

Must be promoted

Tennis bubble bursts

By JUDITH BERNE

The boom in tennis is over. The Detroit metropolitan area is saturated with racket clubs.

With 110 indoor tennis courts in the northern suburbs from Rochester through Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Southfield and Farmington, the name of the game is no longer tennis but promotion.

At least that's the way Seymour Brode and Marshall Greenspan see it. Together they lead the International Tennis Corp. which they call as the largest operator of indoor tennis courts in the world today.

Locally they own The Racquet Club—Centaur Farms in West Bloomfield, Franklin in Southfield and Square Lake in Bloomfield Hills—as well as clubs in Lansing and Detroit.

THE TWO BLOOMFIELD-AREA men are probably the most important contributors to the indoor tennis boom locally from a business market.

They recently added 12 new indoor courts to the Centaur existence at Franklin Club. The 40 courts are available to Racquet Club members among the three facilities make up more than a third of the area's indoor courts.

Although Franklin is fast becoming known as the place to be among the Racquet Club fans, Brode and Greenspan acknowledge that previously filled court time is a far cry from what it was at Centaur and Square Lake.

Previously to opening and availability of courts have until now been the prime requisites for choosing a tennis house, according to Greenspan.

With the opening of more clubs and courts it has now become the management situation and what you offer the people in the way of facilities, amenities, leagues, instruction and parties, he said.

The Franklin facility, built at a cost of \$10 million, not only features tennis but racquetball and houses fully equipped exercise and locker rooms complete with sauna, steam bath, whirlpool and massage area.

Five outdoor clay courts, a background room complete with instructor are other extras. Soon it will offer a restaurant dedicated to beautiful snacks and lunches.

To press their advantages, Brode and Greenspan recently hired a full-time promotions man and have launched an advertising campaign through television, radio and the press.

WHY DOES IT TAKE to make money on a tennis facility?

Brode quotes figures that say given today's building costs a new tennis house must be 70 per cent full from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. to show a profit.

Another rule of thumb, he adds, is that you need 150 playing members per court to be successful.

Greenspan reports that utility costs do take more than 30 per cent of expenses and are an important ingredient as to whether the price of playing indoor tennis will go up.

Currently 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. court time in most area tennis houses runs \$9 or \$10 weekdays. Prime time—week ends and evenings—is \$13 or \$14 per hour.

Cost of belonging to a club runs the gamut from \$10 for a resident of Birmingham to being to the Birmingham Racquet Club at a high of \$2,000 for initiation into the Detroit Tennis Club located in Farmington Hills.

Brode insists that the \$9.95 charged for single membership in the racquet club does not cover costs of amenities offered such as operation of the locker rooms complete with free hair spray and deodorant or free coffee which has gone by the wayside at Franklin but still is offered at the other Brode-Greenspan clubs.

As for court time, there's a point right now where people don't pay a lot more, Brode believes. "We are trying to be competitive," Greenspan adds. "At certain hours I see prices going down."

IN FACT, this has already occurred at the majority of area clubs.

Those who can play before 9 a.m. and between the hours of 3-5 p.m. weekdays are offered "early bird" and "odd hour" rates which are generally half the regular court time price and may dip to a 10¢ per person per hour.

Greenspan and Brode find some promotional value in this. "Indoor tennis is not just for Birmingham Bloomfield people, it is for everyone," Greenspan said as long as they're not particular about the time of day.

For the future, the two look toward the development of new players and finding business efficiencies to keep operating costs down both for themselves and for the tennis industry as a whole.

We are training owners to better run the business of tennis, reports Brode who is on the board of the National Indoor Tennis Association.

We don't want another bowling alley fiasco to happen," he added, referring to the era when bowling facilities became so overbuilt it nearly spelled financial ruin for the entire industry.

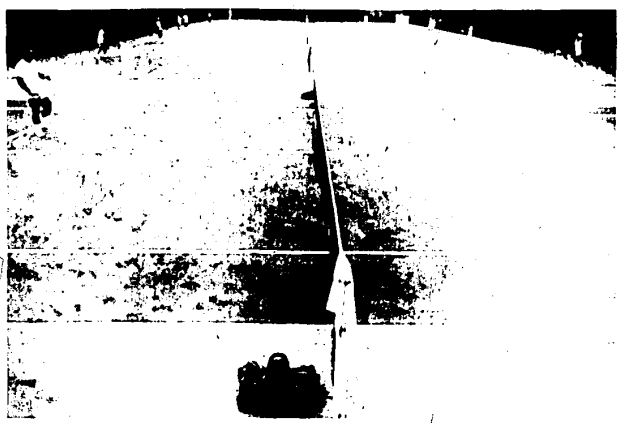
Installation of a computer to automatically operate utilities at Franklin and ending fans to aid in pushing heat down to the courts at Centaur are examples of new ways to cope with the ever-increasing cost of heat and electricity.

