

Turf Tips, Quips

By Doc Minard

This is the time of the year when the managements of the various race tracks in Michigan begin to wonder if the Racing Commissioner will ever get around to announcing allotment of dates for the following season.

True enough Commissioner Leo Shirley has until the end of November to announce the thoroughbred dates and until mid-December to let interested folks know when the trotters and pacers will race the following year, but the point is why does he have to wait until the final day to make up his mind.

It appears Shirley could have made his announcement for both types of racing as early as the first of November since there aren't that many problems.

Everyone knows the dates for the thoroughbred tracks determine when the harness meets start and end. The reason ... Wolverine Raceway uses the facilities of the Detroit Race Course and Hazel Park Raceway operates at the five-eighths mile plant on the east side.

Thus if Hazel Park runners have the early dates starting in March then it follows that Wolverine will begin at about the same time at the DRC. If the thoroughbreds open at the DRC then Hazel Park trotters will take over.

It is well known that the trotters will start in the spring at Hazel Park and the runners at DRC in 1974. The big question is how many

days and nights each will receive and when.

Perhaps the biggest puzzle of all is whether the commissioner will hand out standardbred dates that will have Hazel Park and Wolverine split the much desired summer season in back-to-back campaigns.

In his role of commissioner, Shirley has the authority to dole out dates as he pleases. Naturally he has to discuss such matters with the Governor and administration in Lansing but the final decision is his and his alone.

That's why it appears like so much wasted time and effort when the Legislature passed a bill which included a rider making it mandatory for the commissioner to award back-to-back summer dates to tracks with average mutuel handles of \$500,000 or more. The act since has been declared unconstitutional by Attorney General Frank Kelley but those close to the situation

wonder why it was necessary at all.

Did the commissioner feel he needed some support in taking the choice summer dates from Northville Downs, which pioneered mutuel betting on harness racing back in 1944, and turning them over to the state's two major plants? Or was some

group in the Legislature trying to tell him they wanted the back-to-back meetings during the summer?

Answers are hard to come by. All we can reiterate is that the commissioner has the power to allot dates and doesn't need any support if he wants to use the powers delegated to him.

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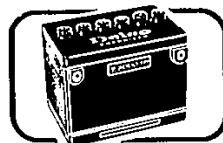
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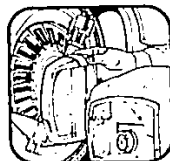
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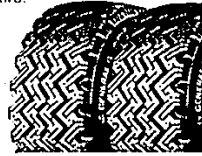
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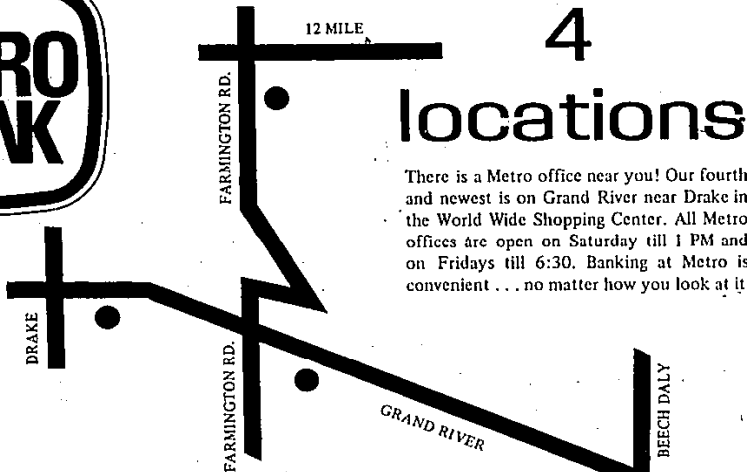
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