

observing sports

PUTTING ONE WORD AFTER ANOTHER: While in Boston last week, a good friend asked, "How much high school hockey is there in the Detroit area?"

The answer naturally and regretfully had to be: "Very little."

Our friend was shocked. Around Beantown and throughout Massachusetts, prep hockey is a big score.

In fact, it's probably even more popular in winter than basketball, which is king in this part -- and most parts -- of the country.

A glance at the Boston papers reveals just how "big" schoolboy hockey is there. Column after column is devoted to detailing the won and lost in high school hockey.

Yet, around Michigan, hockey hasn't made much of an impact as a high school sport.

IT'S NOT THAT BOYS don't play the game. The other night, somewhere around 10:15, we were driving around the ice rink in Farmington, en route to depositing our copy for the Observer.

The lights were on and about a dozen boys, fully garbed in hockey gear, were out there skating around on the natural pond.

One has no idea where they attend school -- maybe at Farmington or North Farmington or Sorrows, perhaps. Or even in the junior high system.

But you had to have great admiration for these boys. It was a time when they should have been getting ready for bed, yet the love of hockey and the love of sports, had them out there playing and practicing.

THERE IS A SCATTERING of high school hockey in these parts. One major prep league operates to our knowledge.

Yet, despite the beautiful facilities available in Livonia, there's no REAL league for the preps such as we know in football, basketball, swimming, track, baseball and the other sports.

We recall that our first attachment with schoolboy sports back in the late '20s or was it early in the '30s? -- was covering some high school hockey at Olympia.

In those days the Detroit city league sponsored hockey under the auspices of Olympia and the Red Wings. There were 15 or 16 schools and they played once a week with eight games on the same day.

But hockey didn't last long. It didn't get the fan support it deserved.

Maybe in the '70's schoolboy hockey will stage an upsurge. It could prove very popular.

A NOTE TO AREA wrestling coaches. Gentlemen, we on the Observer are great boosters of prep wrestling. But unless you cooperate, like your "brothers" in other sports, and call the results in ... please don't blame the Observer when parents and wrestler complain.

QUITE A PERSONAL THRILL Tuesday night sitting in the Spectrum in Philadelphia and watching the annual National Basketball Association All-Star game and, in particular, sitting there and seeing Dave DeBusschere play for the East and Chuck Walker for the West.

Our thoughts rushed back about 13 years to the days when DeBusschere played for Detroit Austin High and Walker for Benton Harbor High.

Both wound up as All-Staters on the team we picked for the Old Times. Both became college stars and, of course, greats in the pro ranks.

Every season we have a hand now in picking other standouts in Observerland prep sports. Many over the last decade have gone on to stardom in college.

Here and there a few have tried their fortunes at the pros.

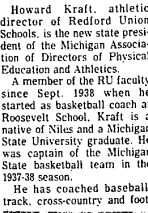
To have known these fellows "back when" ... that's a thrill pretty hard adequately to punch out on this typewriter.

GOOD LUCK TO ONE of our favorites, Bobby Falls of North Farmington High, who undergoes knee surgery next week.

But he hasn't been able to steer clear of injuries ... especially to his knees.

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Athletic Directors Honor RU's Chief



HOWARD KRAFT

Howard Kraft, athletic director of Redford Union Schools, is the new state president of the Michigan Association of Directors of Physical Education and Athletics.

A member of the RU faculty since Sept. 1938 when he served as basketball coach at Roosevelt School, Kraft is a native of Niles and a Michigan State University graduate.

He has coached baseball, track, cross-country and football in addition to basketball, during his career in Redford schools.

Active in the state organization of athletic directors since its inception, he has served in various capacities, including secretary and during the past year was on the national executive committee.

"Nationally our problems are about the same as locally -- crowd control," he said.

"WHEN I STARTED with Redford Union we had only 300 high school students in four grades. Now with 2,400 in the three senior high grades, the principal has so many complicated problems that even he and the two assistant principals can't concentrate on the management of the athletic events as in the early days.

"Actually we have some event or planning meeting just about every night of the week. Coming up Feb. 21 will be our eighth team district wrestling tournament.

"In the fall we ran an invitational cross country meet with 22 schools. With regional and state events for the different sports, we really don't have any slack seasons.

"So directors of athletics have a year-round job of administration with a lot of emphasis on security and safety. We are pooling information on the most successful methods used elsewhere and trying to avoid troubles encountered for instance in California.

do as Detroit has done, close down evening events for our athletic teams. These events can mean so much to the players, the school, the parents and the whole community."

Working out guidelines for crowd control is a priority project of the Michigan association.

"We hope never to have to

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