



Brad Emons

Ironic twist of fate for NSL

MAYBE IT WAS the coffee, a little too strong. Maybe it was the donuts, a little too stale. The room was not smoke-filled. Most of these men had their minds already made up. Nobody rolled up their shirt sleeves like they did last week at the GM-UAW bargaining table.

Tuesday's meeting among Western Lakes Conference principals resulted in an air of haughtiness, or maybe smugness is a better term to use.

These were not union guys or executive types. They were educators.

With the closing next summer of Bentley High School a foregone conclusion, the newly formed conference was down to nine schools. They looked for new members and came up with three last spring — Livonia Franklin, North Farmington and Westland John Glenn.

What they really did was rip up the six-team Northwest Suburban League (NSL). One NSL member, Class B Redford Thurston, wasn't in the Western Lakes expansion plans. Thurston is looking to align with schools its own size.

THAT LEFT the NSL's other two members, Redford Union and Garden City, teetering on the gang plank. Their options at this stage are limited. The Western Lakes people reportedly voted 9-1 in favor of admitting those two schools — making it a 14-team, 2-divisional set-up.

There was only one problem. RU and GC needed to be accepted unanimously under the Western Lakes constitution.

But that didn't deter RU principal Dr. Robert Schramke and GC principal Ron Cowden from letting the matter die.

They came back from their summer vacation confident they could change that one vote. They did some politicking.

Two weeks ago, Schramke said: "I'm confident it can be resolved. I think we can get it squared." GC officials, meanwhile, were cautiously optimistic, but they already mapped out a contingency plan — accept the Wolverine A invitation into their league.

BUT ON TUESDAY afternoon, the hammer came down.

"We discussed it and a majority voted not to expand to 14 teams," said Churchill Principal and Western Lakes President Bill McFarland. "It's not a one- or two-school issue."

The decision was apparently made by the principals, with little input from the athletic directors, who were reportedly asked to leave the meeting when the heavy talking went down. The principals of the three new members — Franklin, Glenn and North — were also asked to leave.

What a welcome into the new league.

"I thought we had a shot," said Cowden. "It does surprise me because I went and talked to all the principals."

"I think whoever voted against me owes me a call. They ought to stand up and be counted."

LIKE COWDEN, Schramke couldn't hide his disappointment: "I don't know what to say. I really don't know why they blocked us out. I guess we'll go to Traverse City to play."

The whole mess seems ironic and leaves me flabbergasted.

How can expansion miss by one vote last spring and now lose by at least six?

An easy answer the principals will give you is that 14 teams in one league is unmanageable.

Did any of these guys take one athletic director's suggestion: Split the 14 schools into two distinct leagues and agree on cross-scheduling?

THE WAY THINGS are shaping up for 1985-86 school year, GC and RU will be semi-isolated from Observerland, playing most of their games outside our Livonia, Westland, Redford, Garden City, Plymouth, Canton and Farmington coverage area.

That obviously wasn't a concern among the principals.

And some of the principals from the Livonia and Plymouth-Canton Schools didn't go along with their respective superintendents' recommendations, which would add GC and RU.

Obviously, Livonia Superintendent George Garver's plea to Walled Lake Central principal Gerald Wallace went in one ear and out the other.

The Walled Lake Schools apparently were concerned about excess travel. I forgot that Westland John Glenn is closer to 12 Mile and Beck Road than Redford Union is to 12 Mile and Beck.

THE WESTERN LAKES principals needed to get the matter settled this week because athletic directors are already building schedules for next year.

Maybe these principals should set up a workshop and help Atkins, the athletic director at RU, and Bill Pinnell, the GC athletic director, plan their 1985-86 schedules.

It's the least they could do.

But then again, they might screw things up.

This is the same league which confuses the public with Lakes Division champs, Western Division champs and Western Lakes Activities Association (WLAA) champs.

It's the same league that can't give you a clear-cut winner in softball, baseball or tennis.

Things looked so promising when the Western Lakes schools joined forces two years ago. Tuesday, Sept. 25 wasn't one of their better days.

Can somebody throw some cream and sugar in that black coffee?

Marino bags O&E crown

By C.J. Risk staff writer

Nunzio Marino's strategy for winning the Observer & Eccentric Men's Golf Tournament was simple: "I just wanted to get the ball on the green," said the 1983 Plymouth Salem graduate. "That's how well I've been putting lately."

The formula worked Sunday, as Marino emerged from a five-player logjam after Saturday's opening round to win by a single stroke in the rain-soaked competition at Livonia's Whispering Willows Golf Course.

Marino's rounds of 73-75 for a 148 total edged Alex McLuckie of Livonia and Bob Thomas of Westland, who tied for second at 149. McLuckie bested Thomas in a playoff for second.

THE SHOT that proved to be the clincher for Marino came on the par-4, 402-yard final hole. He reached the green in two, then sunk a 30-foot birdie putt.

