

Pele draws dyed-in-the-wool fans

By JOHN BOZZO

Peter Iverson of Birmingham got a lot of playing time Monday at Pontiac Stadium in a 14-year-old all-star soccer game prior to the New York Cosmos-Dallas Tornado game starring Pele.

Although he alternated every 10 minutes with three other all-star goalies, he got added time in the game when he came played a third extra period to give thousands of fans outside the stadium a chance to get inside in time for the start of main event.

He had one goal scored against him in the game won by Canadian team from Essex County over the Michigan All-Stars, but made two more saves in the final period. Iverson recalled that the Michigan defense left a Canadian player wide open in front of the goal on the point scored against him.

"I was sort of excited," said Iverson, a ninth grader at Derby Junior High School who plays with the Birmingham Blazers soccer team. "That artificial turf is a lot different. The ball takes a lot of different bounces."

"I'm used to sliding on grass. I usually slide about two feet, on this you stop."

Iverson was one of the many junior soccer players who formed a tunnel which the professional players ran through during the introductions. He said he shook Pele's hand as the man known as the world's greatest soccer player ran by.

when a lot of people were away, it was a respectable crowd.

"I really don't feel as though it was a fair test because the people you saw there last night were dyed-in-the-wool soccer enthusiasts. A lot of kids who play soccer in the area were there."

"My own feeling is if Pele was playing for a Detroit 'Black' team, we probably would have seen more people there. Had there been more on the line and it wasn't just an exhibition, there would have been more interest stimulated. I think very definitely that soccer could make it in Detroit."

The group of sponsors and promoters of this special soccer event will soon be talking with the president of the North American Soccer League, according to Dr. Bertling.

The Birmingham dentist is anxious about a soccer franchise for Detroit, but cautious because of the failure of the Detroit Cosmos soccer team and the Detroit Whalers football team.

"This is a money thing," Dr. Bertling said of the professional soccer franchise. "I'm only a dentist trying to educate my kids through school, with the normal cost that you have. I don't have the staying power. If there were less years, I certainly couldn't sustain it."

"We've talked of a soccer team playing on different field, maybe in Troy where we could erect some stands," he added. "Or

maybe the people at Pontiac Stadium would be so interested in seeing us utilize the stadium that they would give us a break during some of the formative years."

Dr. Bertling added that he thought the media, played during the halftime of the professional game, was the highlight of the soccer day. He noted that in the first half of the New York Cosmos-Dallas Tornado game there was very little scoring and that there was a lot of scoring in the media game.

"Most people in this area are used to seeing a lot of runs scored and points put on the board, like in basketball."



Peter Iverson of Birmingham dives to make a save in the Canadian-Michigan 14-year-old all-star game prior to the Cosmos-Tornado contest on Labor Day at Pontiac Stadium. Stan Boice of Troy (standing) also played for the Michigan team. (Staff photos by Charlie Kidd)

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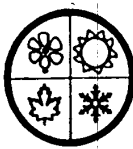
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Members of many youth soccer teams wore their uniforms and attended the Labor Day soccer exhibition at Pontiac Stadium. (Staff photos by Charlie Kidd)

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