

Sports

Bred Emons, Chris McCosky editors/591-2312

entertainment inside



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C.J. Risak

Justice for all?

THE AGE of the radical is past. People just don't like protests any more, not like they did back in the '60s and '70s. Their popularity withered and transgressed into apathy, a condition caused as much by excess as anything else.

Protesters began protesting anything. Soon, there were so many good causes to protest about, people got bored and tired of it all.

That's too bad. Because there's still a lot of injustice around worthy of attention.

This is the season of our heritage — the Fourth of July, in the land of freedom and justice for all.

If only it were true.

I stood inside the press box at the Livonia Stevenson football field two weeks ago, watching and evaluating 22 soccer players in the Observer & Eccentric All-Star Classic. We each had a vote in choosing who we thought was the most valuable player. But the talent was so extreme, the technique so sound, a unanimous decision was impossible.

My feelings were paradoxical. Their raw ability left me in awe, their skills development surprised me, their unending energy filled me with jealousy.

But they were females, and that made their future in soccer a powerful, sagging, saddening anchor.

IN THIS LAND of the free, where ideally each of us is able to pursue his or her dream, these young women — whose ability is second to no other athlete in any other prep sport in the state — have no where to go.

Places like Michigan State University are the reason why.

They have women's soccer at MSU. It's a club sport, and has been since it was initiated in 1979. Unlike the Spartan football, basketball or hockey teams, the women's soccer team has never experienced a losing season. Last year the Lady Spartans — with talents like Julie Gnu and Caroline Trout (Bloomfield Hills), Donna Fox (Livonia), Annie Kura and Julie Staebche (Troy), Julie Pacheco (Farmington Hills) and Andrea Bokos (Livonia) — were 18-6. In 1983 they were 19-3.

It was after that 1982 season that coach Michael Thaut and the team members decided to pursue varsity status.

"We fulfilled all the criteria in our application, the procedure that tells how to elevate a program from club to varsity level," said Thaut, "and waited for an answer."

The answer came: no. Wait 'til next year, the MSU Athletic Council said.

So they waited. And, after going 18-6 last fall, the MSU women soccer backers got their answer in April.

No again.

WHY? THREE REASONS: Funding, scheduling, and too many varsity sports on campus already.

Thaut disputes all three. Private sponsors have already pledged \$10,000 a season for 10 years. The MSU men's team, according to Thaut, is running a varsity program on a \$7,000-a-season budget.

Scheduling tournaments, with two or three games in each, would cut the number of road trips. Kalamazoo College is the only four-year school in the state with a varsity women's program, but there are enough teams in bordering states.

And the third reason — well, that's such a silly statement it doesn't rate an answer.

"I don't think there's any valid reasons to turn us down," said Thaut, who nevertheless will continue to coach the MSU women as a club team.

MIND YOU, the players aren't taking the latest setback lying down. The protest has begun. The players are beseeching their MSU student comrades to sign petitions, which they plan to place in front of the Board of Trustees with claims of injustice.

They don't plan on going back to the athletic council, not after "they gave us the run-around for two years," Thaut said.

"The players just feel betrayed," the coach said. "The girls at this point are mad. They're angry to be run around and make this a discriminatory issue."

That means taking it before the Women's Advisory Council, too, which should put a scare into athletic director Doug Weaver and his council.

Discrimination is a word all those perceiving themselves as fair-minded educators avoid like poison ivy.

BUT WILL IT make a difference? It depends on how good a job the MSU players do in rallying support.

