

# Sports

Chris McCosky, Brad Emons editors/591-2312



Thursday, April 10, 1988 Q&E

(F10)



C.J. Risak

## Teach tots what's really important—first of all, sports

**S**O IT'S SPRING. New season. New life. Time for a new beginning. Which is what I'm contemplating. A change.

Nothing cosmetic, mind you. I'm not going to try and be nice to people, or smile more, or lend a sympathetic ear. People would just take it for sarcasm, anyway.

I'm talking career here. And I know exactly what I'll do, too. Write children's stories.

This isn't lunacy. This was well thought-out during a 10-day vacation in somewhat sunny Los Angeles, where men are sometimes men, women are usually blonde and always better athletically than I am, and the only belief shared by all sexes is: "He who dies with the most toys, wins."

Now I'm going to explain myself, so pay strict attention. The logic is there, but sometimes you've got to search a little hard for it.

**WE ARE** in the throes of a mini baby boom. I could bore you with meaningful statistics, but I won't. I know what I know, and I know that not since the early 1960s, when the last baby boom willed, have there been more young couples planning to raise a houseful of tax deductions.

That means a brand new surge of eager, young minds, all anxious to gobble up whatever reading material they can find on a computer disk. It's perfect. It's profitable. To say nothing of the potential.

These children will need someone to update the Dick-and-Jane-and-their-pet-dog-Spot books, so popular when I was a rug rat. Plots will have to be modernized with characters reflecting the changes, like Dick and Jane and their space robot Tobor. And I'm just the guy to do it.

Tell you why. First of all, despite an audience far more sophisticated than the one of 20 years ago, the style of writing still must be simple. You don't want to confuse the youngsters too early in life. Let the politicians do that a few years down the road.

So who's more qualified to write simply than a sportswriter? Heck, we have an unwritten rule about using words with more than three syllables ("Only in dire emergencies or if you mispronounced the word."). Can you see the connection? It would be the perfect step up for me.

**POINT NO. 2:** The subject matter we concern ourselves with supplies the perfect writing for just such a venture. Remember, a newspaper's sports staff is often referred to as the Toy Department.

True, the toys that fill the realms of copy we churn out are either for adults, those aspiring to be adults or those pretending to be adults. But toys are toys, so the adjustment from producing stories about baseball to writing about Gobots can't be too severe.

It might be a heckuva lot more interesting, too. Anyway, someone from the field of sports is the perfect choice for teaching the kids of tomorrow what's important. Care to argue? Check out the front page stories of Monday's daily newspapers.

Both have stories about Libya's possible ties to recent terrorist activities, but right there with them is a story on a crooked home plate at Tiger Stadium on the day of the baseball opener and the Red Wings winning the finale in their worst season ever.

Both also carried special sections to commemorate the opening of the baseball season. End of argument.

**POINT NO. 3:** What's important. It took a trip to California for me to realize it.

Out there, guys who can't afford dinner or long pants drive around in \$30,000 Porsches. Not just a lucky few, either. There are more cars of that caliber out there than hot chicks.

What perspective! The only news out of the Middle East that gets their attention is falling fuel prices, which gives them the chance to cruise even more.

Toys are everything in California. How else could one state host so many major professional sports teams — five in baseball, four each in basketball and football and even one in hockey, in a place where most of the ice is used for Margueritas.

The object is to teach toddlers what's vital, California-style. We can try to impress upon children that if Jane takes one of the three apples from the basket, two will be left.

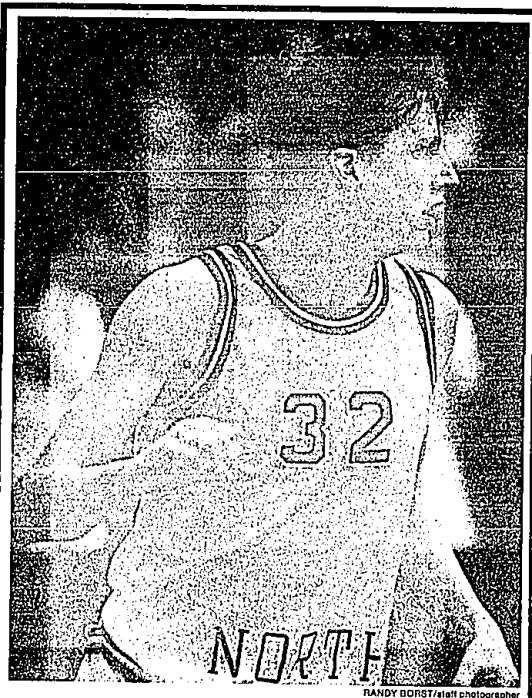
But I maintain that if you tell them a jump shot canned by Dick from outside the 20-foot arc counts three points instead of two, they'll learn a lot faster.

