



Chris McCooky, Brad Emons editors/591-2312

(P1C)



C.J. Risak

Using a basketball to dribble diplomacy

HOW OFTEN WE, the unworthy and undeserving, have cast envious eyes toward the huge men who prance up and down basketball courts shooting a round ball through a hoop for a living. For eight months of work a year they get paid millions, and while they fly coast-to-coast to play their games we travel no further than refrigerator-to-couch to watch them on TV.

So many times our envy turns to bitterness and despair. Why should they be so fortunate? We demand from an unanswerable television. We would cheerily, graciously accept such a job for one-tenth the salary.

But whatever magnitude our despair reaches over such an injustice, we let our dream dissipate with little argument, believing the opportunity will never come. The reason is simple: We do not possess their talent.

LIKE A GREAT majority of us, Dennis Nazelli has shared such dreams. But like a minority of us, Nazelli has brought his dreams to fruition.

"I have two very serious passions in life," the Livonia resident explained. "One is traveling and the other is basketball. So I just married the two and made it a basketball exchange."

It sounds too easy. And yet Nazelli realized his goals with an unelaborate plan: form a team, find some overseas competition, and figure out a method of funding.

On that premise, Nazelli created Young Athletes Abroad (YAA) in 1982. It's goal was to take a team of young and willing basketball players to Europe. The learning experience, on and off the court, would be invaluable.

"We use basketball as the passport," said Nazelli, also a Dearborn High School assistant basketball coach. "That's the purpose of our traveling. We don't go over there with the intent of dominating the world. We share our knowledge, our technique and our drills, and we get the same from them."

"So in that sense, it does become a basketball exchange."

NAZELLI RETURNED last month from his sixth trip abroad with the team he coaches, the Livonia Cardinals. He has made two trips a year since founding YAA, normally taking 12- and 13-year-olds in April and 13- and 14-year-olds in June.

Their destination always includes Sweden. The April team plays in a minor tournament there, but those on the June squad play for the Stockholm Basketball Cup, the largest such youth tournament in the world. Teams from Egypt, Iceland, Republic of China, Sweden and Finland form the competition.

But this year's June team took a side trip — to Leningrad, to play the Russian Spartak squad.

While in Stockholm for last year's tournament, Nazelli learned of a ship line, ScanSov, that sailed twice weekly to Leningrad. After a few inquiries, he found he could bunk his team on the ship during a trip into the Soviet Union.

The director of ScanSov used his Russian contacts to set up a game against Spartak. Nazelli later discovered his Cardinals would be the first youth team from the United States to play in Russia.

SPARTAK, the second-best youth team in Russia, won the Soviet 41-48. The Cardinals returned home with a 10-3 record, including a third-place in the Stockholm Cup, and as Nazelli described it, "a different appreciation for their own lifestyle."

Which perfectly defines what Nazelli hopes to accomplish with the YAA. His method of selecting players has little to do with basketball talent. "I want them to have one or two years of playing experience because I don't have time to teach them the game," he said.

But anyone who answers his newspaper notices, which appear in August and September, can make the trip. The team tryout consists of Nazelli imparting his expectations of his players, usually dealing with academics and fund-raising efforts.

"Normally, a chance like this only goes to the all-star athletes," said Nazelli. "But I've found an all-star can have an all-star attitude, and I don't need that. I'm more interested in their attitude than their talent."

FOR THE EIGHT months prior to the trip, team members bury themselves into efforts to raise money. The goal is to collect 50 percent of the amount needed, with a different method each month (raffles, candy sales, etc.). The fund-raising is on an individual basis, so some benefit more than others.

The June trip cost \$1,350 for each of the eight team members. The least amount raised was \$800, the most \$1,000. The difference is paid by the player's parents.

The success of Nazelli's program has attracted attention. Livonia Ladywood used YAA methods to select its girls basketball team on a trip through Scandinavia, and currently a pair of Swedish female teams are in town.

The Swedish teams started their 10-game tour last night at Livonia Stevenson. In the next two weeks they'll play teams from Bloomfield Hills and Andover (July 25), North Farmington (July 30-31), and Ladywood as part of a two-game tournament at Schoolcraft College Monday and Wednesday.

His program is nobly designed to benefit the young, but Nazelli makes no attempt to hide his own gains. "I'm so fortunate to be able to travel and coach all over the world, especially Europe," said the YAA founder.

Surely, it's a dream come true.

Rain dampens Adray classic



ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

Ty Gaines of Redford Little Caesars slides safely back into first base for the Livonia Collegiate Baseball League all-stars. The

stars played for a 4-4 tie Monday night against a group of Class A stars.

By Chris McCooky
staff writer

Mother Nature made things messy and uncomfortable last year. This year, she forced the postponement of the annual Adray All-Star Sandlot Baseball game Monday at Tiger Stadium with an unrelenting rainstorm.

There was talk among the organizers afterward of setting a makeup date for the annual classic which dates back to 1945, but not everyone is optimistic about the reality of replacing the game.

"They won't make this game up," said John Moraitis, who managed the Livonia Collegiate Baseball League all-stars.

Too bad if they don't. Until the rains came Monday, the prospects looked good for some serious baseball.

THE LIVONIA all-stars took the field against all-stars from the Detroit Adray League's first, third, fifth and seventh place teams at 10 a.m. The game was called after three innings with Detroit clinging to a 1-0 lead.