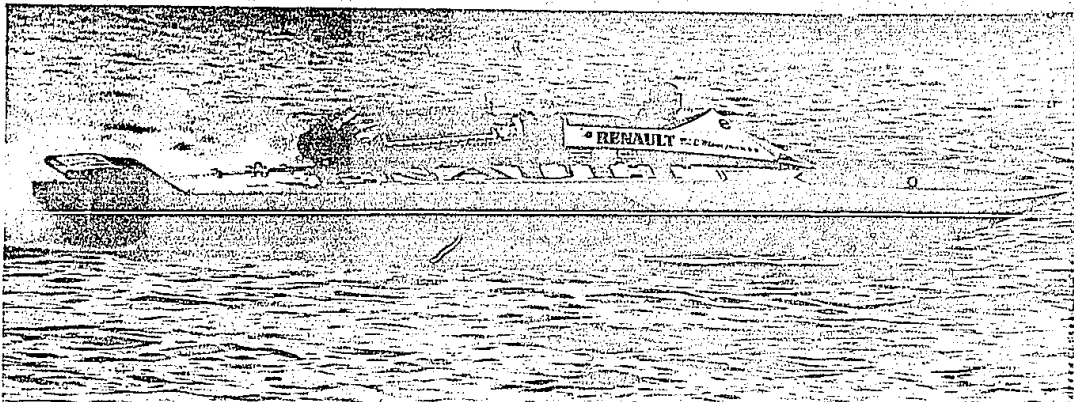
It could be a pivotal battle in this war, which started with the institution of Title IX. Sure, state colleges have allowed women their time in the athletic arena. But support? There has been very little.

Do you think University of Michigan AD Don Canham would keep a basketball coach who is pressed to win a dozen games in three years? He did — Gloria Solak, the women's coach.

Should Weaver and MSU survive this test, women's sports will take a step backward. Should the women's team get a reprieve and earn varsity status, other state schools may be forced to re-evaluate their policies.

The question is, does anyone care enough? Or will this rank as just another protest, to be filed as meaningless and forgotten?

Let's hope not. Because there's a lot of talent out there, high school players who have put in a decade of year-round training to develop their abilities. It would be an injustice to rob them of such an opportunity — the chance to showcase their abilities on the highest level.



It's a revamped Miss Renault that will take to the Detroit River in next weekend's Spirit of Detroit Thundercat hydroplane races.

The event that didn't die

By Tom Henderson
staff writer

"Hot time, summer in the city"

THAT LINE from the '60s hit song by the Loving Spoonful talks about the temperature, but there's another kind of hot time in the city — as anyone who has been around the Detroit area the last few weeks can attest.

First were the Tigers, who provided (and continue to provide) a season full of heat themselves. Then came the Grand Prix Formula 1 cars, with all their European glamor and worldwide attention. Next was the Freedom Festival in general and the fireworks in particular, which drew more than a million fans downtown.

And now come the hydroplanes, one of the most enduring of Detroit's institutions and certainly one of the most popular.

THE HYDROPLANES, with the exception of the war years, have raced on the Detroit River annually since 1918. Their following is rabid, almost cult-like in its devotion, and huge. Police estimated last year's crowd at 800,000 and this year's Spirit of Detroit race on July 16 should do just as well.

"We've got the most water and the best crowd," said John Love, publicity director for this year's race and a long-time powerboat buff.

The crowds are by far the biggest on the 10-race tour, and the water is by far the trickiest, the least forgiving. The boats race in the ocean (on Biscayne Bay in Miami and Mission Bay in San Diego), on lakes and on other rivers, but racing on these waters is like playing with boats in the bathtub compared to racing on the Detroit River, whose swells, waves and currents wait patiently and evilly for the least little mistake.

MAKE A mistake at 170 miles an hour and it's liable to be your last, as too many drivers have found out.

Despite the huge throngs, the boat races very nearly became part of that ever-growing list of former Detroit traditions. As the green seats of Tiger Stadium went, as Hudson's went, as trolley cars and electric buses went, so, too, it appeared, would go the boat races.

In 1978, dramatically increasing costs and a dramatically decreasing economy had the hydroplanes founderling like whales on a beach. "I was at one race," said Love, who literally grew up around the boats and is a fanatic about them, "and there were only

six boats in the pits. I remember thinking, 'That's it. This is the end.'"

IT TAKES eight boats to set up a decent race, with four boats in a heat. They had just six for the Miami race in 1978, and it got worse the next week, when a race had to be canceled for a lack of boats capable of making the 100 miles-an-hour qualifying speed.

There was one excellent boat then (Budweiser), one good boat (Atlas) and one decent boat that had a habit of killing its drivers (Squire Shop). The rest were dogs, ancient, and toothless, with volunteer crews and amateur drivers. Many fans close to the hydro scene were sure the 1978 Spirit of Detroit race would be the last.

