

Winter Wonderland Is Opened For Livonians At New Rink

A winter wonderland throughout the year, regardless of weather conditions outside -- hot and humid, Indian summer, fall, spring and any other kind of temperatures.

That's the future for residents of Livonia with the opening of the new ice rink and arena at Ford Field on Farmington Road with the prospect of a second rink, on the south side of the city, opening before the end of the year.

There'll be something of interest to all avid ice skaters, regardless of age, with hockey for boys between the ages of seven and 17 as the major function.

For those who have ideas of becoming the new generation Sonja Heikari or Monte Robertson, there are figure skating classes and sessions listed for Friday.

For those who just like to get out and ice skate and spend hours on the rink, there'll be open sessions at various times

during the week and especially on the weekends.

For those who like to drop in and view a high school hockey game, there is a complete schedule of games on tap throughout the winter between many of the better parochial sextets.

And for the boys and teenagers, there is a complete hockey schedule with more than 600 participating in leagues that will have the attention of youngsters, their parents and relatives and those who just like to sit and watch the kids develop into hockey players.

MOST EMPHASIS at the moment is on the organization and formation of the hockey leagues which are to be made up of only sons of Livonia residents, according to Livonia Department of Parks and Recreation Supervisor John Dufour.

"We have appointed Jim Kokowicz, a former manager

and supervisor of the Detroit Parks and Recreation hockey program, to head up the hockey activities in Livonia," said Dufour.

"As a director of the Livonia Hockey Association, a former president of the Detroit Hockey Coaches and Managers Association, a coach and longtime enthusiast in junior hockey activities, we believe he is the one we need. In addition Jim is a resident of Livonia and has a couple of boys who are much interested in the program."

THE LMA will sponsor six leagues this year, ranging from the Mites for boys eight and under to the Juveniles, 18 and under.

The divisions are: Mites, eight and under; Spirits, under 10; Pee Wee, under 12; Bambam, under 14; Midget, under 16; and Juvenile, under 18.

As of Tuesday, registrations had crept past the 600 mark with more expected before the

final deadline on Nov. 1. For additional information about late registrations, parents and boys are requested to call LHA President Max Geiger at 261-8058.

Other officers are: Vice President Jack Baker, Secretary William Wiemer, and Treasurer Don Hillman.

Financing the leagues poses quite a problem but the association got off to a big start when the Detroit Red Wings faced one of their farm clubs in an exhibition and turned every penny of the proceeds over to the group. It totaled almost \$6,000 and will go a long way to enabling league officials to furnish game shirts for all players.

Pre-season training sessions and tryouts for all boys registering started more than two weeks ago under the supervision of Kokowicz assisted by George Gee, former Red Wing great who resides in Livonia, and a number of parents and

hockey buffs, many of who played in amateur and pro leagues.

GEORGE GEE, who HAS BEEN interested in amateur hockey in the area ever since his retirement, appears to get a big bang working with the kids. It doesn't make any difference to him whether they are teenagers with some experience or a youngster who has trouble standing up on skates, George gives all the same attention -- all feel like they're headed for the big leagues when he gets through.

Others who are working with the training and tryouts are: Paul Richmond, who will serve as referee-in-chief; Ed McDonald, Tom Shaw, Jim Kokowicz Jr., George Nordstrom, Pete Daniels, a former coach of the Junior Wings, Walt Faloskey, Paul Boudreau, Ron Short, Gordie Anderson, Glen Houk, Harry Daniels, Julian Karcocak, Tom Morrell and Murray Smith.

Many are former residents of Canada who were brought up on ice skates and will never lose their love for the game that was to them the national sport for so many years. They are trying to instill that same spirit into the youngsters of Livonia -- and they are succeeding.

Geiger, as president of the LHA, emphasizes that the leagues are for the youngsters of Livonia and that every boy on every team will be given an equal time on the ice in every game.

"We are emphasizing participation," he said. "This program is designed to get as many youngsters on the ice as possible.

"It doesn't make any difference if the boy is on skates for the first time and just learning how to handle a stick, he'll receive an opportunity to play. The leagues will be made up in divisions so that competition will be as even as possible.

"We do have plans for all-star teams and will have several games during the season for the players selected for those teams. This will not have any bearing on the regular league season. We emphasize that every boy on every team will play, regardless of whether he is the best or the poorest.

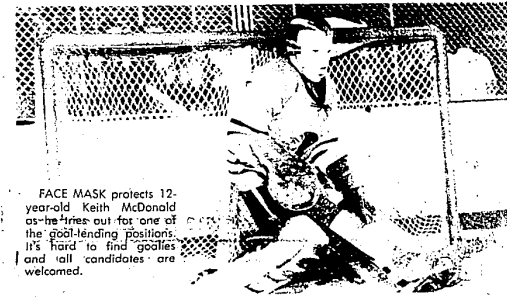


TINY TOTS will have their chance to test ice skates on the new rink. Chris Carney (left) and Jane Leslie (right) help a reluctant Curt Zilch in his swing around the ice.



GEORGE GEE, a former Detroit Red Wing star, devotes most of his spare time to working with youngsters in the new Livonia hockey program.

FACE MASK protects 12-year-old Keith McDonald as he fires out for one of the goal-tending positions. It's hard to find goalies and tall candidates are welcomed.



DONNING SKATES for a workout is Greg Johnson who is wearing all of the pads required of a hockey player.



FOR PUCK, just like the pros, are who is holding off Tom Cleary.



GLENN HAUK, a volunteer instructor, assists in giving youngsters tryouts for positions.

getting ready to demonstrate his stick handling and skating ability while others wait in line.

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