

Making a splash!

Local sports magazine launches 'tasteful' swimsuit edition

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Question: How does a struggling magazine make a splash with Detroit area sports fans?

Answer: Publish a swimsuit edition.

Sport Detroit, a Birmingham-based magazine, will take its imitation of Sports Illustrated one more step next month when it comes out with a 10-page swimsuit edition. "It's just a little something to

brighten up the season," explained publisher Michael Stein, a lawyer and entrepreneur who mixed business and pleasure when he began the magazine in 1987.

Stein spends a lot of time in Florida as president and owner of Heidi's Salons, with 10 beauty parlors in Michigan and 38 nationally.

But when he was growing up in Oak Park, Stein was a typical Detroit sports nut, playing some sports, but living and dying with the Tigers, Lions, the University of Michigan

and Michigan State University, he said.

IT WAS EASY to follow his Detroit teams when he attended Michigan State University (class of '72) and Georgetown Law School (class of '75). But it was very difficult when he attended the London School of Economics (class of '76).

"That was when Mark 'the Bird' Fidrych was doing so well with the Tigers. I simply couldn't get enough news."

Haunted by that experience and willing to bet other information-starved Detroit sports fans offered a business opportunity, Stein turned to publishing.

The initial magazine was a tabloid mixing professional, college and participatory sports such as scuba diving and Michigan triathletes.

It was also a bust.

The format, but not the magazine, was scrapped after five issues.

In April 1988, Sport Detroit republished, this time with a distinctive Sports Illustrated format — glossy,

multi-colored pages, eye-catching photos and a snappy layout.

It had a heavy emphasis on pro and college sports, with a few off-beat stories. Besides the swimsuit edition, for example, the March issue includes a story about Eric Lindros, a 16-year-old hockey player who lives in Farmington.

THE FEBRUARY issue features a cover story on Red Wing Jimmy Carson as well as a short update feature on "Shoes" Huffman, a substitute on MSU's 1978-79 national championship basketball team who founded and is now president of the National Bureau of Credit in Dallas.

Besides a small cadre of staff writers, SD has featured a number of contributing writers, including well-knowns such as Tom Gage, baseball writer for The Detroit News, and Eli Zaret, sports reporter for WJBK-TV.

Stein offers no argument — or apology — to any who might criticize his publication as an imitation of Sports Illustrated.

"It's a very successful marketing

strategy." Circulation has increased from less than 3,000 to nearly 40,000 since SD became an imitation of SI, Stein said.

"Similar regional sports magazines are flourishing in Chicago and other metropolitan areas."

Most of SD's sales are from the newsstand. But a good percentage is subscription sales from out-of-staters, presumably die-hard Detroit fans with insatiable appetites for hometown sports news.

About 30 percent of its readers are women, Stein said.

STEIN DOESN'T pretend that his swimsuit edition is geared for the magazine's female readers, although he believes "many will enjoy it."

He sees it as a refreshing editorial break, much like a January thaw in the otherwise bleak Michigan winter.

Men will like it, Stein predicts. But so will women.

"Our swimsuit edition is more tasteful than Sports Illustrated's SI uses nationally known models in ex-

otic settings. We use all Michigan models with local settings."

Indeed, all 72 models who auditioned for the swimsuit edition earlier this month claim to have roots in the Detroit area, said Ed Rondina, who coordinated the SD swimsuit edition.

Rondina is a 1974 graduate of Eisenhower High School in Shelby Township who studied business administration at Oakland University for three years. He won numerous honors as a tennis player and has been an instructor at places such as the Rochester Hills Racquet Club, the Plum Hollow Country Club in Southfield and the Red Run Country Club in Royal Oak.

He joined Heidi's as a hair stylist and eventually became artistic director for the chain after working with advertising and marketing professionals.

Although he still styles hair at Heidi's in Bloomfield Hills, Rondina also oversees the salon's advertising in Vogue and other national magazines.



Publisher Michael Stein says swimsuit edition will boost Sports Detroit with both genders.

... posing at 'the Schvitz'

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

One might expect photos for a Detroit sports magazine to be shot at Tiger Stadium, the Silverdome, the Palace or in scenic settings such as a Lake Michigan or Detroit River shoreline.

Sport Detroit swim suit issue coordinator Ed Rondina ignored those seemingly logical choices, however, in favor of "the Schvitz," a 50-some-year-old bathhouse

The Schvitz Health Club, on the north side of Detroit, catered to a male Jewish clientele and was built in an art deco style in the 1930s.

It has since opened its doors to a broader segment of society and is now a trendy nightclub featuring co-ed Turkish steambaths — clothing optional — fine food and X-rated films, also optional.

Besides being distinctively Detroit, the Schvitz has a certain decadence that appealed to him, Rondina said.

Stein wins ruling

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Michael Stein, who grew up in Oak Park, has established himself as a lawyer, entrepreneur and publisher. But a ruling by the Florida Supreme Court last week reinforced his claim to an equally cherished title — parent.

That state's high court put some

sunshine in the lives of Michael and Hayat Stein by ruling they are the legal parents of Andrew Stein, the son Michael fathered with Patricia Foster, a surrogate mother from Monroe.

"I'm extremely happy about the decision," Stein said last week from the Birmingham offices of Sport De-

troit.

Please turn to Page 11

"I liked the contrast between the chipped, decaying marble and our fresh models."

AT LEAST one of the models agreed. Rebecca King, a 1983 graduate of Lincoln Park High School, said she felt "like a mobster's girlfriend" when she posed in an old-fashioned swimsuit.

Part of her professional background, King said, was a bit part as a mobster's girlfriend in the pilot episode of Miami Vice.

Rondina insists he was striving for a sophisticated, artsy effect in the swimsuit edition.

"We didn't want breasts spilling out of a swimsuit. We wanted suggested sensuality."

Asked to distinguish between "suggested sensuality" and soft pornography, Rondina equivocated. The difference is in the eye of the beholder, he said. "But it's there."

Stephanie Stavros said she was appealing to the viewer's sense of artistry when she modeled a "body glove" bikini.

"I would never do T&A," said



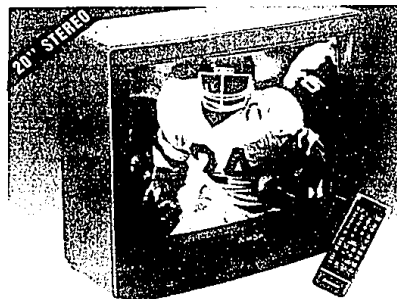
Model Stephanie Stavros, who attended school in Farmington Hills, says swimsuits and poses are tasteful. Stavros, a 1985 graduate of Mercey High School in Farmington Hills.

Please turn to Page 11

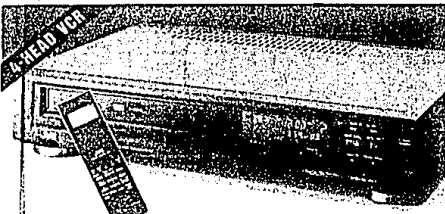
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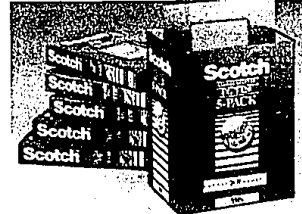
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