TO PARAPHRASE Mark Twain, reports of the hydro's death were greatly exaggerated. The economy revived, which meant new sponsorship, new boats, new drivers, bigger purses, TV contracts and the promise of a long life.

Before this season is over, for example, there will be about 24 boats that have raced in at least one race, and 12 of them will be regulars on the circuit. There will be eight or nine new boats in all, three of them expensive turbines, with their \$100,000 hulls and \$40,000 engines.

Leading the resurgence is a group of Detroit owners or sponsors, whose money transfused life into the dying sport.

MISS RENAULT, which won the World Championship race in San Diego last year, is owned by Detroit's Jerry Schoenitz and sponsored by AMC Enault, whose race headquarters are in Livonia.

Miss Renault, also known as U-3, was cranked in the off-season. It has new sponsors and a computerized wing off the rear deck.

American Speedy Printing, with corporate headquarters in Birmingham, sponsored what else? American Speedy Printing, the U-4. The boat used to be known as the Miss Madison and is still owned by the small Indiana community on the Ohio River.

MISS TOSTI Asti, the U-10, is sponsored by Tytiland Importers of Troy. This year, the team has invested in a brand-new hull to go with its high-tech turbines.

There are a couple of other Detroit-area connections. In the "Tech" Ton D'Eath of Fair Haven will drive the Lite All-Star, while O.E. Friable of Detroit is owner of the Atlas Van Line.

THE ATLAS, which has won the last

two Spirit of Detroit Thundercats, will be the boat to watch in this year's race. The boat is so brand new, it missed the first two races of the season, then quickly set a lap-record of 141 mph when it finally got on a course. It is piloted by Chip Hanauer, the veteran of the hydro circuit with 11 wins.

Hanauer replaced the legendary Bill Muncy on the Atlas team three years ago after Muncy, the darling of the Detroit fans with his daredevil driving, was killed in a horrific accident during a race in Acapulco.

(FIVE HYDROPLANE drivers have won at least 15 races in their careers and four of them — Muncy, Dean Chenoweth, Ron Mazon and Chuck Thompson — died in their boats or while hurtling out of them.)

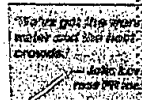
As a safety precaution, this year's course has been changed from three

miles to 2 1/2 miles, the first change on the river since the '50s, when the hydro used to race under the Belle Isle bridge twice a lap.

The reason for the change, according to Love and Hanauer, is that the hydro is more stable during acceleration, but tend to become airborne at top speed of 175 miles an hour. The boats used to hit that speed at the very end of the straightaways, just in time to slow down for the turn. But the newer engines get the boats to top speed faster, necessitating either shorter straightaways or more turnarounds.

ATLAS' BIGGEST challenge should come from Budweiser, whose owner (Bernie Little, a Bud distributor in Lakeland, Fla., the winter home of the Tigers) annually outspends every other team on the tour.

Please turn to Page 2



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Faulkner shines on state soccer squad

The Michigan State Select Women's Soccer Team, under the direction of player-coach Mar-Jo Wickham, placed fourth at the regional tournament played in Rockford, Ill., last weekend.

The purpose of the tourney is to ultimately select a United States Women's World Cup national team.

Four Michigan players earned consideration for a berth on the regional team: Pam Faulkner from Farmington Hills, Robert Cuddy, Kelly Gals, head coach at North Farmington, and Kristina Brown from Ann Arbor.

Faulkner, however, was the only player

from Michigan to actually win a spot on the national team.

The Michigan team played five matches in two days of action. The team blanked Illinois 1-0, on Saturday behind the shut-out goal keeping of Faulkner. The team then defeated and tied to Los Angeles and Minnesota.

Other area players on the select team were Carolyn Trout (Farmington Hills), Janet Horn (Farmington Hills), Kathy Taylor (OU Detroit), Claudia Martin (Livonia Athletic), Pamela Miller (Northville Athletic), Amy Aronowicz (OU Detroit), Michelle Troy (OU Detroit) and Ben Dorn (Livonia Athletic).