



**Tourney champs**

The 9-and-under Dodgers, a Pinta tournament team representing the South Farmington baseball organization, took first place July 20-21 at Millington. The Dodgers are (front row, left to right) Michael Masson, Nicholas Malzone, Ryan Walker, Nicholas Vandenberg, Johnny Harris, Evan Smith, (middle row) Conner Mohr, David Vandercok, Scott Bateman, Chris Zubly, Tommy Killen, Jimmy Dillard, (back row) coaches Jerry Dillard, Jeff Masson, Paul Zubly and John Bateman. Not pictured are players Alex Masson and Jacques Domplere.

**Reserve nips Bucks in shootout**

BY C.J. RISAK  
STAFF EDITOR

**SOCCER**

The scenario could not have been more perfect for the Mid-Michigan Bucks.

A strong ending to their regular season swept them into the Premier Development League soccer playoffs, although their first match was against the No. 1-ranked team in the PDL: the Des Moines Menace, and in Des Moines, Iowa, no less. But the Bucks rose to the challenge, utilizing a defense that had been missing all season to shut down the Menace, 3-1 last Friday.

That put the Bucks into the Western Conference final against the Boulder (Colo.) Rapid Reserve, who upset the best defensive team in the PDL, the Chicago Fire Reserve, 2-1 in Friday's conference semifinal in Des Moines.

Which meant for the Bucks to reach the PDL's national semifinals, they had to beat a team that, like themselves, finished second in their division. And there was more good news after that — not a single top seed survived the conference playoffs.

A PDL national championship was beckoning the Bucks, who had previously lost in the PDL finals once and in the semifinals twice.

But it was not to be. For the first time this season, the Bucks shut out their opponent, only to

see the Rapid Reserve do the same to them. Ninety minutes of regulation and 30 minutes of sudden-death overtime resolved nothing; indeed, it took nine penalty kicks before a first-ever emergency and it was the Rapid Reserve by a 7-6 margin.

The Bucks finish their season at 12-6-2, reaching the PDL's Final Eight for the fifth time in their seven-year history.

"It's the ultimate irony," said Buck's co-owner/general manager Jim Duggan. "We went 19 games without a shutout, probably our worst streak ever, and we finally get one and we lose."

Saturday's conference final pitted the Bucks' speed and quickness against the Rapid Reserve's greater size. For the first 10 minutes of the match, the Rapid Reserve seemed in control; the Bucks had the better of the play after that, although they had few good scoring chances.

"They were going to let us bring it up and then shut us down in the final third of the field," said Duggan. "We attacked. We were attacking the whole time."

In overtime, the Bucks had the better chance on Simon Oniekanda's 25-yard drive with just minutes left. But Rapid Reserve keeper Curtis Spitari made a huge save, deny-

ing the Bucks.

Mid-Michigan keeper Eric Pogue (from Troy Athens) and Spitari each had two saves in penalty kicks. Ryan Mack (Birmingham Seaholm), Pat Noonan and Adam Heinemann converted on the Bucks first three shots; Mychal Turpin missed on their fourth try, but Kellen Kalse hit on the fifth as the two teams matched each other's effort.

One of the biggest misses for Mid-Michigan came on the sixth PK, when Benji Djekeng's try was stopped by the goal post. Will Kletzien and John Swann converted the Bucks' next two tries before Phil Presser was stopped by Spitari to give Boulder the win.

The Bucks played both games without the services of player/coach Darjo Brosse, who was attending a family wedding — something Duggan knew could happen prior to the season. Still, having someone who played Major League Soccer a year ago in the lineup would have been a huge benefit.

Duggan, however, offered no such concession. "You never know," he said. "We played so well on Friday, and defensively we were phenomenal."

Wouldn't you know it — the defense was outstanding, but the offense came up a goal short.

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**Danger coach hopes people notice SupHer Bowl victory**

BY TIM SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

One year, one championship. Not a bad track record for the Detroit Danger, an expansion franchise in the National Women's Football League.

