



PITCHER JOE SPARMA

Shows his worth in pennant clincher

By George Maskin

There is such a thing as justice in this world. Just ask Connie and Joe Sparma who reside in the Six Mile-Merriman Road area of Livonia. Joe's profession is that of a pitcher for the Detroit Tigers, although there were many weeks when many, including maybe Joe himself, were asking: "Is Sparma a pitcher?"

He had started the season as one of the Tigers' Big Four with Denny McLain, Mickey Lolich and Earl Wilson.

But something went wrong along the way... for Joe. He couldn't win and he wasn't pitching well.

FINALLY AFTER a game in Cleveland he spotted off. He told Sports Editor Joe Falls of the Free Press that he

couldn't pitch for Mayo Smith, who happens to be the Tiger manager.

Almost from that day on, Sparma didn't pitch for the Tigers -- at least, not very much.

On Sept. 2 he worked a game in Oakland, and he failed to finish. In the two weeks that followed, Sparma had become the forgotten Tiger pitcher. The fact is, the way McLain, Wilson and Lolich were working, along with John Hiller, so had just about every other Tiger pitcher.

Whoever started, finished. THEN CAME Tuesday of this past week. Sparma let his Livonia home expecting to just sit out in the bullpen and watch the Tigers clinch the pennant without making a contribution.

It was Earl Wilson's turn to pitch the clincher. Wilson emerged from the dugout some 18 minutes ahead of the game and started to warm up.

Suddenly, he stopped. He walked back to the dugout and told Smith to get somebody to pitch... that his arm and shoulder were sore.

Smith looked around and there was Sparma... Buckeye Joe from Ohio State, perhaps the biggest disappointment of all Tigers in their drive to their first flag in 23 years.

Sparma leaped from the dugout, threw a few warmup pitches and went to work against the New York Yankees.

HE STARTED poorly and you could hear rumbles that this was "a typical Sparma" effort.

But after the second inning, it was a brilliant Sparma who curbed the Yankees without a run until two were out in the ninth and it was Sparma who became the winning pitcher when Don Wert knocked in Al Kaline with the winning run with two out in the bottom of the ninth.

Sparma's a big boy... in his mid '20's... but at that instant the Tigers won it all, he broke into tears. He couldn't control himself.

Those around in the mob scene, in the Tiger celebration that followed in the clubhouse, understood.

Sparma on this night had proved to baseball, to his manager and his teammates, to his beautiful wife, Connie... and mostly to himself that he still was the excellent pitcher the Tigers long have felt he was.

IN THE MATTER of a little over two hours, he "had come back" and maybe as Pete Waldmire wrote in the News, "a new life had started for Joe."

The victory gave Joe a 9-10 record for the season as he thoroughly enjoyed the champagne that sprayed freely through the Tiger clubhouse.

When it was over, Sparma talked about all the trouble he's had this year and "how much pain it had caused his wife and family."

"It was beautiful, not for me, but for Connie (Mrs. Sparma)," he declared. "She sure put up with an awful lot from me."

To add justice to the Sparma pitching performance, it was Joe who knocked in the first Detroit run and for a while it appeared that his hit would be the decisive one in the game, along with his arm.

SO, NOW the Tigers are the American League champs... and the rest of the season comes academic, including McLain's bid to add to his victory total which hit 30 in such dramatic fashion last Saturday.

The season has another week to go... a game in Washington Sunday... three at Tiger Stadium beginning Friday night.

A week from Monday the Tigers take off for St. Louis and their crack at the Cardinals in the World Series.

Preps To Launch Drives For Football Crowns

The preliminaries are over! Now comes the start of the drive for league title honors for Overland public high school football teams.

Parochial teams wanted no time jumping into conference action. Our Lady of Sorrows and St. Agatha both lost their opening a week ago.

Sorrows was booked at St. Rita Saturday night while St. Agatha meets Spassanti St. Johns at Redford Union Sunday afternoon.

The area's third Parish school, Bishop Borgess, was to make its debut in the Catholic League First Division-West Saturday against defending champion Cabrin.

