

By George Macklin observing sports

If you're a Little League advocate, read elsewhere. You won't like the following.

It's not anything we deliberately have manufactured. It's a story we feel we should report. George Larchen, once a Detroit Tiger, once a Cincinnati Red, once a minor leaguer, now makes his home in Garden City.

He's the superintendent for a construction company, but hasn't lost his interest or love for baseball.

A year ago, George was asked to manage a Little League team in Garden City. He graciously accepted.

His tour of duty lasted one season. By his own choosing. But let's let Larchen tell his own story.

"I THOUGHT it would be fun trying to teach a group of youngsters baseball... baseball the way I learned it in my 12 years in organized leagues—four in the majors."

"I'd go to practice and work hard with the kids. They worked hard, too. They didn't fool around much."

"We'd practice all phases of the game. We'd work on batting and pitching, fielding and running."

"In the workouts the boys did everything great. I used to go home from practice very happy with what I saw."

"Something seemed to happen between the practices and the games, however. The boys would forget what we practiced, what we told them."

"They'd start playing badly."

"The first few times I figured, 'well, the season is young; they'll learn.'"

"But the story kept repeating itself as the season went on. I'd go home mumbiling. I was mad. My wife would try to talk me out of my blues."

"I'd get the feeling that maybe I was wasting my time and my energy."

LERCHEN, AS STATED earlier, stuck it out for one year. They wanted him back in Little League this season, but he had different ideas.

"The opportunity was presented for me to manage the Garden City West team in Connie Mack. They're high school boys... mostly from West High where they had a winning season this past spring."

"What a difference working with these boys. You tell them something and they work on it in practice and use it in games."

"They seem to appreciate what you have to say and it certainly has paid off for them so far in the young season."

LERCHEN PAUSED... He reflected about the Little Leaguers.

"Maybe, it was wrong for me to blame the boys on the team."

"Perhaps they actually were a little too young at the ages of 10-12 really to comprehend and retain what we were trying to tell them."

"But, there was something else that got me. It was the driving madness of the parents and other folks for the Little Leaguers to win."

"I'm all for winning, too. But I had the feeling—and still have—that in the cases of youngsters, what comes first has to be teaching and perfecting the fundamentals of the game they'll win and enjoy what they're doing more."

"But, as I said, the parents just didn't seem to want that."

"It was WIN and WIN and WIN."

FROM WHAT he now sees, Larchen hopes that there'll be others who'll jump aboard the bandwagon and help with the managing and coaching on sandlot teams.

"These are the boys who need help more," Larchen said. "It's the young teenager who finds himself in a vulnerable position, more so than the kid of 10 or 12."

"The 17 or 18-year-old involved in baseball or some other sport during the summer is less apt to wander off the course and get involved with the law."

"There's something extra nice about the kids in this Connie Mack League."

"None of the boys has a girl-type hairdo. They are well disciplined for the most part."

"The boys have recognized and learned the importance of teamwork. It's an aspect that will help them as they go on in life."

Larchen would like to see the number of teams reverse themselves in the area.

"Instead of a town like Livonia having 140 Little League teams and only six or seven for boys of high school age, it should be the other way around. The same should hold true in all communities. We'd all be better off."

Agree?

Sandlot Schedule

FREE PRESS LEAGUE
WEDNESDAY—Northville vs. Garden City, Ford, 6:15 p.m.; Canton, Dearborn (Livonia) vs. Redford, 8:30 p.m.

CLASS A
WEDNESDAY—Redford vs. Plymouth, 6:30 p.m.; Garden City vs. Westland, 8:30 p.m.
SUNDAY—Livonia vs. Dearborn Heights, 1:30 p.m.; Garden City vs. Redford, 3:30 p.m.; Dearborn vs. Redford, 5:30 p.m.; Dearborn vs. Livonia, 7:30 p.m.; Dearborn vs. Dearborn Heights, 9:30 p.m.

