

Wagering Records Run Wild, Too

More Marks Fall Under Fleet Feet Of Wolverine's Pacers And Trotters

observing sports

How big have high school sports become? Staggering might be an appropriate word. Stop a moment to analyze the programs the various schools in Observerland are about to undertake in sports during the forthcoming 1970-71 semester.

RIGHT NOW the football and cross country teams are in action, getting a head start in preparing for their start of schedules a couple of weeks hence. Comes the winter there'll be a real jam, athletically speaking, on the prep front.

There'll be basketball, swimming and wrestling at most schools. A few will offer gymnastics and in Livonia, the four high schools will sponsor ice hockey. A couple of schools also sponsor skiing and bowling.

And in the spring? Well, there'll be baseball, track, tennis and golf. Now, that's just for the boys.

SEVERAL OF the schools also sponsor sports programs for the fairer sex. In some schools there are as many as five sports for the girls.

Add to the fact the number of participants — boy and girl — who go out for the various varsity, junior varsity and freshman-sophomore teams.

Toss in the number of fans... the average is around 3,000 for every prep football game. So, let nobody say that high school sports haven't reached the big time.

COLLECTIVELY, when you throw all these numbers into one hat — just even from the 21 high schools now in Observerland — the figures become awesome.

It's a far cry from prep sports of three or four decades ago when the number of total sports was considerably less than it is today... when schools weren't able to accommodate as many fans... when there were far fewer who turned out for teams... when coaching staffs were much smaller than we know them today.

IT'S NOW definite. There'll be a state high school baseball tournament for the first time next spring.

Such an event has been a long time coming, but those who have sponsored such tournaments as the Les Anders Invitational held in Livonia rate a bow in bringing about the state-wide meet.

For many years, the argument was: "There's no time in the spring to run off a tournament."

But then came the Anders Invitational... involving the Livonia, Plymouth, Redford schools, etc., also Pontiac Press Invitational in which teams took part like Southfield, Brother Rice, Lathrup and Birmingham Groves.

Despite the so-called jam-period which exists every spring, the Anders and the Pontiac meets went off pretty much on schedule. Even occasional weather problems didn't knock the tournaments out of the box.

If such extravaganzas as the Anders and Pontiac affairs could be staged, why not a state meet? The various high school baseball coaches made the plea. Their principals and athletic directors agreed... why not?

The State High School Athletic Association naturally had to consider the matter. Information was sought from all schools in the state.

Back came their votes... the majority was for a state baseball meet.

DID YOU notice that Highland, Ind., the team that beat South Farmington's National in the Little League semifinals before being bounced out?

DENNY McLAIN may be having his own problems this season; but he's also concerned over the ill fortunes that his ex-Livonia friend, Joe Sparma, has encountered.

McLain, who has resided in Livonia with his family this summer, was asking about Sparma, who was traded from the Tigers to Montreal and then sent down to Winnipeg in the International League.

"Poor guy," Denny was saying about Sparma, who still makes his home in Livonia, or did at last report.

The feeling always existed that Sparma had the arm to become a pitching star. But somehow, he ran into difficulties on the Tigers... then into a siege of wildness.

He doesn't seem to have licked his problems in the minors. When he last noticed he was 3-15 at Winnipeg and with that kind of a record it isn't likely he'll get a hurrry-call to return to the majors.

Could be that Sparma, the one-time All Big Ten quarterback at Ohio State, may give some thought to giving pro football a whirl yet.

As for McLain, he'll be in the National League next season!

Take the word of those who have been watching racing over the big mile track at Wolverine Raceway and you have to believe when fans say they are seeing the best harness racing in Michigan history.

Take it from members of the official family at the track, the big mile is the greatest thing ever to hit harness racing in the state and they have all-time high figures to prove their point.

Saturday's program was one

of the most exciting ever presented in the Detroit area and found eight of the 10 races clocked in 2:02 or faster with three going in 2:00.1.

The crowd of 11,781, third largest of the season, was in a betting mood and sent an all-time high of \$229,026 through the machines. That shattered the record of two weeks standing of \$16,972.

It boosted the nightly average to \$399,000, a hike of 7.3 per

cent over 1960, and the big turnstile count boosted the average to \$4,494 for an increase of 45.7 per cent over the first 22 nights of 1969.

All told, four records went by the boards Saturday as Wolverine continued on its way to the biggest meeting in its 21 years and one that may become the greatest in state annals. The pools for the daily double, Big Perfecta and the Perfecta all bettered previous highs.

THE DAILY DOUBLE

totalled \$76,382 compared to the former high of \$68,854. The Big Perfecta soared to \$73,940 contrasted to the \$66,775 of two weeks earlier.

The Perfecta, on the 10th race, climbed to \$66,930 against a record of \$57,801.

And to add a bit more sizzle to the evening, wagering on the fifth race hit another all-time high total of \$125,949, including the pool on the race and the Big Perfecta.

Knox Patch, the five-year-old Michiganbred who set the track record of 1:58 two weeks earlier, maintained his dominance over the top pacers with a length victory in Saturday's invitational.

It was a brilliant duel from the start with Fanny Mite holding the lead for three quarters before Knox Patch roared to the front. But it wasn't to be that easy, for The Big Bear came charging up in the final furlong and was only a length back at the wire.

Here are the times for the various winners on the evening's program: Redigo Adios Bill (2:04.4), Brazil Hanover (2:05.4), Deb Adios (2:03.1), Peppy Relco (2:00.4), Prince Knox (2:01.2), Shawassee Squire (2:00.1), Franklin Jewell (2:00.1), Knox Patch (2:00.1), Cushing Beauty (2:01.1) and Pilot Adios (2:02).