SCHEDULE-makers couldn't have matched two more perfect opponents for a head-on collision in the Northwest Suburban League.

It'll be defending co-champs Franklin and Glenn against each other Friday night at Glenn.

Both made auspicious starts last weekend and figure to be major contenders, along with Thurston, for the crown this season.

Thurston will open loop action Friday afternoon at Oak Park. Game time will be 3 p.m.

North Farmington will wait until Saturday to face Groves at North Farmington at 2 p.m.

Report Plentiful Panfish

The Michigan Department of Conservation reports that perfect fall weather is bringing out crowds of sightseers and picnickers.

Activity at the trap and rifle ranges continues to be heavy on weekends and is increasing during the week, especially in the evening.

Perch and panfish are being taken one half mile off Grover Point, the mouth of the Middle Channel and Strawberry Channel. Worms and minnows were equally effective.

Excellent catches of large bluegills were taken from Union Lake. A few perch and bluegills were taken on the Stringy Lakes. Oxbow Lake has produced some nice catches of bluegills and a few were taken on Stony Creek Lake.

Bass fishing remains fair, using spinning tackle and artificial lures. Occasional bass are taken on the Detroit River around Sugar Island and Grosse Isle, Stony Creek Lake, Lake St. Clair and Lake Orion, in the late evening.

Pike fishing has slowed down according to the department. However, a few are still being taken on Stony Creek Lake, Lake St. Clair. A few nice walleyes are still being caught on Lake St. Clair although they are spotty and difficult to locate.

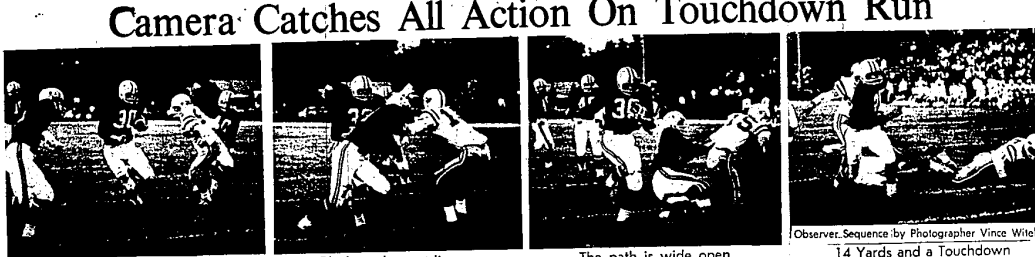
Honors In Bestball

Dr. Roy Smith, who practices in Farmington, and Paul Haase, 20, of Detroit, tied a two-day bestball score of 86-88-134 to win the Salem Hills third amateur tournament.

Jim Lobbestael, of Plymouth, and Ray Hartner, of Northville, took second with 70-72-142 while Gary Robinson, of Plymouth, and Bob Horste, of Belleville, tallied 73-76-149.

In the first flight Livonians Chuck English and George Dawson shot 78-80-158 while Ron Hawkins, of Plymouth, played with Harry Hawkins, of Detroit, to post an identical score.

In the second flight, R.L. Pardum, of Plymouth, played with Jim Schell, of Battle Creek, and counted 80-79-159.



Tim Malone Hits Tackle

Blocker takes out lineman

The path is wide open

14 Yards and a Touchdown

Little Wert Almost Brings Down Stadium

Little Don Wert, one of the tinniest of the Tigers, caused the greatest mob scene in the long history of baseball in Detroit Tuesday night when his single sent Al Kaline home with the run that gave the Tigers their first pennant in 23 years.

At the precise moment Kaline crossed the plate close to 50,000 fans, leaped the barriers and stormed the Tiger dugout trying to get to the players before they headed into the tunnel toward the dressing room.

From leftfield, from center, from right and from the far reaches of the reserved sections they came, thousands of them, to rival the famed mob scene from Shakespeare's Othello.

Little did they know that the Tigers had clinched the pennant a few moments before Kaline scored, as the news of Boston's victory over Baltimore was kept from them until the Tiger game ended.

THE SCOREBOARD carried no word of the Boston-Baltimore game after the eighth inning and as one Tiger official put it, "They might have broken up the game here had they known it. So, we didn't take a chance."

