

By George Maskin

observing sports

The end of a vacation seldom precipitates a happy feeling. It's especially jolting when you embark from an airliner at Metro Airport after five hectic days in Las Vegas and there's No. 2 son Douglas to read the sad news that Tommy Devine is dead. Only a couple weeks before — just prior to heading west — we had lunched with Tommy, the public relations director at the Detroit Race Course.

He gave no hints that he was in failing health. Maybe he wasn't aware himself that time quickly was running out on him. Devine talked about the "old days" when he wrote sports for the Free Press and later of his association with the Miami News.

Quickly, however, the subject switched to the DRC. "We'll be switching our offices from downtown out to the track in a few days," Tommy said. "You know we get going out there on July 29."

WHAT DELIGHTED him was the fact that racing crowds and wagering were up all around the country. "It sure looks like another record year for us, unless we're hit by a riot or something like that," Tommy declared.

He noted that good times (financially speaking in the nation) also reflect in happy times at race ovals and at other sports attractions. "People are just busting out to spend their dollars set aside for entertainment," Tommy declared. "And for many of them, sports comes No. 1."

"Look at the way your Pistons set records last season at the gate and the way the Tigers are drawing . . . and the way the Lions and Red Wings keep drawing wilding teams."

"There's nothing like sports." And Devine knew sports . . . from A to Z. During his sports writing days, Devine thrived on controversy.

He'd dig into stories and took a lot of punches. There were times when he swung wildly. Other times he was on the target.

DEVINE LEFT OUR midst just two weeks after life vanished for George Kuhla, another member of Detroit's sports writing community. George was only 25 and just beginning to become a star on the staff of the Detroit News when the strike silenced his typewriter — as it turned out, forever.

Kuhla had gone hunting with friends in Canada, above the Straits. He was relaxing on the front fender of a boat trailer when suddenly there was a jolt. He fell to the ground, crushing his head.

George never regained consciousness and within a few days he was gone. Appropriately enough, special memorial educational funds have been set up — both for Devine and for Kuhla.

The Devine fund has been established at Wayne State University, the one for Kuhla at the University of Detroit, his alma mater.

THERE'S STILL a great deal being said about whether baseball did right or wrong when an assassin's bullet struck down Robert Kennedy. As you'll recall, some teams played and some die-hard Cincinnati sounded off so bitterly that the Reds wound up trading him to Atlanta.

Houston fined two players who refused to perform last Sunday, a national day of mourning by a decree of the President. Those who rap baseball for not respecting the death of the senator from New York are off base as far as we're concerned.

The commissioner's office proclaimed that no games would be played Saturday until after Kennedy's funeral. Teams promptly switched afternoon games to the evening. The Tigers were one. Who was to know the funeral would not be over by 6 p.m., as originally planned?

THE LATENESS of the hour left baseball with no recourse but to carry on with its schedule Saturday night, even though the funeral services had not been completed.

Raiders' Star

Albion Bound  
Rich Knock, a three-sport athlete who was graduated at North Farmington High Thursday, plans to enter Albion College next fall.

Knock played football, basketball and baseball during his prep career with the Raiders.

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# Redford-Livonia Nines Clash Sunday

It'll be showdown time Sunday in the Greater Livonia Class A baseball league. Redford Township, the first round champ, squares off against Livonia in a pivotal second-round battle at Thurston High at 2:30 p.m.

Redford took the first round laurels by winning eight of nine games while Livonia was second with Dearborn Heights, each 7-3 marks.

In the second round, Redford has won three, lost one and tied one, while Livonia has a 2-1-1 mark. Hence the importance of Sunday's clash.

Livonia copped its last two starts by downing Plymouth, 8-2, and Garden City, 10-2. Tom Balistiere hurled a seven-inning shutout against Plymouth and was supported by some hotly slugging by his teammates. Jim Rose knocked in two

runs with two singles while Gary Bowen doubled over another pair of runs.

JAY SCHWALM flipped a two-hitter in the Livonia romp over Garden City.

Rose and Bowen struck the big blows for the winners as Rose belted in four runs with two singles and a double. Bowen had a double and a single to drive in three tallies.

Manager Bob Atkins has moulded together another powerhouse for his Redford Stars as they bid to repeat in the league and state.

VIRTUALLY ALL of his squad are graduates of Thurston or Redford Union and several are fresh from playing college baseball this past spring.

Three members of the Observer's All-Area team are on the Redford team — catcher Bill Howe and infielder-first baseman Kevin Fox.

The pitching staff will include Tom Fieszar, a Township boy who pitched for Detroit Catholic Central and the University of Michigan freshman; and Denny

Carol, another Township boy who this past season hurled Catholic Central to the Catholic League title with an 8-0 record.

Dan Camp, ex-Plymouth high star who has been attending Flint J.C.; Vic Pilar, Michigan State sophomore via Thurston, and Tom Becker, an RV senior in '68 round out the mound staff.

LELAND BJERKE and Bob Holmes are back from Eastern Michigan to play first and short, respectively. Bjerke prep'd at RV, Holmes at Thurston. Rod Ferguson, another RV grad who has been at Port Huron J.C., will play second while Howe and Joe Himmelspach from Farmington High will share third base.

Fox, Reg Barringer (Thurs-

ton and Eastern senior), Bill Holmes (a Thurston center) and Fred Dunham (RV senior) are other outfielders.

Adkins has announced that in addition to league games, the Redford team will play a series of non-league games with state powerhouses, including the ML Fieszar team which Redford beat in the state finals last two years.

## Advice To Little Leaguers

DICK McAULIFFE — "The big thing playing second base is to keep your eye on the ball . . . Learn to follow the ball all the way into the glove."

RAY CYLER — "Never watch the runner going to first . . . Also, even if it's a routine play, never LOB the ball to first."

DON WERT — "The main thing about playing third base is to field the ball in front of you as much as possible."

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