

Detroit Race Course Opens 90 Day Meeting



HEADING INTO THE HOME STRETCH -- The Detroit Race Course opened its 24th season Monday for the start of a 90 day meeting with weekday post times set at 2:30 p.m. and 1 p.m. on Saturdays. (Observer photo by Tom Donoghue)

New Post Time Draws Only 9,672 For Opener

Although the expected rains never came, the thoroughbreds returned to the Detroit Race Course Monday with attendance and wagering a bit disappointing to track management.

The opening program of the 90-day season was to be a test of the new post time, an hour earlier than the traditional twilight "off time" that has marked the runners in the Detroit area since the start of parimutuel wagering back in the '30s.

For years the Motor City has been the only spot in North America with a 3:30 p.m. post. Originally it was set to give the automotive plant workers a chance to take in the races after finishing the afternoon shift.

It was continued during World War II to give workers a chance for recreation and relaxation. Why it wasn't dropped after the war one will never know but the fact is that attendance and wagering in the Detroit area hasn't progressed as it did in other areas.

In fact it has been going down in the past few years instead of showing the growth expected from an area like metropolitan Detroit.

After a six-week concentrated effort to get the message across that an earlier post means all would have ample time to get home in time for dinner or to go out to dinner, DRC Vice President and General Manager Dick Wilson anxiously awaited the opener to see how the program was accepted.

"We aren't going to make a judgment on the first day's performance even though we had looked forward to a crowd of around 11,000 and a handle of a million or close to it," he said. "We have a firm belief that folks will accept the earlier post."

Friends thought he was making a mistake but were told contract driving isn't that much fun.

FROM BRIGHTON comes a tale that Bob Kalish, the wheeler-dealer from Southfield willing to make a trade most any time, made a \$40,000 offer for Chuck Farmer's Easy Ivy but was turned down.

Earlier in the meeting during an interview, Bea, wife of Charley and one of the top feminine drivers in the land, told of an offer for the speedy four-year-old that was rejected.

"We wouldn't think of taking \$100,000," she said at the time. It appears now that Bea knew of what she was saying.

Easy Ivy is still recovering from a bout with the virus but is expected to start at Hazel Park in the near future.

FINAL FIGURES from the Hazel Park thoroughbred meeting, which ended Saturday, show the five-thirty mile plant was far ahead of the not-so-hot statistics of last year.

The final program attracted 15,245 fans who wagered \$1,515,603. Total attendance for the 121 days was 1,000,244 for an average of 8,266. The handle for the meeting was \$108,591,187 for an average of \$892,655.

Hazel Park totaled \$103,540,217 for 129 days in 1972 for a daily average of \$802,657. It had a turnstile count of 1,119,686.

Thus it showed a big increase in business this year and a drop in attendance. It was the biggest year for wagering at the track since 1970 was trailing Bea Farmer, going into the final two programs of \$566,636.



LARRY SNYDER Wins First Race

cept the earlier post. We know it will take a long period of educating patrons to the advantages across and we hope to see considerable improvement in the next three weeks."

As it was the DRC opened with 9,672 in the stands and the mutual handle was \$394,695, on a dark, dull day with a constant threat of showers.

Other than that it was a typical opening with the crowd getting its first view of the redecorated plant, the new racing surface, the much improved parking area which has a new cover of black top in many sections that were just dirt and dust a year ago, the new outdoor paddock where the horses are in view of fans and one can see the jockeys mount up for the parade to the starting gate.

Larry Snyder, perennially riding champion who had to be content with the runners-up spot at the Hazel Park

meeting, and veteran Bobby Baird got off to excellent starts with two victories each.

Snyder turned the tables on his aged rival in the featured \$10,000 Curtains Up handicap when he rode Dr. Ephantos to an amazing victory with a brilliant effort in the stretch.

Baird had Swoco, the even money choice, flying in the six furlong event and appeared headed for his third win of the day. But then Swoco began to wilt turning into the long stretch and that's where Snyder made his bold move with Dr. Pantano. The winner was clocked in a fast 1:10.2.

Snyder had his second win with Mr. Sumner in the opening event, breezing to victory over second place, Swirlclip.