AS FOR PLAYER DEVELOPMENT, Brode notes two trends. "Above the frost belt the hard-core tennis players are already playing indoor tennis, and we are losing tennis players to racquetball which is cheaper to play (\$4.95 per court) and demands less skill."

The men acknowledge they had the right instinct at the right time when Greenspan, a builder, and Brode, in the business of swimming pools, opened Franklin in 1969 to play tennis even when they wanted.

Despite the present competitive market, they have every hope for Franklin because the club is a 100 per cent location. Southfield is still dynamic and the center of the metropolitan area.

At the same time, they insist that despite the tennis boom of the early 1970s, their take-home profits haven't been world shaking. "We are constantly putting mon-



Experts estimate that tennis courts must be filled to 70 per cent capacity in order for the club to make money.

CLUB	NO. OF INDOOR COURTS	MEMBERSHIP	REGULAR COURT-TIME	PRIME COURT-TIME
Beverly Hills Racquet 31555 Southfield Rd	11	\$75 Per Person	\$10	\$14
Birmingham Racquet 2100 E. Lincoln	6	\$15 Birmingham Residents \$22.50 Non Residents	\$9	\$13
Centaur Farms Racquet 5700 Drake Road West Bloomfield	8	\$225 Family, \$95 Single \$35 Junior (Entitled to Membership in Square Lake & Franklin)	\$10*	\$14
Court House Tennis & Racquets 6141 Farmington Road West Bloomfield	11	\$195 Family, \$100 Single Male \$65 Female, \$40 Junior	\$9*	\$13
Cranbrook Tennis 3201 Lone Pine Rd Bloomfield Hills	4	Selective Membership \$650 \$250 Annual Dues	No Charge	No Charge
Detroit Tennis 31031 Drake Road Farmington Hills	4	\$2,000 Bond, Annual Fees \$950 Family, \$700 Single, \$80 Junior	No Charge	No Charge
Farmington Racquet 2777 Farmington Road	10	\$200 Family, \$100 Single \$40 Junior	\$9	\$13
Franklin Racquet 25350 Northwestern Highway Southfield	20	See Centaur Above	\$10*	\$14
Jewish Community Center 6600 W. Maple Road West Bloomfield	9	\$25 plus member of Jewish Center	\$4*	\$10
Rochester Hills Racquet 290 W. Avon Road	8	\$200 Family, \$65 Adult \$40 Student (Ages 18-23) \$30 Junior	\$9*	\$13
Southdowns Tennis 2110 Industrial Park Drive Farmington	8	\$155 Family, \$40 Single \$40 Junior	\$9*	\$13
Square Lake Racquet 791 Denison Court Bloomfield Hills	12	See Centaur Above	\$10*	\$14
Troy-Bloomfield Tennis House 1824 W. Maple Road Troy	4	\$215 Family, \$180 Couple \$95 Single, \$45 Junior	\$10	\$14

*Offers "Odd Hour" Special Rates

How the area tennis clubs stack up throughout Oakland County.



Marshall Greenspan (left) and Seymour Brode head what they call "the largest operation of indoor tennis courts in the world today."

Workshop honors employers

Awards for the volunteer, employee and trainee of the year were presented last week at the 13th annual meeting of New Horizons of Oakland County, Inc., held at the Farmington Workshop.

A Youth Drive agency, New Horizons helps mentally and physically handicapped persons find employment.

Betty Fisher, of Bloomfield Hills, presented the "Client (trainee) of the Year" award to Christopher Carper, 36, of Hildebrand House, a group home at 280 W. Haven, Pontiac.

Carper was injured in an automobile accident five years ago and has about no use of his right arm. A welder before the accident, he now does hand assembly work in the sheltered workshop at New Horizons headquarters in Pontiac.

Virginia Plunk of Birmingham was named "Volunteer of the Year." Mrs. Plunk drives trainees on outings and helps them with shopping.

She is an active member of the Women's Auxiliary which raises thousands of dollars each year to support New Horizons activities.

She also makes and sells jewelry as a personal fund-raiser for the organization.

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR award was given to Howard Johnson's Restaurant, 689 Telegraph, Bloomfield Township.

