

# State College's air hockey wizard takes short cut to New York City

One afternoon Mike Dickstein was trying to catch a bus and looking for a shortcut between College and Beaver Avenues. He wound up last weekend in New York City.

Now before you call up the campus patrol and send them to find out whether it's this writer or Mike Dickstein that's crazy, let's explain a little. On that afternoon, about a year and a half ago, Dickstein wandered past the Campus Casino, a local amusement hall. His words may be best here

"I saw this funny looking thing, with this puck flying back and forth, and I went in. I spent all my lunch money there for the next three weeks."

You still wanna turn us into the loony bin, right? Well, the "funny looking thing" turned out to be fairly well known around the country. It was pioneered by Brunswick and it's called air hockey.

Air hockey, for those who've never been in any of the local amusement halls, is played on a large table with a laminated surface. Underneath the table an air compressor pulls in air from the surrounding area, then shoots it all along the table's surface through small holes in the sides. Dickstein explained that the puck then travels on a virtually frictionless surface.

Players strike the puck with a bat shaped like a large puck with a handle. This piece is called the goalie because it is also used to block the hole, or goal, at your end of the table, from opponents' shots.

Dickstein turned out to be a good enough air hockey player that the Brunswick people along with Aurora and Holiday Inns, extended an invite to visit New York City last weekend and play in a North American air hockey tournament, all expenses paid.

Free ride to New York huh? Makes you wanna dash to the nearest air hockey table maybe? That's exactly what Mike had in mind upon reaching the Big Apple. Consequently, he finished third in a field of 32 and returned to little old State College with a big bag full of goodies.

However, if you're suddenly having visions of yourself as the next air hockey champ of North America, you best



Jeff Young  
Ass't Sports Editor

get on some sort of conditioning program. Mike related that the structure of the tournament required that he play 27 games last Saturday, starting at 8:30 a.m. The champ, David Barnett of Athens, Ga., was crowned "about 3:15," Mike said.

Dickstein made it to New York after winning a local tourney this past September at Funtime USA, beneath Pappy's Restaurant. Local winners were sent to a regional tourney in Philadelphia, Mike's hometown, a month later. Mike did not win in Philadelphia, due to a unique protest of tournament rules.

"They have free shots at the goal if you're charged with a foul," Mike said, "and a lot of the fouls they call are stupid. So I don't take my foul shots. I hit them into a corner of the table."

Dickstein related he lost in a semifinal round after turning down a foul shot with a 6-3 lead (7 wins) in the game that would've given him the match. (The best out of three sets constitutes a match and the best of three games makes a set.)

"But the guy who ran the tournament knew I was a good player and he spoke to Brunswick," Mike said. "He told them he wanted to have a good tournament in New York and could he bring an alternate in case people didn't show up. They said yes and I went, and people didn't show up, so I got to play."

For his efforts Dickstein received 500 dollars, a set of

golf clubs, a tennis racket and balls, a bowling ball and bag, a Brunswick air hockey table, plus an assortment of games. Some shortcut, huh?

By the way, Mike is looking for a buyer for the air hockey table. He already has one that he won in the Delaware Valley Regionals in Philadelphia this past summer.

Revealing the more serious side of his beneficial pastime, Dickstein related particular reasons that he was happy to go to New York.

"It's so rare that you get a bunch of serious people together talking air hockey," he said. "People come up to me and say 'I hear you're the pinball champ. Oh, air hockey? Oh, yeah, it's one of those.'"

"When you're a really good football player, people know all about it. But air hockey, people don't really know the scope of it."

"They say 'so you're the champ, huh?' and they always think they're gonna beat me with one hand tied behind their back and one leg sticking up in the air. But they don't realize that there's more to it than just hitting it back and forth."

Dickstein said that he has offered an air hockey course through the Free University, meeting with little interest. "They still think it's something you take your girlfriend to Saturday night."

Mike added that he and many others that competed in New York would like to develop a circuit with tournaments around the country. He insists it's in the future.

"I know that ten years from now, when I try to tell people stories about how it started, they'll laugh," he said. "Like when football was first started. But it's growing."

Along with other local air hockey enthusiasts, Mike is trying to start a league in the area. (If interested, call at 237-1376.) He has worked out all the details for team play and scoring. On his own, he is also considering revisions for the table and the game itself. But meanwhile he probably takes all the shortcuts he can.

# Gourdine could become sport's first Black czar

CLEVELAND (AP) — Simon P. Gourdine could become the next commissioner of the National Basketball Association and the first black to hold such a high position in professional sports when the NBA's 18 owners meet here today.

The 34-year-old Gourdine is the prime candidate to succeed Walter Kennedy, who has announced he will retire June 1, 1975.

