



Marty Budner



Businessman Roger Faulkner, director of the World Championship of Tennis Tournament later this month, is turning into one of the city's top sports promoters.

JOHN STANG/staff photographer

'Court'-ing the stars

Faulkner pulls some strings, brings men's tennis to city

Soccer or tennis. It doesn't matter.

Roger Faulkner appreciates both sports. In fact, he enjoys them so much he wants the people of the Metropolitan Detroit area to share the action.

A stockbroker for the Merrill Lynch office in Bloomfield Hills, the 44-year-old Faulkner is fast becoming one of the city's top sports promoters.

Faulkner was instrumental in bringing professional soccer to Detroit by promoting, along with former partner Gordon Preston, two exhibition soccer matches in the late '70s. One of the matches featured the legendary Pele and the Cosmos of New York against a professional team from Dallas.

Faulkner later became a partner with Preston in the original Detroit Express soccer team that played at the Pontiac Silverdome as a member of the North American Soccer League. He later severed his relationship with the Express, although Detroit still has a soccer representative in the American Soccer League.

When he left the soccer franchise, one of his goals was to bring professional men's tennis to Detroit.

Faulkner's dream will be realized Jan. 27-30 when the World Championship of Tennis (WCT) conducts its \$250,000 Winter Finals in Detroit's Cobo Arena.

The eight featured participants are ranked no lower than No. 26 in the Nixdorf Computer world singles rankings list.

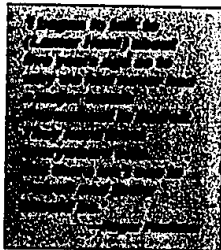
Czechoslovakian Ivan Lendl, the

No. 2-ranked player who won an exhibition in Chicago over the weekend, will be the top attraction. Guillermo Vilas (Argentina), Balazs Taroczy (Hungary), Kevin Curren (South Africa), Wojtek Fibak (Poland), Paul McNamee (Australia), Brian Teacher (United States) and Bill Scanlon (United States) will be the other participants.

The winner is guaranteed \$125,000, with the runner-up earning \$40,000. Series tickets for all four days of the tournament will be \$40 for Tier A (Inner Circle); \$30 for Tier B (Circle Loop); and \$20 for Tier C (Upper Reserved).

For ticket information, contact the Joe Louis Arena office at 587-6000.

Faulkner agreed to do a question and answer session for the Observer & Eccentric earlier this week at the Square Lake Racquet Club.



What was your original purpose of getting into the sports promotion business? Was it a flash-in-the-pan type thing or were you always interested in it?

No, I've always had an interest. I ran all sports at London University for a year. I was still a student, obviously, but I had functional responsibility for it. And having been on the tennis circuit and associated with it through Trisha (his ex-wife), and associated with sports, and knowing the media people, and so on, I've always enjoyed that part of life tremendously.

About the WCT tourney, how were you able to get it here in Detroit? Was it a personal dream of yours to get a WCT event to Detroit?

It began because at the league meetings which I attended — I was a director in the North American Soccer League — and we used to sit alphabetically. Representing Detroit, I sat between the representatives from Ft. Lauderdale and Dallas.

It was kind of fun because for 50 days of my life I sat between Lamar Hunt on the one side representing Dallas and Joe Robbie — who owns the (Miami) Dolphins — on the other side representing the (Ft. Lauderdale) Strikers. So, Lamar and I, naturally, got to know each other very well. He's the man who created professional tennis in 1987. He runs World Championship Tennis which is 20 tournaments world wide.

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Another good year for NF gymnasts?

By Tom Baer
staff writer

North Farmington's gymnasts have a winning tradition to uphold.

Last year, coach Mary Johnese's crew compiled a 14-1 dual meet record, won league and Dearborn Invitational titles and placed third in the regional. Is the 1983 Raider squad up to defending that sort of record?

"We should have a good year if sickness doesn't strike us," predicted Johnese, who is starting her seventh season as North's coach. "Right now, quite a few girls are down with the flu. If we can get them back and going, we should be strong."

Johnese has two seniors, Heidi Lacey and Kim Edwards, back from last year, as well as experienced junior all-arounders Dona Kebrle and Sharon Shaffra. Freshman Angie Griffin has been looking good in all events, according to the coach.

"The team's young with only two seniors," said Johnese, a 1970 graduate of North Farmington. "But of the top four, three have competed for us before and Angie (Griffin) seems to know what she's doing."

Meet results — See Page 3

North opened its season Jan. 6 with a victory over Clarenceville and then beat Ann Arbor Pioneer and Walled Lake Western Monday. North's season continues Thursday at 7 p.m. when it hosts Troy, one of the top teams in the state.

FARMINGTON HARRISON could have a comeback story in sophomore Jill Bira.

Bira took an unfortunate tumble while competing on the uneven parallel bars in the regional meet last season, breaking two bones in her left arm and dislocating her elbow.

"It was a real serious injury and we rushed her to the hospital right away," said Harrison coach Kim Dennis. "They did emergency surgery on it. The tendons and ligaments were torn. She also had nerve damage."

"But Jill's back and doing real well right now. It's taken her a long time to come back, but she's come back further than we expected."

Dennis also is counting on junior Martha McCaughey, sophomore Laurie Hunk and freshmen Julie Runk and Jamie Lyons. All are all-arounders. "This is a real young team," Dennis said. "I have two juniors. The rest are freshmen and sophomores."



Dona Kebrle competes on the balance beam for North Farmington.

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