Guards at the dugout managed to get all of the Tigers into the tunnel in safety -- but after that no attempt was made to hold back the celebrators.

Tiger officials did try to curb them by turning off the lights -- to no avail. They paraded up and down the playing field, shouting such things as: "We want the Tigers."

"Bring on the Cards, We'll claw 'em."

"Deal us the Cards."

IT WAS A NEVER to be forgotten spectacle as some

of the younger fans climbed up the screening behind home plate and got as high as the press box.

Amazing as it was, it was far different to one who was telling along the river of printers' ink back in 1934 when

Mickey (Black Mike) Cochrane piloted the team to its first pennant in 25 years.

In those days night baseball

was considered a wild promotional dream. The game was played in the daytime. It was during the day that the Tigers clinched the pennant.

Detroit is a far different place today than then. We were a more or less isolated group and there were no multiple ribbons of concrete expressways to take us to the outlying districts.

As a result most of the fans were right there -- and the celebration -- parades, fireworks, ringing of church bells, and the like, was confined to the area within the city limits.

Trumbull -- the length of the stadium.

What's more, the celebrators, or many of them, wanted some sort of a memento of the occasion other than a scorecard so they ripped up the infield grass and left with rolls of it under their arms. They dug up the pitchers mound and home plate -- and even the plates in the bull pen.

The Tiger officials said nothing. It was taken in the spirit of good fun.

THE TIGERS LONG will remember the night -- and they'll never forget the look of the field the morning after.

They'll always have mental pictures of the big night -- and many of the fans will have new sections of their lawns as a reminder of the 1968 victory.

It was a night to remember. So, bring on the Cards, the fans are in fine fettle to provide an encore.

RU Boosts Streak In Runs

Redford Union High's cross country team made it four straight in dual meets by nipping North Farmington, 27-29, Tuesday.

Rick Randall of North Farmington was the individual winner as he bested out Dennis Keeney by a couple strides in 10:40.

Paul Hebel of North Farmington was third, followed by Bill Kuhn, Bob Junk and Doug Wajda of Redford Union.

Then came three NF runners -- Tom Hebel, Bill Kouris and Mary Mackinn. Craig LeRoux of RU was tenth.

Earlier RU won over Thurston, 19-42, with Keeney the individual winner in the time of 10:47.

In a triangular meet, RU tied with Farmington, each with 34 points, while Franklin had 67. Gary and Larry Williams of Farmington ran one-two in the individual action.



Red Wings Set Benefit Game At New Rink

The Detroit Red Wings are coming to Livonia.

They'll play an exhibition hockey game against their top farm team, the Fort Worth Wings, at 8 p.m. Monday, Sept. 30, at the new Ford Field Arena, Lyndon and Stark Roads.

The Livonia City Council has unanimously voted Wednesday to grant permission for the contest with an admission price of \$3 per person. Profits will go into the Parks and Recreation Department's fund for purchase of equipment for youngsters participating in junior league hockey.

John Dufour, director of the Parks and Recreation Department, said: "The game promises to be a good one as the Red Wings will not yet have made player cuts and all will be trying to impress their new coach, Bill Gadsby."

Joining the DPR in sponsoring the event is the Livonia Hockey Association which is actively involved in junior hockey. The group's program which started last week, is open to all Livonia boys seven to 18 years of age.

Game arrangements were made through the Livonia Hockey Association and the Red Wing Alumni Association.

The public is invited. Tickets are on sale at the booth in the Livonia Mall, at the Ford Field Arena; the Wonderland Shopping Center; and the Parks and Recreation office. Tickets will also be sold at the door, but no tickets are on a first come first served basis with no reserved seats.

Bennington was coaching at St. Louis U. when he spotted Niemann in high school in St. Louis. A little conversation... Niemann enrolled with the Billkins. But he never played under Bennington there. By the time Niemann reached the varsity, Bennington had switched to Michigan State.

The two, however, were together last fall when Bennington picked Niemann to play center on the United States team which played and won in the World University Games in Tokyo.

Niemann has wasted little time impressing Pistons coach Donnie Butler at Marysville.