Baird on the third with Jet's Champ (\$15.40) and the fourth astride Sunbina (\$15.80).

The DRC meet, which is highlighted by the 25th renewal of the \$100,000 Michigan mile and an eighth on Sept. 15, continues through mid-November.

Turf Tips, Quips

By Doc Minard

The trotters and pacers open an 82-night campaign tonight (Wednesday) at Hazel Park and the attention of those close to the harness racing picture will be focused on the east side plant to see how business compares with that at Wolverine in the spring.

It will be recalled the west side operation, at the Detroit Race Course in Livonia, shattered just about every existing Michigan record for attendance and wagering.

Wolverine had six successive million dollar Saturdays while Hazel Park is still trying for its first. Attendance at the big mile plant

was up four per cent and wagering soared to a nightly average of \$667,000, an all-time high in the state.

Most experts feel the track with the late spring, early summer meeting always does the best. They point to Hazel Park's statistics when it opened the season and contrasted them to Wolverine's operations with the late summer and early fall dates.

It was during an early meeting that Hazel Park set the record for nightly wagering with an average of \$642,000. That mark vanished like snow in the summer at Wolverine's remarkable spring.

There isn't any question that the big mile track has been a big factor in the tremendous surge at Wolverine... that and the fact General Manager Dick Wilson is a firm believer in promotions. He proved the value of gimmicks last spring.

On the other side of the picture Hazel Park President Don McFarlane and General Manager Harold Duris have a firm conviction that good racing will draw the crowds. They are not strong for promotions of any kind but may get a message this fall... a message that will inform them a bit of the old carnival spirit helps pack the place also.

There isn't any question about the type of horses Hazel Park will have. Racing Secretary Bill Connors, the only one in Hazel Park history, has a way of getting the best and fastest to go where he makes up races.

He did it for Wolverine and undoubtedly will do the same this fall. It should prove conclusively that good horses are the backbone of a good meet but a few gimmicks here and there can help a lot.

Hazel Park will use the superfecta for the first time on its final race. It will be interesting to see if it has the same effect it did on the Wolverine meeting. They'll keep the crowd on hand for the last race, one that found wagering going past the \$100,000 mark most of the time.

We hope it does the same on the east side. Hazel Park will have an earlier post time nightly with the first race slated to go off at 8 p.m., a half-hour earlier than a year ago.

It has all of the best stables from Northville Downs and Windsor Raceway and most of the top reinsmen. In addition Connors expects to lure such powerful stables as Billy Houghton, Dick Buxton, Gene Riegler and Lew Williams from Ohio and the east.

If successful, there's no reason to believe he won't, then Hazel Park will be able to present its finest racing in several years and that won't hurt the handle or attendance.

MERRITT DOKEY, the slender driver from Pontiac, hit the hottest streak of any pilot at the Downs while making a belated bid for the 1973 driving championship.

Dokey had four straight victories Friday and came back with three in a row on Saturday for a total of seven in the two nights. He still was trailing Bea Farmer, going into the final two programs of \$566,636.

grams of the 36-night meeting.

Dokey started the year as the driver for the powerful Bert James stable but when James sold most of his racing stock, Dokey decided to switch to a public stable.

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NEW VIEW AT DRC -- The paddock area at the Detroit Race Course has taken to the outdoors this new '73 season.

Southfield Has Golf Tourney

The City of Southfield is hosting its second annual men's golf tournament at Evergreen Hills Golf Club on Saturday, Aug. 11 and Sunday, Aug. 12-13. Entry blanks are available at the Evergreen Hills pro shop with entry fee set at \$20. Entry deadline is Aug. 6, and the tourney is open to just Southfield residents.

Aces 5th At Brooklane

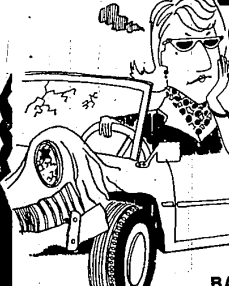
Twenty-four year old Gary Bailey of 777 Karmada, Plymouth, scored his first hole in one on the No. 5 hole at Brooklane Golf Course, using a nine iron on the 161 yard hole.



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