



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Browsing through the multitude of cartons containing Super Bowl memorabilia are Jean Thybaut and Dennis Jackson who are readying for the big Super Sunday.

Stored in Farmington Memorabilia readied for fans

By Teri Banaas
staff writer

The Super Bowl means super sales for area merchants, who are turning the football frenzy into a business bonanza.

In Livonia, one of the high scorers is Mike Leahy, a former chemical salesman who two years ago opened the Old Ballpark Inc., a sports specialty shop at 28453 Five Mile.

By the time the Super Bowl game between the Cincinnati Bengals and San Francisco 49ers is underway Sunday, sales of NFL-sponsored pennants, jerseys, programs, and sports mugs are expected to triple those registered by last year's figures, says Leahy.

Leahy, a distributor of NFL-approved souvenirs, is projecting a \$1 million sales mark, though some area estimates put that figure at more than twice that amount.

What's the secret to this year's success? According to Leahy, early marketing strategies account for some of the high gains. His shop, he said, began selling Super Bowl XVI souvenirs some six months ago.

HEAVY MARKETING in businesses such as bars (where NFL cigarette lighters are big sellers, for instance), party stores, and restaurants also contributed to increased sales. Leahy added that another smart

business tactic this year has been the pre-sale of game programs, previously sold only at the football stadium, he said. This year, the marketing plan was also aimed at those fans who will be watching the game in the comfort of their living rooms.

In just one day this week, for instance, Leahy said he received some 60,000 programs.

Because of his role as a full-time, NFL-approved merchant of sports equipment and paraphernalia, Leahy was selected this season to handle the Detroit-area distribution of Super Bowl souvenirs.

LEAHY IS affiliated with Heritage Sales Inc., the NFL-approved company that distributes Super Bowl souvenirs

from some 30 manufacturers to 1,000 sports shops, convenience stores, and restaurants in southeastern Michigan.

Much of the merchandise makes its way through Leahy's warehouse in Farmington, where this week eight employees worked at a hectic pace to unload promotional items.

"I'm getting less sleep every day," Leahy said. "I guess I'll get some rest next Tuesday."

At one point this week, some \$300,000 worth of merchandise was stored there.

There are 150 different items on sale for the Super Bowl memorabilia collector. Items range from NFL-labeled cigarette lighters, card decks, and key rings to clothing.

Expand horizons: learn architecture

Instead of cartoons on Saturdays, community residents can watch their "horizons expand" during two special design programs being offered by the School of Architecture at Lawrence Institute of Technology.

Beginning Feb. 6, the Design Discovery and Pre-College programs will give adults and high-school juniors and seniors a chance to "dabble" in the areas of architecture, interior architecture, and art/design. Classes will be offered in such subjects as basic design, visual communications, drawing and composition, and interior architecture/interior design. In addition, there will be an art and architecture seminar which will include field trips to museums, art galleries, and the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Aftack House.

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