

King of softball to visit

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Eddie Felgner is as much showman as he is softball pitcher. On both counts, he's pretty amazing and quite successful.

Felgner has combined the two into one of the greatest shows in sports entertainment, and area fans can see his act on Friday, Sept. 8, at Canton Softball Center.

The King and His Court, as Felgner's world-famous four-man team is known, will play Pat Boyle Chevrolet, the Livonia modified fast-pitch champion, at 7:30 p.m.

It will be the second meeting in four years Boyle Chevrolet, playing under the FGS Radlator name, was on the losing end of a 7-6 score in 1986.



The King and His Court consists of (left to right) Eddie Felgner, shortstop and relief pitcher Craig Van Prooyan, first baseman Gary West and catcher Dave Booth.

"It's a tremendous opportunity to play against a guy who has struck out some of the greatest names in baseball," Boyle Chevrolet's Dave Brubaker said.

"I'M PLANNING to have a good time, because (Felgner) is quite a clown around. He's into having fun, and he puts on quite a show. It's not every day you brush elbows with a legend."

Proceeds from the game will benefit the Caring Athletes Team for Children's and Henry Ford Hospitals. Charity is always a key part of the Felgner program, and he estimates his team has helped raised \$4.5 million over the years.

But that wouldn't be possible without the show, the love of which has kept the 65-year-old Felgner going for 44 years. His longevity is virtually unequalled in sports, and his travels have taken him to six continents and nearly 100 countries.

"I'm interested in doing the show as long as the crowds continue to enjoy it," said Felgner via the telephone from Boston. "When you're a ham, you feed off the show and keep enjoying it."

Felgner and his crew began the current season in March with a stop in Hawaii. Along the way, they played 15 games in Korea against the U.S. Army and gave a demonstration on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier in the Pacific.

"You could play a game up there all right — as long right field is a ground-rule double," Felgner said. Being a ham is part of the show,

though Felgner calls it horse play. During a game, he'll pitch behind his back, through his legs and from second base. It's never to embarrass the opponent, Felgner adds, and it's an expected part of the act by now.

FELGNER will pitch to a couple of Boyle Chevrolet batters while blindfolded, too. He does that every game. It's something he started in the 1940s when he was looking for a gimmick.

"It's not dangerous — if you don't mind being hit with a line drive now and then," said Felgner, who was hit in the eye white doing that in 1984.

Felgner believes most sports events are too serious. In fact, he thinks there ought to be more comedy in sports.

"(The fans) would like to see that in regular games," he said. "Baseball and football have become so austere if a guy does any showing off they call him a hot dog."

While Felgner is the King, the court includes catcher Dave Booth, a former body builder and aspiring TV actor and stunt man, first baseman Gary West, the team comedian who lost his left eye to cancer three years ago, and shortstop/relief pitcher Craig Van Prooyan.

softball

said. "It's two different games. If they played fast-pitch softball, they'd hit me just like they would a baseball. It makes good copy, but it doesn't mean anything."

Felgner came of age at a time when softball was the popular sport, not baseball. The sport should have gone pro, he said, but the advent of television was a factor in it never doing so.

"I PLAYED baseball on Sunday like anybody else who grew up in the '40s and '50s," Felgner said, adding softball was the game of choice during the week.

"Baseball was not the desirable thing to do, because I didn't pay any money. (Softball) started to die out after the war. After dinner, people went out and played softball. When TV came along, they had something else to do."

Felgner enjoys his work but likes a chance to get away from it, too. "I enjoy striking out the last hitter and going golfing," he said. "I enjoy it like you enjoy your job."

But, like most working people, he thrives on the idea of working and staying active. Retirement and an end to his barnstorming missions is not in Felgner's plans.

"Why should I give it up?" he said. "That's one of the dumbest things we do in America. People have the idea it's a panacea to work 40 or 50 years and retire."

"Fishing and golfing all day is not the way to do it. The important thing is to keep going when you're older."

THE BOYLE Chevrolet roster Felgner will face includes pitcher Curtis Richards, Rick and Don Dreher, Keith McManaway, Jeff Campbell, Dan Pierce, Scott Collins, Jim Stoltsland, Curt White, Kevin Dill, Mike Kessin and Tim Bowden.

Tickets for the game are \$1 for adults, \$2 for students and \$4 for a family package (two adults, two children) at the gate, the cost will be \$5, \$3 and \$12, respectively.

