



Debbie Pacheco moves the ball upfield



Coach Eddie McCracken concentrates on the actions of his team.



Farmington girls aged 10-15 join women in many parts of the world as they play league soccer. This the last game of the season, was against Whitehall, a Toledo suburb

A great sport

Young women's soccer starts rolling

By CORINNE ABATT

It was really the girls themselves who got the soccer ball rolling for their sex in Farmington.

For several years the Farmington Soccer Association had been organized for boys' league play. But, some of the 10 to 15-year-old young women felt slighted. It looked like a great sport and they wanted to play.

League play for girls started this fall with two teams and according to association mentor, George Pacheco, it was very successful.

He says, "I had never before seen or been involved with girls playing soccer, but I tell you these girls have fantastic spirit."

The problem came to his attention because his daughters, Debbie, 15, Susan, 13, and Julie, 11, wanted to play. They had watched their 16-year-

old brother Michael's team and they wanted in on the fun.

It made sense. Pacheco, born in South America, had long been a soccer enthusiast. It was him and several others in the area who had grown up in soccer playing countries who spearheaded the formation of the association.

One of his problems was to find coaches for the girls' teams. By luck, he found Eddie McCracken, a native of Scotland, now Farmington resident, former soccer star both in his native Glasgow and in Michigan. McCracken's granddaughter, Pam Hawley, wanted to play. How could he refuse?

So Pacheco took over one girls' team and McCracken the other.

The season included a game between the two Farmington teams, a game between the local boys and girls teams, as well as games with the Toledo suburb of Whitehall, Detroit, War-

ren, Livonia, and Roper School in Bloomfield Hills.

The girls play exactly the same rules as boys—11 players and four quarters.

Explaining that each team carries 16 players, Pacheco says, "It is a league rule that all players on the roster must play at least one quarter. We try to play all of them equally, although sometimes it's difficult."

Next spring, when soccer starts again, Pacheco anticipates the girls will be participating in the Western Suburban Soccer League. The membership includes Plymouth, Livonia, Northville, West Bloomfield and Farmington. Most have made a commitment to have girls teams for league play.

Pacheco speculates he may have more than two teams for girls, enthusiasm is growing as the girls spread the word. He will be recruiting

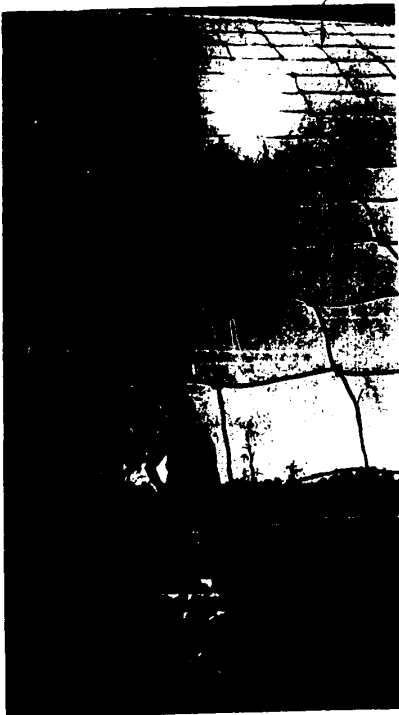
early next year and weather permitting, league play will start in early April.

From the small nucleus of foreign-born soccer boosters in Farmington, the ranks have grown to include many parents and friends new to the sport but willing to work to promote it.

Pacheco says, "I think it's a great sport—and it's a clean sport. It's not really a contact sport as some people believe because you play the ball, not the people."

Two more soccer coaches for the girls are ready and waiting in the wings for next spring. Rick Galindo and Eddie McCracken, Jr.

Those interested in playing next spring are welcome to give Pacheco a call. They need not expect to wait until warm balmy spring days. Soccer players are a hearty lot who ignore the drizzles of rain or snow although mud does slow them down a bit.



When the action is somewhere else, the goal tender must still be alert and ready to defend.



Soccer is a fast game, requiring stamina and skill.

PHOTOS
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