

Sports

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No slowing down for Senior Olympian

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Wilfrid Sproule entertains no visions of grandeur about competing in the National Senior Sports Classic III this week in Syracuse, N.Y.

The Farmington Hills man, a self-described recreational runner who will be 67 later this year, doesn't expect to win the 800-meter run when his event is called Tuesday.

But that isn't necessary for Sproule, who took up running for its health benefits two decades ago, to consider himself and the mission a success.

Maintaining a workout schedule that would challenge any younger man, he will be content to chase his personal goal, racing against the clock as much as the competition.

"There's a dedication to all of this, and you feel good for it," Sproule

said. "There will always be somebody that is better. But for my age and all, I'm going to say I'm an accomplished runner."

SPOULE IS making his first visit to the national event, also known as the Senior Olympics, and will be among 5,200 athletes age 55 and older competing in 18 sports ranging from badminton to the triathlon.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime thing for me, I think," Sproule said.

"Whether I get another invitation remains to be seen.

"But I still hope to be running five and 10 years from now. My knees are good, and I don't have any joint pain — just sensitive heels and that should go away."

Sproule, who retired 11 years ago as a supervisor in the graphic arts department at General Motors, went from being a jogger to racing com-

running

petitively in distance runs.

He entered the Michigan Senior Olympics in 1988 after reading about the event in the Farmington Observer and won the 1,500-meter race that year.

But a heel spur in his left foot forced him to shorten his racing distance last year, and he took up the 800-meter run (two laps around the track) as an alternative.

THE 800 IS "not a specialty," Sproule said. "I'm not a sprinter. I've always been a jogger. When I got into training (for it), I had to change my regimen because you're going to a much longer stride. I had

some aching muscles for a while."

Sproule ran a personal record of 3:19 Thursday in his last 800-meter training session before leaving Friday for the open ceremonies and competing Tuesday.

The winning time for the men's 65-69 age group at Michigan Senior Olympics last year was 3:10.98, and 2:34.8 was the top time at the last national meet in 1989.

Sproule knows he can't come close to matching the latter — yet — and that's one reason he's focusing on self-improvement and a more realistic goal.

"In shooting for 3:10, which would be great for me, but I have no illusions," he said. "I figure I'd have to run 2:45 to come close to earning a medal. But I'll find out when I run. I don't have the necessary genes, let's say, to be a serious racer. You can see by the times, there some are

very good runners. But I'm going there to improve my own PR.

"Being realistic, with my training and ability, that's my goal. It's not to seek a medal. There will be elite runners from 46 states, potentially 144 if everyone in the age group comes."

SPOULE EARNED his trip to the nationals by finishing third in the Michigan Senior Olympics last year. However, there were only three contestants in his age group, and he was unimpressed by his 3:50 time.

"It was a fluke," he said. "There were only three of us in the age group. I'm not kidding anyone; I was fortunate there weren't any more there."

"But I was coming off the heel spur, too. I don't think I was running a mile a week."

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Wilfrid Sproule
Senior Olympic runner

NFWB plans title defense

By Brad Emons
staff writer

The fourth annual Bob Bird Memorial Baseball Invitational, featuring some of the top Mickey Mantle League-age (15-16 year-olds) teams from across the nation, should provide additional fireworks long after the Fourth of July holiday.

Admission is free for the 10-day tourney, which gets under way at four sites beginning Thursday. The tourney continues through Sunday culminating in the championship final, 1 p.m. at Westland John Glenn High featuring the teams with the top two records.

The field includes North Farmington-West Bloomfield, the defending champion, along with teams from Canada, Ohio and Maryland.

One of the favorites will be the host Westland Federation America team.

Coached by Jerry Pitcher, Westland America's 13-player roster is loaded with Overland standouts.

"Eventually we'll be a good team," Pitcher said. "We have a lot of talent. Some of the kids are struggling right now, but will come around later. Right now when we fall apart, we really fall apart. We're still sorting things out."

Westland America, members of the Little Caesars

Amateur Baseball League, is 10-4 overall and unbeaten in league play.