It was to be the first time in three years that Detroit and Livonia had played each other. Livonia, long considered a weak sister to the Detroit league, was out to prove it could compete with the elder circuit.

John Rogers, a Catholic Central grad now playing at the University of Detroit, started on the mound for Livonia representing Redford Little Caesars. He was greeted with a blast to the base of the right field wall by Adray Photo's Tom Hauck for a double.

Hauck, an Eastern Michigan University standout, moved to third on Scott Willis' (Adray Photo, EMU) fly ball to right. University of Michigan's Tom Brock (Adray Sound) then sent a fly ball to left center, some 400 feet away, that Tyrone Gaines (Caesars) ran down. Houck scored on the play.

Livonia got a single from Todd Krumm (Livonia Adray) to lead off the second inning. But Detroit hurler

THE LAST ROSE

Pete Rose, a Michigan State baseball player and a member of Ron Heller's Livonia Adray baseball team, is playing his last season in the Livonia Collegiate Baseball League. He is the last of five Rose brothers who have played baseball for Heller. This extraordinary family will be featured in Monday's Observer sports sections.

Ron Hightower (Adray Photo, EMU) picked the MSU football-baseball star off first.

LIVONIA PITCHERS Doug Doyle (Waller's Appliances) and Derron Armstrong (Caesars) checked the Detroiters on one hit each in their one inning of work.

Meanwhile, Detroit pitchers Dave Karasinski (Adray Sound, U-M) and David Sala (Adray Sound, U-Cincinnati) blanked Livonia. The rains washed out the scheduled duel between the Lansing All-stars and stars from the Detroit Adray League's second, fourth and sixth place teams.

Featured performers in that game were to be former Farmington Harrison football-baseball player Bob Wasczenki who was playing for the Lansing team. Wasczenki plays football at MSU.

On the Detroit squad were such area players as Dave Slavin, former all-state catcher at Plymouth Salem now playing for the University of Missouri, and Bob Graham, a former star at Southfield High who now attends Henry Ford Community College.

The rain did go away Monday in time for the clash between the LCBL stars and an all-star contingent from the Adray-Sun Mutual Class A baseball league which took place under the lights at Livonia's Ford Field.

The game went nine innings and ended in a 4-4 tie. Todd Krumm hit a long triple for the Livonia stars; Mike Williamson slugged a two-run homer to highlight the Mutual effort.

But the hero of the night was Livonia's Derron White. With two out and two on in the last of the ninth, Mutual ahead 4-3, White slapped a single to right center to retie the game at 4-4.

MDA 10K run has new date

By Marty Budner
staff writer

Although they certainly got their feet wet, representatives of the inaugural Michigan MDA 10-kilometer road race held last November along the streets of Southfield were less-than-pleased with the race's rather stormy debut.

Officials believe the second race — moved up to Aug. 18 this year — will prove to be more successful for its ultimate beneficiary — the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

"We had the race in November last year. The weather was rainy and there was just not enough publicity time," said race director Mike Koeler, who works for the Southland Corp. which helps to sponsor the race.

"We wanted to move the race date closer to the actual (MDA) telethon (over the Labor Day weekend). That way it's right near the MDA activities."

"It's an ideal date for us and we'll try and stick with that third Sunday of the month each year," he said.

The 1984 race was held in cold, rainy conditions, limiting the field to just under 450 runners. Koeler said the race also netted \$4,000 for the local branch of the MDA.

BECAUSE OF the switch in race dates, Koeler figures to attract upwards of 600 people this year.

The race begins 6:30 a.m. at the Southfield Civic Center and will conclude in the Southfield Towers area. Although the exact course is yet to be determined, it again will be routed along Civic Center Drive.

Awards will be given to men's and women's winners in each of the five age divisions: 19-under, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49 and 50-over. T-shirts will be awarded to the first 400 entries.

Joe Caruso of Monroe and Cindy Barber of Lincoln Park, members of the Racquets Unlimited Racing Team,

running

are the defending overall champions.

The Racquets Unlimited Racing Team is a group of 11 dedicated runners sponsored by the Livonia-based Racquets Unlimited sports store.

They travel around the country and are considered one of the best teams in the Midwest, according to store owner and race-team director Ben Tashich.

"I think we have the strongest team in the Midwest," said Tashich. "Our runners come from around the state. We consistently finish among the top teams at all the races."

"WE HAVE GOTTEN performances this year from our runners that you usually only see from nationally ranked teams. We won the Cherry Festival race with the minimum requirement of only three runners, we won the Ludington Lake Stride Race and the Borgess Medical 10K."

"We have a team of high quality runners, next to the people who run for money," he said.

Paul Baldwin and Sam Torres of Flint, Dave Emery of Farmington Hills, Tony Mifflin of Allen Park, Ron Lessard of Ferndale, Gary Wolfram of Lansing, Don Andersen of Garden City, Gary Reiffitt of Ypsilanti and Sherri Sly of Dexter are other members of the Racquets Unlimited Team.

Besides the Southland Corp., other major sponsors of the second Michigan MDA 10K race include the Observer and Eccentric Newspapers Inc., Racquets Unlimited, Melody Farms and Gatorade.

For more information and to register for the race, call the Michigan MDA 10K hotline at 556-0839.

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