard S. Wilson who saw Wolverine become the first track in the area to pass the \$300,000, \$400,000, \$500,000, \$600,000, \$700,000, \$800,000 and \$900,000 hurdles during his 22-year association with the plant.

The truth of the matter is that Wolverine is the only Michigan harness racing track to go over \$900,000. It accomplished the feat six times during 1972. With the exception of Albatross nights, all came on Saturdays with the following figures: \$997,697, \$910,633, \$902,270 and \$900,325.

The season average handle was \$607,127, bettering the previous high of \$572,793 of 1971. It should be stressed that the 1972 mark was set over a period of 82 nights which included several weeks in late winter and early spring.

The average nightly attendance was 7,214 with an all-time high total turnstile count of 591,534. Total wagering was \$49,784,390 contrasted to \$43,438,890 for 72 nights in 1971.

Wolverine President Frederick VanLennep and Wilson have never regretted the decision to change the racing strip from a half-mile to the big mile track that produced more records in two years than anyone thought possible.

The big mile surface produced 14 two-minute miles, most in the nation when the meeting ended in mid-June. Five trotting and six pacing records were set.

The fastest trotting mile was the 1:59.2 by Michigan owned Dearborn Star who suffered an accident a week later while enroute to another track that ended his racing for the year.

Albatross clocked the fastest pacing mile with his 1:58.2. Tarzan Hanover was the winningest horse with six victories followed by King's Butler and Steady Sports with five each.

Track marks for trotters included: two-year-old filly, Colonial Charm, 2:05; three-year-old filly, Delmonica Hanover, 2:01; three-year-old gelding, Savoir, 1:59.4; aged horse, Dearborn Star, 1:59.2; and aged gelding, Top Freight, 2:00.

New standards for pacers: two-year-old filly, Real Hilarious, 2:01; two-year-old gelding, Count Kef, 2:05; three-year-old gelding, J.R. Rocky, 2:00; four-year-old gelding, Big Kahuna, 1:59.2; and aged gelding, Yankee Creed, 1:59.2.

Perhaps the biggest upset of the year was in the \$25,000 Matron three-year-old trot. It all came about when Super Bowl, with Stan Dancer at the reins,

appeared to hang in the final furlong after holding a length lead. Mr. Colwell, a little known Michigan trotter, sped by on the inside to flit past the superstar to win by a half-length. Driver Charley Norris had the Michigan colt flying the long stretch and just did have enough to win in 2:02.3.

Owned by Duane and Minnie Greenlee, of Milford, Mr. Colwell paid a whopping \$45.20 for the win.

Fans had hardly recovered from that amazing setback when they saw the Wolverine jinx strike again in the three-year-old pace. Strike Out, everybody's choice of sophomore pacer of the year, was whipped by a fast-closing Breadwinner (Bret Hanover), who came from seventh at the head of the stretch to win by a length in 1:59.2.

Russ Butler (Adios Butler), a four-year-old who barely qualified for the championship finale in the \$24,950 Motor City with a fifth in the second elimination heat, had the most when needed and captured the title for Driver Eddie Cobb in 2:00.3.

Big Kahuna (Quick Pick), piloted by Gene Riegler, closed fast to take second but was still a length and a half back at the wire. Big Kahuna had a 1:59 fastest time in the eliminations. Sailing Heat (Race Time) won the first qualifier in 1:59.4.

With Speedy Crown, 1971 Hambletonian champ, scratched at the last minute with a virus, Savoir (Star's Pride) encountered little opposition in the four-horse \$57,345 Matron four-year-old trot. Driver Jimmy Arthur sent Savoir to the top from the start and was under the wire with four lengths to spare over second place Gunsmith in 1:59.4.

Tom Wilburn won the driving championship with a winning percentage of .341 with 23 wins in 95 starts. Chris Boring, of Adrian, was the winningest reinsman with 46 firsts, one more than Canadian star Greg Wright.



WE'RE CHARGING FOR ANOTHER RECORD BREAKING YEAR!

'73 CHARGER
\$7489 \$100 Per Mo. Down
 BALANCE of \$2,285
 36 months at 11.08%
 ON APPROVED CREDIT

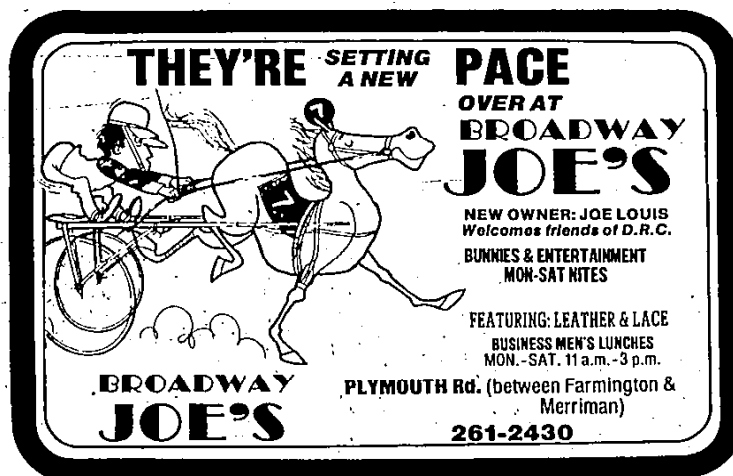
"SETTING NEW RECORDS EVERY DAY"

'73 POLARA
\$9494 \$100 Per Mo. Down
 BALANCE of \$2,897
 36 months at 11.08%
 ON APPROVED CREDIT

HUGE INVENTORY of ALL MODELS

"YOUR SHIELD OF PROTECTION"

CRESTWOOD DODGE
 32850 FORD RD.
 GARDEN CITY 421-5700



THEY'RE SETTING A NEW PACE OVER AT BROADWAY JOE'S

NEW OWNER: JOE LOUIS
 Welcomes friends of D.R.C.

BUNNIES & ENTERTAINMENT
 MON-SAT NITES

FEATURING: LEATHER & LACE
 BUSINESS MEN'S LUNCHES
 MON.-SAT. 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

BROADWAY JOE'S **PLYMOUTH Rd. (between Farmington & Merriman)**
261-2430