"That's what won it for me," the new champion said. It was Marino's first win in three attempts at the O&E tourney. In fact, it was Marino's first tournament victory since . . .

"The Walter Hagen Junior Tournament, at Brae Burn," he recalled. That was way back in 1979.

Ironically, Marino considered skipping the O&E until just two weeks ago. "I had a chance to go to Canada this weekend," he said. "I probably would have if I hadn't started playing so well."

MARINO GOT hot rather suddenly, particularly with his putter. "(Whispering Willows' pro) Gary Whitener helped me with my alignment two weeks ago. Before that I couldn't make a three-foot putt to save my life."

He had no such problems in this tournament. Two weeks ago, he was averaging "36-38 putts" per round, but he reduced that to 28 Saturday

golf

and 30 Sunday. For the tourney, he had just one double-bogey and six bogies, to go with two birdies.

Prior to finding his putting stroke, Marino, who normally plays "just about every day" became so discouraged in the past month he stopped playing and just concentrated on practicing.

"I was playing 'army' golf," he explained. "You know — left, right, left, right . . ."

THAT CHANGED over the weekend. Marino, McLuckie and Bob Thomas, together with Jerry Thomas of Livonia and Roger Schroeder of Redford, finished the opening round with 73s.

But the weather changed from near-perfect Saturday to dismal Sunday. Play was halted for 90 minutes because of rain, and when it resumed the course was drenched. Still, many of the golfers felt the rain did not hamper play much, and that despite the dreary weather Whispering Willows was in excellent shape.

Marino wasn't about to argue. His strong putting earned him the \$150 gift certificate and first-place trophy in the championship flight. McLuckie won a \$90 gift certificate and trophy for his runners-up finish, while Daryl Case of Farmington Hills was low net winner (137, handicap included), worth an \$80 certificate.

IN FIRST FLIGHT, Paul Rys of Redford turned in the tourney's best round — a 72 on Saturday — and followed that with a 78 Sunday for a 150 total and the first place money of \$100. Jerry Pankas of Livonia carded Sunday's best score (74) to claim the

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Nunzio Marino championship flight champ



Pat McCarthy tops in second flight



Paul Rys best in first flight



Richard Hall's golf ball got into all kind of trouble on this hole. The rains Sunday made water traps out of some sand traps, but on the whole, the Whispering Willows course was in good shape.

DAN DEAN/staff photographer

GC, RU out of picture

By Brad Emons staff writer

The principals at Redford Union and Garden City high schools were stunned to learn this week that Western Lakes Activities Association (WLAA) will not expand.

That decision was made Tuesday by the WLAA league principals.

"We discussed it and a majority voted not to expand to 14 teams," said Livonia Churchill principal and WLAA league president Bill McFarland.

With the advent of Livonia Bentley closing next summer, the WLAA was looking for a 10th member last spring. WLAA principals then voted for expansion in June, inviting three Northwest Suburban League (NSL) members to join — Livonia Franklin, Westland John Glenn and North Farmington. That decision made the WLAA a 12-school, two-divisional alignment (six teams in Western Division and six in the Lakes Division).

Curiously, the other three NSL members — Redford Union, Garden City and Redford Thurston — were not included.

RU PRINCIPAL Dr. Robert Schramke and GC principal Ron Cowden lobbied hard this fall to gain admittance after their schools missed out by a reported one vote when the WLAA considered the issue last spring.

Both Schramke and Cowden were optimistic they could get the unanimous 10-0 vote required under WLAA bylaws.

"Maybe they were influenced by their colleagues," said Schramke. "I went to talk to every principal. I spent time with each of them and there was nothing negative."

"I really don't know why they blocked us out. I'm very disappointed. I don't know what to say."

Cowden, meanwhile, had plenty to say about the WLAA's action.

"It does surprise me because I went and talked to all the principals," he said. "I think whoever voted against me owes me a call. They ought to stand up and be counted."

WHEN SCHRAMKE was asked about joining another league, his response was: "I'll guess we'll go to Traverse City. But we'll survive."

The WLAA's decision may give Garden City the green light to accept the Wolverine A League's invitation. Cowden, however, indicated that the next move is up to the school board and the superintendent.

As it stands, the WLAA will look like this for the 1985-86 school year: Lakes Division — Livonia Stevenson, Plymouth Salem, Farmington, Walled Lake Central, North Farmington and Glenn; Western Division — Churchill, Franklin, Farmington Harrison, Plymouth Canton, Northville and Walled Lake Western.

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A PLYMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL FLASHBACK

Lisa Russell's talented touch around the net helped Plymouth Canton close out its girls' soccer season in winning fashion with a 4-0 blanking of Farmington Harrison Friday, May 27, 1983 at Canton. Russell netted all four goals for the Chiefs, bringing her season total to 12. Lori Engel assisted on two of Russell's tallies and Kim Reeves assisted on another. Pat Phillips stopped six Harrison shots to record her third shutout. Canton fired 16 shots at the Harrison goal. The victory gave the Chiefs a 5-7 final season record.

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