AMONG THE PLAYERS off to hot starts include pitcher/first baseman Scott Kapla of Redford Catholic Central High, second baseman Jeff Tapp of Wayne Memorial and left fielder Brett Walters of Redford CC.

Tapp has been a pleasant surprise since recovering from a broken leg he suffered over the winter.

Other area standouts include third baseman/pitcher Mark Rutherford (Livonia Churchill), pitcher/outfielder Marcus Sarnovsky (Churchill), utility infielder Greg Tamas (Westland John Glenn), catcher John Rash (Redford CC), pitcher Jason Wetmore (Wayne), and catcher Jason Zielinski (Lutheran High Westland).

Rounding out the Westland America roster is outfielder/first baseman Kevin Kern, a power threat from Millford High; catcher/pitcher Brian Hicks. Dearborn Heights Fairlane Christian; and pitcher Jason Temple of Woodhaven.

"Several kids pitched on the varsity, including Jason Wetmore who had a no-bitter (perfect game) against CC," said the Westland coach.

Pitcher hopes this Mickey Mantle-age group team will duplicate the feats of past national champions.

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SHARON LAMUEUX/staff photographer

Jason Farrell pitched the North Farmington-West Bloomfield team to an 18-7 victory over Windsor in Mickey Mantle play Thursday.

Cougars pace honor team

1991 ALL-OBSERVER
SOFTBALL SQUAD

FIRST TEAM
P — Tracy Thompson Garden City
P — Maureen Paulin Farm Mercy
P — Jenny Mayle Liv Franklin
P — Kelly Holmes Ply Canton
INF — Carolyn Shanks Garden City
INF — Kristal Maters Garden City
INF — Dawn Warner Liv Franklin
C — Karen Olack Liv Franklin
C — Kim Supron Liv Ladywood
OF — Kathleen Berrigan Farm Mercy
OF — Dana Botwick N Farmington
AL — Rhonda Saunders Clarenceville

COACH OF THE YEAR

Barry Patterson Garden City

SECOND TEAM

P — Jennifer Lydon N Farmington
P — Christy Pridgen Liv Westland
P — Kris Ford Canton
INF — Emily Gubins Salem
INF — Alison Drury Ladywood
INF — Carrie Hachway John Glenn
INF — Michelle Berchomier Thurston
INF — Kate Hetherington Farm Mercy
C — Eve Clark N Farmington
OF — Jenny Mayle Liv Franklin
OF — Gwendy Harper Garden City
OF — Andrea Crishton Liv Ladywood

HONORABLE MENTION

Garden City: Jennifer Lydon, Christy Pridgen, Kris Ford, Emily Gubins, Alison Drury, Carrie Hachway, Michelle Berchomier, Kate Hetherington, Eve Clark, Jenny Mayle, Gwendy Harper, Andrea Crishton.
Liv Westland: Christy Pridgen, Kris Ford, Emily Gubins, Alison Drury, Carrie Hachway, Michelle Berchomier, Kate Hetherington, Eve Clark, Jenny Mayle, Gwendy Harper, Andrea Crishton.
Canton: Kris Ford, Emily Gubins, Alison Drury, Carrie Hachway, Michelle Berchomier, Kate Hetherington, Eve Clark, Jenny Mayle, Gwendy Harper, Andrea Crishton.
Salem: Emily Gubins, Alison Drury, Carrie Hachway, Michelle Berchomier, Kate Hetherington, Eve Clark, Jenny Mayle, Gwendy Harper, Andrea Crishton.
Ladywood: Alison Drury, Carrie Hachway, Michelle Berchomier, Kate Hetherington, Eve Clark, Jenny Mayle, Gwendy Harper, Andrea Crishton.
John Glenn: Carrie Hachway, Michelle Berchomier, Kate Hetherington, Eve Clark, Jenny Mayle, Gwendy Harper, Andrea Crishton.
Thurston: Michelle Berchomier, Kate Hetherington, Eve Clark, Jenny Mayle, Gwendy Harper, Andrea Crishton.
Farm Mercy: Kate Hetherington, Eve Clark, Jenny Mayle, Gwendy Harper, Andrea Crishton.
N Farmington: Eve Clark, Jenny Mayle, Gwendy Harper, Andrea Crishton.
Liv Franklin: Jenny Mayle, Gwendy Harper, Andrea Crishton.
Garden City: Tracy Thompson, Maureen Paulin, Kristal Maters, Dawn Warner, Karen Olack, Kim Supron, Kathleen Berrigan, Dana Botwick, Rhonda Saunders.