NEMANN IS ONE of three center candidates bidding for the starting job on the Pistons. The other two are Jimmy Fox, whom the Pistons obtained from Cincinnati last January, and No. 1 draft pick Otis Moore from Pan American University.

Pistons See Niemann As Star Of Future

If size... if brains... if they all mean anything, the Detroit Pistons have plucked themselves a potential stand-out in center Rich Niemann of St. Louis University.

Niemann, the Pistons' fourth pick in last May's college draft, has brought some imposing credentials with him into the Pistons' training camp at Marysville High School.

For example: Niemann stands an even seven feet and is the tallest man the Pistons have drafted in several years... He scales 245 pounds... and besides winning All-Star acclaim for his work on the basketball floor, he was named on the All-American Academic basketball team at the close of the 1967-68 season.

NEMANN ORIGINALLY went to St. Louis U. thanks a great deal to the efforts of John Bennington, now head basketball coach at Michigan State.



Crestwood Dodge, Inc. 421-6700 Ford Road at Livonia



TRAVEL TRAILERS AND FOLDUP CAMPING TRAILERS We Service What We Sell Call 626-5001 KNIGHT RENTAL & SALES 3125 Hawthorne Hwy. St. Clairsville, Ohio 43085

Grid Games

SUNDAY
Chicago Bears at Detroit Lions, 1:15 p.m. (WJR)
St. John vs. St. Agatha at Redford Union, 2:30 p.m.
Churchill at Brighton 4, 3 p.m.

FRIDAY
Redford Union at Allen Park, 8 p.m.
Clareville at Clarkston, 8 p.m.
Bentley at Belleville, 8 p.m.
Farmington at Southfield, 8 p.m.
Sevenson at Pontiac Northern, 8 p.m.
Plymouth at Trenton, 8 p.m.
Franklin at John Glenn, 8 p.m.

SATURDAY
Thurston at Oak Park, 3 p.m.
Groves at North Farmington, 2 p.m.
Michigan at Duke, 2 p.m. (WJR)
Baylor at Michigan State, 1:30 p.m.
Purdue at Notre Dame

BUY OF THE YEAR WHILE THEY LAST

19 Ft. Fully Self-Contained - Many Extras - Sleeps Six



2 - 30 Lb. Gas Bottles - Auto. Regulators
4 Cu. Ft. DOMETIC Gas-Electric Refrigerator

Rental Units from
TIMBER SHORES TRAVEL TRAILER RESORT

Used 10 weeks this summer within park
Like New - 1968 Titles Available

Inspect at Max Bowen residence (rear)
30885 W. Six Mile Rd., 1/4 mile east of Merriman Rd. (across from St. Matthew Church)

OR
see and purchase from --

Crawford Trailer Sales
7667 S. Telegraph Rd., Taylor
Phone 291-4410

The Tiger Schedule

Sunday - At Washington, 1:30 p.m. (WJR)
Monday - At Baltimore, 8 p.m. (WJR)
Tuesday - At Baltimore, 8 p.m. (WJR)
Wednesday - At Baltimore, 8 p.m. (WJR)
Friday - Washington at Tiger Stadium, 8 p.m. (WJR)
Saturday - Washington at Tiger Stadium, 2:15 p.m. (Channel 2 and WJR)
Sunday - Washington at Tiger Stadium, 1:30 p.m. (WJR)
WORLD SERIES SCHEDULE
Oct. 2 - Detroit at St. Louis, 2 p.m.
Oct. 3 - Detroit at St. Louis, 2 p.m.
Oct. 4 - St. Louis at Detroit, 1 p.m.
Oct. 5 - St. Louis at Detroit, 1 p.m. (If Necessary)
Oct. 6 - St. Louis at Detroit, 1 p.m.
Oct. 7 - St. Louis at Detroit, 1 p.m.
Oct. 8 - Detroit at St. Louis, 2 p.m.
Oct. 9 - Detroit at St. Louis, 2 p.m.
Oct. 10 - Detroit at St. Louis, 2 p.m.
(All Games will be carried on Channels 2 and 4 (WJR and WJJ Radio))