Chef owner Robert Bochenek of Dearborn and manager David Cole of Wabash Lake for their cooperation in helping a 69-year-old mentally retarded New Horizons trainee who had not held a job previously.

According to agency officials, Bochenek and Mr. Cole spent considerable time teaching, switching hours and altering the job description to fit their first worker from New Horizons.

He now handles dishwashing and kitchen duties during a 30 to 40 hour week.

"Contractor of the Year" honors were given to G.P. Plastics, Inc., 3018 Industrial Drive, Pontiac, for providing enough work to keep 10 to 12 sheltered workshop trainees busy on a continuing basis.

The plastic firm sends products to New Horizons trainees for hand assembly. The company also employed New Horizons trainees in the plant.

Terry Alvord of Birmingham accepted the award for the firm.

CERTIFICATES OF appreciation for services were given to treasurer Reynolds Smith of Royal Oak and board members including Margaret White of Bloomfield Hills.

Phenomenal growth

Computers: Wave of the future

If you are 30 or older, you were born before the dawn of the computer age—before the birth of it, perhaps mankind's servant or, at some suspect, its big brother and his noisy electronic relatives.

For better or for worse, the computer is modern man's companion for life, especially for Americans, the National Geographic Society says.

In 1931, there were only 10 computer systems in the United States. Today there are 325,000 computers with 700,000 people making, selling, repairing and attending them.

That's not even counting that infusion of miniaturization, the pocket calculator, expected to increase another 16 million this year.

ENTHUSIASTS are tempted to say there is nothing a computer can't do now, let alone what it will be doing away at in the future.

The family room TV set could become a home learning center for a fee, pulling in all kinds of teaching courses and information from huge electronic memories fed and updated in storehouses at the far end of a transmission line.

Home computers could be programmed to run all household gadgets like vacuum cleaners and lawn mowers, or oriented to recognize the voice of a telephone caller and then tell him with simulated speech a message left just for him.

A COMPUTER remembering the height and weight of all your friends could size up who is rounding the doorknob and report whether it is someone you know or a stranger.

Computers go back to the ancient finger-printed sheets of the Chinese. In 1923, Englishman Charles Babbage invented a steam-powered computer that supposedly would have done almost all the figuring a basic modern computer could do if anybody then knew how to build it.

Electronic computers came along during World War II in time to revolutionize artillery calculations with ENIAC, short for Electronic Numerical Integrator and Calculator. This secret machine sent civilians in 1946. A successor, UNIVAC I, helped the Census Bureau speed up nose-counting and now spends its old age in a museum piece in the Smithsonian Institution.

MANY HAVE contributed to the genius of the computer. Among the big names are John W. Mauchly, J. Presper Eckert and John von Neumann.

The miniaturizing breakthrough of the computer came with the invention of the microprocessor. Half the size of a stick of chewing gum, it contains up to 3,000 transistors equivalent to a room size computer of 20 years ago.

With microprocessors, electronic job boys can build a computer for \$1,000 that outworks the best that was available in the early 1960s.

Accountant asks change at SEC

Both government and the accounting profession could do a better job of responding to "the public interest" in areas of public accounting, said the head of Touche Ross & Co., one of the nation's leading public accounting firms.

Russell Palmer offered the following recommendations for the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC):

- Prescribe a framework of uniform accounting principles
- Require auditors to attest that accounting principles selected by management present information fairly
- Suspend from SEC practice a CPA who falsifies or contributes to false accounting records
- Require auditors to attest to the quality of internal controls and the quality of enforcement of those controls in the annual report
- Vest the board of directors (majority independent of management) with the authority to hire and fire auditors
- Prescribe auditing standards
- Prescribe standards of conduct for independent auditors for accounting firms practicing before the SEC
- Provide legislation amending the Securities Acts to make negligence a test for a violation rather than knowledge.
- Refer willful cases to the justice department rather than using injunctive action

Palmer, whose firm used the SEC charging that the agency's administrative proceedings against Touche Ross over Giant Stores' auditing is improper and biased and threatens the firm's business suggested that the accounting profession:

- Provide guidelines for the auditor faced with conflict between the management of his client company, its board, and the public
- Eliminate the prohibition of advertising by public accounting firms so that the profession can publicly air its strengths and weaknesses
- Take a cooperative rather than a reactionary posture toward regulatory bodies—particularly the SEC—Establish a public interest reviewer to challenge the activities of the entire profession in the name of the public

Palmer praised both the regulatory agencies and the accounting profession. But, he said, it is reasonable to expect "the public will demand performance above and beyond our present standards, no matter how high those present standards may be."