

# Ball hawkers out of sight, out of mind

By RON HINGST

Step aside "Pepi Generation," shagging tennis balls is the in-thing this month.

Tennis ball boys and girls don't achieve much identity during a tournament, but then again they are not supposed to.

"We all like to rub elbows with a Rilly Jean King or Evonne Goolagong," said Ted Jax, Orchard Lake Tennis Club professional and manager of the Dearborn Indoor Racquet Club.

"WE HAVE kind of made being a ball boy or girl the in-thing in this area, don't ask me why it just is."

Five years ago the Virginia Slims Women's Tennis Circuit debuted in Detroit.

In a recent telephone interview, Jax recalled how the Birmingham Junior League was looking for a fund raiser and decided to co-sponsor the Slims

Detroit visit. The initial tournament was held at Oakland University, but the event has since switched to Cobo Hall.

"The league does all the work and I help out with jobs such as training ball boys and girls," Jax said. "You just can't say enough about all the work that those ladies do."

PRIOR to the first Detroit-Slims event, Jax enlisted and trained a group of ball boys. After that tournament, one of the lady professionals indicated that girls should be included in the group and this year Jax will supply the Slims event with 200 boys and girls from the ages 11-16.

"This year we will have about a 50-50 ratio of boys and girls," Jax said. "We have a list of hundreds of interested youths. We now have all kinds of sources to obtain them from."

Jax admitted it might be easier

training a dozen or so ball boys and girls, but as he pointed out the whole effort has become a "community-type affair."

The casual tennis tournament observer might concentrate on the action and never see the ball boys or girls, but according to Jax that type of response constitutes the "good ball boy or girl."

EACH BALL boy and girl must attend a one-hour training session each year, whether he or she has experience or not and discipline is the key to the instruction.

"I guess you could say I kind of run it like an army camp," Jax said. "Obviously every kid can't do the finals of the tournament, but we have never had one youth miss an assignment since the Slims have been coming to Detroit. Any kid who gets up at 8 a.m. on Sunday morning to attend the class wants to do it."

Jax's group of fuzz ball retrievers for the 1975 Virginia Slims Detroit event reside in all parts of the Detroit area and as far away as Port Huron. The 42-year-old Orchard Lake Tennis Club pro listed three requirements for his group which included:

- White dress and tennis shoes.
- No gum chewing or talking.
- Good throwing arm and knowledge of the game.

"A good ball boy or girl always knows the score of the match," Jax said.

ANOTHER responsibility for the youths involves keeping track of the four balls being used which must be kept in the server's court. According to the Slims Tournament rules, the players are allowed to switch balls only after the 11th and 13th games. If

the ball goes into the stands at the Detroit event, then it becomes Jax's job to retrieve it.

"We have a standing joke that when the ball gets tangled in the stands, it's my job to retrieve it," he said. "The ball boys and girls never leave the court."

The Virginia Slims 1975 Detroit event is slated for Feb. 18-22 and Jax's crew of ball boys and girls will be exposed to national television coverage of the finals at this year's event.

"A good ball boy or girl is never noticed and if he is, then he is distracting from the match," Jax said.

The Racquet Club manager explained that he also formerly trained officials for the Detroit Slims tourney, but the crew has gained enough experience through the previous tournaments.



Margaret Court will be among the lady tennis professionals participating in the Virginia Slims Tournament at Cobo Hall from February 18-22. The event is co-sponsored by the Birmingham Junior League and the Metro Detroit Ford Dealers. Tickets are still available at Grinnell's, J.L. Hudson and the Cobo Hall Box Office.

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## Sports about town

### Lady cagers honored

Southfield Lathrup's girls basketball team captured first place in the final Metro Suburban Association standings with a perfect 10-0 record. Rochester Adams took second with an 8-2 record followed by Utica Eisenhower, 5-5; Bloomfield Hills Lahser, 4-6; Royal Oak Dondero, 2-8 and Birmingham Groves, 1-9.

Lathrup dominated the MSA "All-League" squad with three members named and they included Pam Rendine, Sue Peterman and Ruth Fraser. Other players selected for post season honors included Adams' Beth Kamp and Mary Ann Hopp; Eisenhower's Fran Cyplik and Dondero's Linda Haglund and Joyce Mathews.

Second team or honorable mention selections were Lahser's Claudia Murray and Peg Koppmeyer; Groves' Sue Collins, Sue Jones and Andrea Altherbon; Lathrup's Cindy Wright and Patti Rendine and Eisenhower's Jan Neudehoffer.

### Lacrosse officials needed

Gene Heilly, Detroit Country Day School athletic director and Yellow Jacket lacrosse coach and Fred

Faust, director of the Michigan Lacrosse Officials Association are looking for lacrosse officials for the coming season this spring. Anyone with previous lacrosse playing or officiating experience or interested persons are invited to contact Faust at 920-4435 or Heilly at 646-7717.

### Royal Oak takes ice district

Royal Oak Ratskeller took the District Number Three MAHA state championship last weekend with a 5-2 victory over St. Clair Shores in the final game.

The Southfield Chiefs finished fourth in the event and Birmingham Kenmore Corp. finished fifth. Six teams competed. Royal Oak was led by goalie Ron Ruvarrette who recorded two shutouts during the series.

### Loves' labors not lost

The Detroit Loves of World Team Tennis may be gone, but they are far from forgotten and will host a tennis camp at The Racquet Clubs in April of this year. Because of the demand for registration, interested parties are urged to call 332-9221 as soon as possible.

### Curling not permanent

Birmingham Parks and Recreation director Roger Faust reports that the city curling program is in "a state of flux" due to a lack of response by potential curlers.

"The Friday night from 9:30 to 11:30 program is still being operated on a drop-in basis at \$4.00 per night," Faust said.

Faust blamed part of the lack of success of the program on the \$40 registration fee which primarily covered ice time.

Further information may be obtained by contacting Faust at 644-1800.

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