CONNIE MACK
TUESDAY—Livonia Optimists vs. East Marshall, Thurston, 6:30 p.m.; Detroit Realty vs. Livonia, 8:30 p.m.; Redford Panthers vs. Dearborn, 10:30 p.m.; North Farmington vs. Spazans, 6:15 p.m.; Northville vs. Plymouth, 8:15 p.m.; Northville, 6:15 p.m.

AMERICAN LEAGUE
FRIDAY—Farmington at Meriden
SUNDAY—Farmington at Meriden
WEDNESDAY—Farmington at Meriden

King and His Court
4-Man Softball Team
Coming July 12-8:30 p.m.
Claude Allison Field
Sponsored by
REDFORD JAYCEES
REDFORD TOWNSHIP MICHIGAN
Ph. 532-1758

Sports World--In Brief Form

Wert Fourth Tiger Named For All Stars

Don Wert has become the fourth Detroit Tiger player named to play for the American League in next Tuesday night's All Star game in Houston.

Wert was picked as a utility infielder by Manager Dick Williams of the Boston Red Sox, who'll guide the American League's best against the cream of the National.

Pitcher Denny McLain, Catcher Bill Freehan and Outfielder Willie Horton previously were named to the All-Star team from the Tigers. Freehan and Horton were voted to the starting lineup and it's expected that McLain will be the AL's starting pitcher. Tiger Manager Mayo Smith will be a coach in the game.

The National League added 15 pitchers and utility men and to the surprise of nobody named Pitchers Juan Marchal, Bob Gibson and Don Drysdale to lead its staff.

Three Detroit Lions drafted "distinguished" themselves in Friday's East-West College All-Star game that kicked off the 1968 football season.

Greg Landry, the Lions' No. 1 pick from Massachusetts, handled the East quarterbacking and clocked 14 times for 160 yards.

Jerry DePoyser of Wyoming, another Lions pick, booted four conversions for the winners while Phil O'Dell, recovered a big fumble and also caught a 40-yard pass.

The game's big star was Helmsman trophy winner Gary Beban who hit on 15 of 20 passes for 222 yards and fired a 40-yard touchdown pass with less than five minutes to go to break up a 20-20 tie.

SPEAKING OF THE Lions, they'll kick off practice at Cranbrook next Tuesday.

Meantime, the Pontiac Firebirds of the Midwest Football League already are drilling and will stage a homecoming game in Rochester on July 20 for those fans eager to see football so early in the year.

RALPH OWEN, who resigned recently as head of the Catholic High School League, has been named new executive director of the Michigan Amateur Golfers Association.

Hagen Ultra, Palmira, Solidities, etc.

Johnston & Murphree, etc.

25% & 30% OFF LIGHTED 9 HOLE GOLF COURSE NORTHWOOD G.C. Maple Road at Crooks 689-2233 Troy, Mich.

THE NATIONAL LEAGUE finally has got around to following the American League next year and operate in two six-team divisions.

Originally, the senior circuit had said it would function as one 12-team circuit after San Diego and Montreal joined as expansion teams.

But after a high level meeting of the major league's executive committee, the NL

agreed to go along with the American, but just what division the NL will adopt won't be announced until after the loop's owners meet next week in Houston.

The NL has forced the American to re-establish a 162-game schedule for 1969 after the American had said it would cut back its slate by six games.

Under the revised divisional setup, the two winners will meet for the league crown and the right to enter the world series.

THE AMERICAN-OWNED Ribero captured the Irish Sweepstakes and made a lot of folks roach. Odds-on favorite Sir Ivor finished second with Val D'Aoste from France third in the 1 1/2 mile race.

SPEEDS IN THE 180 m.p.h. category are expected to be hit in Thursday's Firecracker 400 auto race at Daytona Beach.

LIFE HAS CHANGED FOR Jim

Bunning, the ex-Detroit Tiger ace, now with Pittsburgh. When he beat Philadelphia, 10-1, Friday, it marked his first victory in two months. His overall record for the season now is 4-9.

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