BOBBY WILLIAMS, the 34-year-old Comstock, Mich. driver-trainer who started his career at Wolverine Raceway years ago under the direction of his father, Jack Williams Sr., continued to steal the show from the other reinsmen at the meeting.

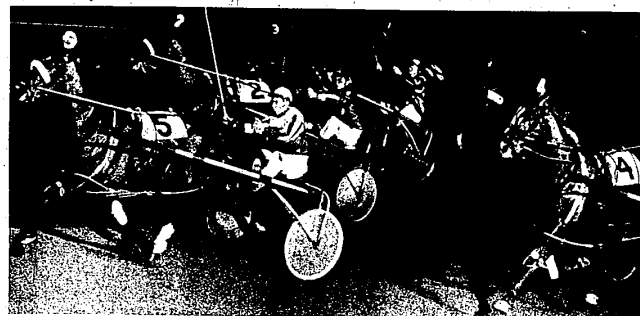
Bobby recorded his third triple in 22 nights during Friday's program and added to his No. 1 spot in driver rankings. Williams started his Friday triple by guiding Ski Slope, a four-year-old owned by Reno Ministrelli of Southfield, Mich., home first in the fourth race to pay \$12. The clocking of 2:03.4 was a new mark for the bay gelding.

He came back two races later and piloted Buddy Time, a four-year-old, to its ninth straight victory and 10th in its last 11 starts. The Winter Time gelding is owned by Sal Lettman and Thomas DeCarra of the Chicago area.

Buddy Time was the odds-on favorite and won as he pleased in the fastest mile of his career, a quick 2:01.4.

Back came Williams in the 10th race to beat Reeds Michael to the wire by a half-length in 2:04.4.

Little Diamond was making his fifth start of the year but was much the best, when Williams decided to let it go in the drive to the wire.



SPEEDING UNDER the wire for his third straight victory is Knox Patch (5), the fast-moving Michiganbred driven by Bob Williams, to win Saturday's

invitational at Wolverine Raceway in 2:00.1. The Big Bear (2) was second and Blaze Pick (4) third before the crowd of 11,781.

Area Bowlers Strike For Multi-Million Pot

By W. W. EDGAR

Metropolitans Detroit's vast army of bowlers, more than 250,000 strong, will march to the foul line next week to bid for a share of a prize fund that will total close to \$5 million by next spring.

This vast army, once mainly composed of the male of the species, now boasts a record number of "mixed" leagues and they'll be bowling "round the clock" — especially in the suburban areas.

In the season just closed the Greater Detroit Bowling Assn. boasted a total of 3,088 leagues during the fall and winter season, with close to an additional 200 summer leagues.

At the same time the Detroit Woman's Bowling Assn., the largest city association in the country, listed 2,140 leagues.

COMBINED, they made metropolitan Detroit the most active bowling center, per capita, in the country.

Combined, too, they represented more than 6,000 leagues. With the constant clamor for prize money, the leagues now are allotting more to the prize fund each week and it now averages close to \$1,000 per league.

At this figure, the bowlers will be bidding for a share of a prize melon that could reach to more than \$6 million.

This opening is only part of the bowling story, however.

It is estimated that 40,000 bowling balls are sold in the area each season. At a cost of at least \$25 per ball, this amounts to another million dollars.

Then consider another factor. Each bowler purchases a bag with the ball and that's close to another \$1 million.

With more than 250,000 bowlers changing socks each week they last about a month at most. With an eight-month season this means that there'll be four million pairs of socks used at an average cost of 70 cents per pair, or another \$3 million.

THE biggest item, though, next to the bowling bag and ball, is the shirt program. It has been estimated that 80 per cent of the league bowlers are on sponsored teams and each of them wears a shirt bearing the sponsor's name.

If that figure is accurate — and no one has challenged it through the years — then 20,000 bowlers are equipped with sponsor's shirts or dresses. At a low average cost of \$10 per garment, this adds another \$2 million into the economy of the area.

Putting it all together the opening of the bowling season next week will add close to \$11 million to the economy of the metropolitan Detroit area in the next year.

Golf Tourney Deadline Near

With the deadline for entries only three days away, Gary Whitener, pro at Livonia's Whispering Willows golf course, Monday issued a warning to all Livonia golfers, male and female, that drawings for the first annual city championship golf tournaments will be made over the weekend.

"We have more than 30 entries in each division, men and women," Whitener said. "But we are looking forward to an increase in the number of entries in the men's division and a total of near 100 for the men."

Each of the championship meets will be a medal play with full handicaps. The women's title will be over the 18-hole route and is scheduled for Friday, Sept. 11.

The play is open only to residents of the City of Livonia. Whitener, who will serve as tournament director, believes the men's meet will be one of the best staged in the area in some time. Melvin "Bud" Stevens, a longtime amateur star in Metropolitan Detroit who plays out of the Western Golf Club in Redford Township, plans to enter if possible.

Stevens, who recently qualified for the National Amateur, is a former state and district champion and resides in Livonia.

Kevin Sidley, the Stevenson High golfer who was medalist in the annual high school state championship tourney, is expected to enter as is Dave Waters, 1969 champion of the first Observerland tournament held at Whispering Willows last fall.

Whitener will check all entries Saturday morning and start the task of making the pairings and placing the golfers in the various flights.

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