**NOT JUST** counting, either. These kids will learn about the thrill of victory and how to attain it. They'll learn about the agony of defeat and how to avoid it.

And they'll learn about the adult population's high regard for fun and games. Who wants to hear about a Libyan madman when the Tigers are on TV?

I'll do my Howard Cosellian-best to "tell it like it is" in my children's stories. But will come home and ask Dick how he did in his baseball game before sitting down in front of his television to watch a hockey game on cable while perusing the sports page.

There's a fortune to be made, to be sure. And when I're of writing children's stories, I'll take the next logical step. Such a simple style of prose would be perfect in writing a bowling column.



RANDY DORST/staff photographer

## Decisions, decisions

The national signing day for basketball recruits was yesterday, but North Farmington's Rick Anderson still hadn't made up his mind. The sure-shooting senior will definitely play in the Mid-American Conference. He has whittled the choices down to four: Eastern Michigan, Western Michigan, Kent State and Bowling Green. He is expected to decide early next week.

## Mikel quits North post

By Chris McCosky  
Staff writer

Denny Mikel dropped a bomb on his North Farmington softball team Tuesday.

Just three days prior to the start of the 1988 season, Mikel informed his troops that he was resigning as their coach.

"It's kind of a family-motivated thing," said Mikel, who has never had a losing season in four years with the Raiders. "I have three young kids, a wife who works full time and I was coaching three sports. It was just too hectic. Something had to go and it was softball."

Mikel said he will continue to coach the team until a successor is hired.

"I anticipated problems long before the season began," said Mikel, explaining why he made his decision so close to the start of the season.

"But you always like to think you can work things out. While I was away last week (he spent a week with his family in Indiana), I spent a lot of time with my family. I had the chance to really reassess the things I was doing."

"I KNOW this is a bad time. It would have been easier if I had made the decision earlier. But there really is no good time to make decisions like these. Just when you do make up your mind, you have to go for it."

Mikel stressed that he was not, in

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—Denny Mikel  
ex-North coach

any way, disappointed with his team or with the school administration.

"It was strictly a personal decision," he said. "It's never easy to give up something you love doing. But with the new league, we'd be playing three times a week. I wouldn't be getting home until 7 p.m. every night. It just wasn't fair to my family."

Mikel has daughters 16 and 7 and a 3-year-old son. His wife teaches full time.

Mikel said he plans to stay on as the assistant boys and girls basketball coach at North.

Athletic Director Ron Holland will post the job opening throughout the district. If in 10 days no one applies, the job will be offered outside the district.

## Observerland softball previewed on Page 2D

## tennis

### Frazier takes Easter Open

Rochester's Amy Frazier was the big winner at the Farmington Tennis Club's annual Easter Junior Tennis Open that concluded Sunday.

Eighty-five players from Michigan, Ohio and Ontario competed in three age levels — Boys and Girls 14, 16 and 18.

Frazier, the nation's No. 1 player in Girls 14s, won the Girls 18 title in straight sets over Northville's Bretta Johnson. Frazier did not lose a game throughout the entire tournament.

In Girls 16, Erub Coughland of Birmingham defeated Dayton's Michelle Geocke. Erin Elmhorn of West Bloomfield defeated Southfield's Michelle Harris in the Girls 14 division.

Jeff McKenzie of Livonia won the Boys 18 title nipping Plymouth's Jeff Hathaway in three sets. In Boys 16, Neil Denahan of Kalamazoo beat Steve Campbell of Detroit. Roger Seabrook defeated Jeff Westmeyer of Toledo for the Boys 14 title.

Rick Hallaver was the tournament director, Steve Hack the referee and Jim Kirwin the chief umpire.

## softball

### Mercy outslugs DC in opener

Suzanne Brown now has the highest winning percentage among active softball coaches — the first-year Farmington Hills Mercy coach is 1-0.

The Marlins outslugged Dearborn Divine Child Tuesday 15-14 in an eight-inning thriller.

Senior Terri Nalodka was the hero for Mercy. She ripped four hits, the last of which provided the margin of victory. In the top of the eighth, she rocketed a single to left-center field. When the ball shot past the left-center fielder, Nalodka circled the bases.

**NALODKA DIDN'T** fare as well on the mound, pitching the first six innings and yielding 13 of the 14 DC runs. Amy Edwards worked the final two innings to post the win.

Molly McWood had three hits and Missy McKenna two for the Marlins.

Jean Wassenberg hit what would have been a grand slam home run, except that a Marlin baserunner's helmet flew off, costing the team an out and two runs. Wassenberg was awarded a double.

Michelle Fryatt scored four of the team's 15 runs.

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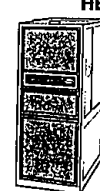
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