

By George Maskin
observing sports

If you're like the chronicler of this effort, nostalgia creeps into your system. Especially when you sit in a place like Madison Square Garden in New York City and realize that within a couple weeks the most noted of all indoor sports arenas in the United States will close for all time.

A new Garden is about to open . . . some 16 blocks south of the present one which has for better than four decades hosted just about everything important in the way of indoor sports — from hockey, to basketball, to tennis, to soccer, to curling . . . well, to you name it.

The old Garden, of course, lacks the color (seats and decorations) of the new Garden, or places like Detroit's Cobo Arena, or Olympia.

But if the old Garden just could talk . . . well, it would tell the world about the days when Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson boxed there . . . about the days when Bob Cousy, George Mikan and all the rest of the greatest basketball players this country has known strutted their stuff.

Or how Howie Morenz and Rocket Richard performed in their glimmer hockey days, or how Gordie Howe of the Wings acted in his younger days around the National Hockey League.

ALL OF THE biggest names in track have run or jumped or done something in the Garden. They have had tennis there, ping pong, circuses, ice shows.

The transition from the old to the new Madison Square Garden will be a swift one. One night they'll play in the old, two nights later in the new one.

The Detroit Pistons will find themselves in an honored role. They are to face the Boston Celtics on Feb. 14 in the first basketball game to be staged within the walls of the new building.

There's no question that players and fans will find the new building to their liking. There will be no pillars to block the view of a spectator.

The athletes no longer will have to operate on an old surface. They will have decent dressing rooms, instead of the present ones which were out-moded from the day the building was opened.

But, who'll be able to forget the thrills, the excitement, the unhappy moments that marked the events staged in the old Garden?

When anything leaves us, we say farewell with heavy hearts.

SHORT STUFF: The high schools now are in the stretch drive for league basketball honors. One more month and it again will be state tournament time in Michigan.

It will be a strange Sunday this one. No football game is scheduled on television.

Not since the last week in July, or was it the first week in August, have we had a weekend come when we couldn't tune in at least one grid encounter.

But, we will have basketball and hockey and golf and bowling and a few other items to keep us busy if we wish to keep our eyes glued on the television.

One thing is for certain . . . football won't stay out of the limelight very long.

The pros have their college draft next week and the first game of the new season will be held in June.

One can hardly wait for the next grid kickoff!

WE NOTE that the ballots are out for candidates to be voted upon for the entry into Michigan's Sports Hall of Fame.

One name we think should be added to the list is that of Fred Zollner, who owns the Pistons.

Personal reasons don't enter into our plugging Fred Zollner. The taking of the Pistons into Detroit, pretty much has been a one-man battle — Fred Zollner's.

He rates some special consideration . . . we think.



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