By Steve Kowalski
and Brad Emons
staff writers

IN THE FUTURE, when Garden City softball coach Barry Patterson thinks back to 1991, it'll be satisfying for him to know he was Observers' Coach of the Year.

But even more gratifying for Patterson was the fact that this season he dealt with perhaps the most talented senior class he's had in five years as Garden City coach. The Cougars reached the finals of the Class A state tournament before losing to champion Waterford Kettering, and Patterson knows his senior class had much to do with that success.

"When they leave, I'll be a better person for having known them," said Patterson of his five seniors. "They're nice kids, a super group, the best senior class the school has ever had. They're community-oriented kids."

They also were team oriented and that's one of the reasons shortstop Carolyn Shanks, pitcher Tracy Thompson and first baseman Kristal Maters headline this season's All-Observers first team.

Patterson's teams have not suffered a losing season, and this year the Cougars finished the year at 44-3. Garden City won three major tournaments, along with its fifth-straight Northwest Suburban League crown under Patterson.

Garden City has won three district and two regional titles under Patterson, and in his first year as head coach (1987), the Cougars reached the Class A semifinal before losing. The future also looks promising with several players returning to the



Barry Patterson
Coach of Year

team next year, including Sherry Harper, who went 9-0 with an 0.57 earned run average. She beat state-ranked Jenison (2-0) and Lapeer West (2-1).

"The future is still bright," said Patterson, whose career record is 133-26. "We have some holes to fill, but we still feel confident."

Following is a profile of each player on the 1991 All-Observers first team:

FIRST TEAM

Tracy Thompson, pitcher, Garden City: Thompson, who plans to play softball and study to be a pharmacist at Ferris State, always had the right prescription for beating the opponent this spring. She was Patterson's go-to pitcher, finishing with a 15-3 record, 0.97 earned run average and 116 strikeouts in 123 innings pitched. Thompson, who carries a

all area
softball

3.7 grade point average, batted .323 with 34 RBI, 39 runs scored, four triples and six doubles.

"Tracy was the heart and soul of our team for the past two seasons," Patterson said. "She has a tremendous amount of composure and seemed to be the center of our team. Her drop ball and changeup made her tough to hit. She was a true leader by examples she set on the field."

Maureen Paulin, pitcher, Mercy: One of the area's top athletes, Paulin capped off a successful career by carrying Mercy to the Class A district title. Paulin struck out 140 batters in 172 1/3 innings on route to a 20-7 record. One of her most impressive games came in the regional semifinal where she allowed only three hits in a 3-2 loss to eventual state runner-up Garden City.

Paulin had a 1.67 ERA, and also contributed to the team's 1-148 average, 29 runs scored and 32 RBI. Paulin, who is headed to Madonna University on a volleyball scholarship, also played each infield position when not pitching.

"She's a main-man pitcher; not very fast, but very controlled," coach Suzanne Brown said. "I don't know how you can replace a person like her. We're Paulins come around once in a lifetime."

Jenny Mayle, pitcher, Franklin: As a junior, the 5-foot-11 senior led the Patriots to the state Class A title game before losing 3-0 to Jenison.

As one of the state's premier pitchers, Mayle finished with a 20-3 record and an earned run average less than 1.00. Her only losses occurred against the state-ranked clubs Class B Richmond (1-0),



Maureen Paulin
Mercy



Kathleen Berrigan
Mercy



Dana Botwick
N Farmington



Kelly Holmes
Canton



Tracy Thompson
Garden City



Jenny Mayle
Franklin



Kim Supron
Ladywood



Karen Olack
John Glenn



Carolyn Shanks
Garden City

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