The Danger defeated the Massachusetts Mutiny, 48-30, to win the NWFL's first SupHer Bowl title game July 27.

But, even with an 18-point differential, the win wasn't a breeze, said head coach Tony Blankenship, whose team includes a number of players who live in the coverage area of the Observer-Eccentric Newspapers.

"They scored the last 13 points of the second quarter and came out again in the third and scored to make it 34-20," Blankenship said. "We fumbled and they scored again to cut our lead to four points. At that point, I was definitely nervous, because that 'M' word is huge in athletics."

But the star on offense and defense came through in the final quarter. Safety Angela Griffin batted down a pass on a fourth-and-5 play in Danger territory, enabling Detroit to stay in front.

Griffin earlier caught two touchdown passes for a combined 121 yards in the first

quarter as the Danger broke out to an early lead.

"We got the ball back and Heather Baughman (Wixom) scored on a 63-yard sweep to give us some breathing room," Blankenship added.

The touchdown enabled Baughman to rush for 150 yards.

Other top contributors to the victory included quarterback Kim Grodus of White Lake, who connected on 10 of 15 passes for 175 yards and Windsor native Misty Findlay, with two quarterback sacks.

Blankenship said the "SupHer Bowl" win was shared with a large contingent of fans from southeastern Michigan. Approximately 3,000 of the 5,200 in the stands at Pine-Richland High School Stadium made the trek to the Pittsburgh, Pa. suburb to support the Danger.

"It was a huge, huge showing of orange and teal (the Danger colors) in the stands," Blankenship said.

After the victory, the fans watched as players and coaches celebrated with the glass football-shaped trophy.

According to Blankenship, hopes are that the title will fuel even more interest in the team, which played home games this year at Wisner Stadium in

Pontiac.

That means more media coverage, ticket buyers and women athletes who might want to join the squad.

"I'm thinking it will bring more and more attention to the ladies," Blankenship said. "... This brings respectability, that they can play the sport and do it well."

The combination of raw athletic ability and dedicated effort enabled Blankenship to mold a winner out of women who, before this season, had "never played before in their lives. Yet they went out and dominated the league."

"You win a championship and you open up a lot of eyes," he added. "I hope people take notice."

Among the players listed on the Danger roster from Livonia are defensive ends Marey Tulik (5-11, 210) and Anneliese Kolan (5-7, 170), and tight end Erica DeSenz (6-0, 190). Westland mom Ginger Evans (5-4, 215) played nose tackle on defense.

Tulik is a student at Henry Ford Community College, while Kolan played organized football in Ohio. DeSenz, a team coordinator at Ford Motor Co., graduated from Dearborn High and Madonna University.

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**U-16 Wolves make early exit from tournament**

The under-16 Michigan Wolves, coached by Livonia's Dzek Wilford and Kevin Callaway, failed to make it out of pool play at the U.S. Youth Soccer Nationals held last week in Germantown, Md.

The Atlanta (Ga.) Fire defeated FC DeLeo Dynamo II (Downingtown, Pa.), 2-1, to claim the championship on Sunday.

In the opening round of play on July 24, the Wolves and Dynamo battled to a 1-1 draw. Jacob Peterson scored in

the 73rd minute for the Wolves, but Peter Sokoloski answered in the 80th minute for the Dynamo.

On Tuesday, Joshua Mahoney struck for the Wolves in the sixth minute, but the Fire came roaring back on goals by Tomasz Charowski (35th), Chris Davis (54th) and Cristian Duvall (76th) for a 3-1 triumph.

In a critical third-round match Friday and needing a

Sereno 86 Golden Eagles (Phoenix, Ariz.), 2-1, on goals by Kenzo Webster (76th minute) and Bill Weaver (78th) to erase a 3-0 deficit after a Jordan Demos goal (61st).

The Wolves feature area players Chris Austin, a goalkeeper from Livonia Franklin; defender Pat Kolodziejczak and midfielder Jeff Wilson, both of Livonia Stevenson; forward Kasey Lopata, Farmington; and midfielder John Show, Redford Catholic Central.

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