Complimentary tickets are available at Boyle Chevrolet, 9700 Bellevue Road, Belleville. The phone number is 697-6700. Call 422-1391 for more ticket information.

Hoffman shines for Detroit club in hoop tourney

Detroit finished third in the International Invitational Maccabi Games held recently in Pittsburgh.

The Detroit team, composed mainly of players from The Observer & Eccentric coverage area, played six basketball games in three days. Detroit went 4-2 in the nine-team tourney, defeating a team from Chicago, 85-75, to wrap up the bronze medal.

"We've become very competitive over the past four years," said Detroit coach Burt Hurshe, a Brighton resident who previously coached in both the Birmingham and Southfield school systems. "I thought it was great competition. . . four of the teams were very competitive."

Detroit opened the tourney with a 68-43 victory over Toronto as Scott Zacko (West Bloomfield) and Joe Hurshe (Brighton) combined for 26 points. In its next game, Detroit routed Cleveland, 83-40. Vaughn Swartz (Ann Arbor Huron) scored a team-high 20 points. Hurshe added 14 and Adam Shapiro (Bloomfield Hills Andover) scored 10.

Detroit suffered its first loss in the next game against New Jersey, the eventual gold medalists. Despite a flurry of four consecutive 3-point shots by Hurshe in the third quarter, Detroit fell, 79-71. Swartz scored 13 points and Matt Hoffman (North Farmington) scored 10.

THE DETROIT team got back on track in its fourth game against the host Pittsburgh squad, winning 78-52 to wrap up a spot in the medal round. Hurshe, for the second straight game, was the leading team scorer with 18 points. Hoffman scored 13 points and Jeff Rosenberg (Bloomfield Hills Andover) totaled 13.

In its first medal-round game, Miami topped Detroit by two points, 64-62. Detroit trailed by five points with seven seconds left, but Hurshe hit a 3-point shot to cut the margin to two. The Detroit squad then forced a turnover, but missed a 3-point attempt at the buzzer.

"We had a halftime lead and a lead in the third quarter," said Hurshe. "But we seemed to lose a little intensity. It was an incredible game."

Zack and Hurshe led Detroit in scoring against Miami with 21 and 17 points, respectively.

Detroit had a very balanced attack in earning its bronze medal against Chicago. Swartz and Rosenberg each scored 18 points, followed by Zack (15), Hurshe (13), Hoffman (9) and Shapiro (8).

"That was our best game of the tournament," said Hurshe. "It was a very well-played game. We got up by 17 points, but they came back to within five points and we managed to hang on."

Dave Bellenson (West Bloomfield), Greg Olshansky (Bloomfield Hills Andover), John Rosenbaum (Southfield Lathrup), Matt Frankel (Birmingham Seaholm), Brian Winchell (West Bloomfield) and Darren Rosenberg (Bloomfield Hills Andover) were other team members. Doug Hoffman was an assistant coach.

The Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield will host the 1990 games, slated to begin Aug. 19.

SOCCER TRYOUTS

The Michigan State Youth Soccer Association will conduct open tryouts in all age groups for its 1990 girls Olympic Development Program on Fridays, Sept. 8, 15 and 22, at Bicentennial Park in Livonia from 5:30 to 8 p.m. each date. The age groups trying out will be under-14 (1976-77), under-16 (1974-75) and under-18 (1972-73).

All players in the state of Michigan are eligible to try out for this program. The fee for on-site registration is \$50. Players must bring water, a soccer ball, shin guards and two head-shot photos. For information call Kathy Coyne at 522-0295.

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COACHES NEEDED

Farmington Hills Mercy is looking for a freshman basketball coach and an assistant softball coach. Applicants should send a resume to Suzanne Brown, athletic director, 29300 Eleven Mile, Farmington Hills, 48018, or call her at 476-2836.

Walled Lake Consolidated Schools has coaching vacancies in the following areas: skiing (Central), boys swimming (Western), diving (Central and Western), JV boys soccer (Western) and gymnastics (Central). Candidates should send their resumes to Robert Atkins, director of athletics, 615 N. Pontiac Trail, Walled Lake, 48088, or call 624-6504 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

SOFTBALL TOURNEY

Men's and ladies softball teams are invited to participate in the 15th Annual Allen Park Labor Day Softball Tournament. The double-elimination event will take place Sept. 2-4. The entry fee is \$65 plus \$10 per game for umpires. Team and individual awards will be given. Team reps should contact Rick Sparks at 875-3219.

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Labor Day Hours: Monday, Sept. 4th 9-5 (Unless prohibited by law)