Gourdine currently is NBA vice president in charge of administration and has been a member of the league's staff since June, 1970.

"I have heard the stories, and I am very much conscious of it," Gourdine said of a published report of his chance of being elected. "My main concern at this point is that the story might be premature. You know the owners have to vote, which they presumably will do Thursday, and to that extent the story was a speculative piece."

"I hope that it's treated as such. I anxiously await the outcome of the meeting."

Gourdine said he talked with some of the owners, "but I can't go into details."

The owners will meet at the new \$25 million Coliseum, home of the Cleveland Cavaliers. A news conference is scheduled for 3 p.m. EST

Selection of Kennedy's successor requires 14 favorable votes among the owners. However, before the owners vote, the committee appointed by the commissioner to find his successor will have to formally submit Gourdine's name for consideration. That is considered a mere formality, and Gourdine's name is expected to be the only one submitted.

The NBA has been in the forefront of giving blacks coaching and administrative positions in sports.

Bill Russell became the first black coach of a major pro team when he took over the Boston Celtics in 1966. There are five black head coaches and eight assistants in the league. Russell and Wayne Embury of the Milwaukee Bucks are general managers.

Gourdine, 34, has been an assistant U.S. attorney and served the Army in Vietnam after receiving a law degree from Fordham Law School in 1965.

# Marshall unimpressed by Cy Young award

EAST LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Winning the Cy Young Award hasn't mellowed Mike Marshall, the ironman relief pitcher of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Marshall was unimpressed when informed that he had been voted the National League's top pitcher by a panel of the Baseball Writers Association of America. Even the fact he was the first reliever so honored failed to stir him.

An Associated Press newsman who visited the pitcher at his home near the Michigan State University campus, was greeted graciously, but was firmly told he would not be granted an interview.

"It's nothing personal," said Marshall. "I just don't want to talk about it."

Marshall's tight-lipped policy apparently was aimed specifically at news service agencies. "I don't think... the organizations have much sensitivity for the individual," he said.

The relief pitcher who helped the Dodgers win their first pennant in eight years was sooting his lawn when visited by the reporter. He took off a heavy work glove to shake hands, smiled, then resumed putting around the yard.

Marshall and his wife, Nancy, have been living near the MSU campus since the season ended. He is studying for a doctorate in psychology at MSU.

He didn't even ask a reporter for specifics

on his being named the Cy Young Award winner.

Reporters who phoned Marshall's home were greeted by a recording suggesting they leave their name and number.

In an earlier telephone interview with the Los Angeles Herald Examiner, Marshall told baseball writer Bob Hunter that he would not decide whether he would play in 1975 until March.

"By making this statement, I do not mean to say, or imply, that I do not intend to pitch again," Marshall explained. "What I'm saying is that I simply will weigh the various ingredients, my family, my academic pursuits, my feelings, and baseball at that time and then make my decision. Not before."

Marshall, who appeared in a record 106 games, received 17 of the 24 first place votes and 96 points, easily outdistancing teammate Andy Messersmith, who had 66. Marshall had a 15-12 record and saved 21 games for the Dodgers.

Following Messersmith in the balloting came Phil Niekro of the Atlanta Braves and another Dodger, Don Sutton. No pitcher was named on all 24 ballots, but Marshall came closest, with mention on 22 of them.

Catfish Hunter of the Oakland A's was named American League Cy Young winner last week.

# Smith to NY

# Connors to Pittsburgh

PITTSBURGH (AP) — The Pittsburgh Triangles of World Team Tennis said yesterday they had acquired the rights to sign Jimmy Connors, who crushed ex-Triangles player-coach Ken Rosewall in winning this year's finals at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open.

WTT rights to Connors, 22, came to Pittsburgh in a deal that sent backup players Isabel Fernandez and Gerald Battick and unspecified "future consideration" to the Baltimore Banners.

"I only traded for him because I fully expect to sign him," Triangle owner Frank

Fuhrer said of Connors. Meanwhile, the Triangles also said they'd traded negotiating rights to Stan Smith to the New York Sets for a 1975 No. 1 draft choice and "future consideration."

Smith, Connors' main rival as top U.S. player, did not compete for the Triangles last season when Rosewall played and coached for Pittsburgh.

Rosewall, 39, told the Triangles last week that he had retired as coach, and Tuesday he telegraphed Fuhrer that he also wouldn't return as a player.

Fuhrer said he had

scheduled a meeting later this month with Connors and his agent, Bill Riordan.

Connors won every match he played in the WTT last season, when he commanded a contract which required he play only about half his club's matches.

That contract was criticized by many WTT owners, who complained it hurt attendance because they were unable to guarantee Connors' appearance.

There was no immediate word from Fuhrer on whether he would abide by a similar contract next season.

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