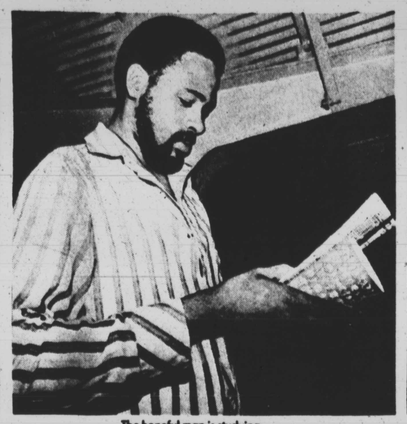
AFRO camera hobnobs with the harness set

Photos by Mark Gail

The confused lady is pondering



The hopeful man is studying

And the disappointed is reviewing

Sorry, my friend, but that cigar won't help

Giddyup, Gold Cork Robbie, Quick Time Pick, here comes somethin' catchin' up

How can you be so dumb, it's all right here?

Win, lose or draw, folks, our picture's in the AFRO

Harness bug has same bite

By Sam Lacy

Like the novice who shocks the coke party by calmly stating, "I'll take mine straight," a fellow looks down his nose and remarks: "Trotters? You've gotta be kidding!"

To him, there's is no sen Rarity whatsoever between thoroughbred racing at Bowie, Pimlico or Laurel and the evening sport at Freestate, Rosecroft, etc. And if he is a real, dyed-in-the-wool snob, he'll give you a second-degree disdain if you have the gall to call harness racing a sport.

"It's for losers," piped a fellow who had just gone broke at Bowie the other day. Then, in an afterthought: "You got any guess for tonight?"

The sulky fan, on the other hand, wouldn't have it any other way. He — or she because the gals go, also — prefer to take in the races after work.

"It's a nice way to relax in the open without having to fight the sun and heat of the afternoon," asserted Tom Glascoe of Washington Monday night at Freestate, formerly known as Laurel Raceway.

"There's no battling with the daytime rush traffic, no excess use of gasoline in the need for air-conditioning in your car on your way to and from the track, and there's a fascinating choice of betting methods which don't gobble your money so quickly."

When the Glascoe comments were repeated to Vernon Smith of Rockville, he came back: "Yeah; that's true, but it's only the first part about the leiserely trip and saving gas that I agree with. I can lose as much here as I do at Bowie. In fact, I came here from Bowie this afternoon and the story's the same."

Here, then, is evidence that, while some thoroughbred fans rap the trotters, and some harness fans want nothing to do with the afternoon bangtails, there are others who try their luck on both ends.

AFRO photographer Mark Gail, who spent a recent evening at Freestate, caught the same melange of expressions he found at Pimlico in pre-Preakness week.

His assortment of candid shots, we felt, needed no identifications since they were made in a spirit of pure fun.

The "reading" of faces seems to indicate that the "bug" which bites the harness aficionado is the same one that victimizes his or her afternoon kinfolk.

As stated earlier, the Freestate plant was formerly the ill-fated Laurel Raceway which was plagued by mismanagement and scandal. It was taken over last winter by Frank De Francis, a multi-millionaire international lawyer.

De Francis, who owns a stable of thoroughbred horses and employs a black trainer, Luke Hawkins, immediately set to work refurbishing the entire layout.

While a planned rebuilding of the grandstand and clubhouse is yet to be undertaken, the parking area already has been improved, the track resurfaced and a firm hand on customer treatment has been applied.

The results are favorable.

Attendance is up despite the economic crunch and the nightly handle averages well over a quarter-million dollars.

IT DOESN'T BELONG HERE in this harness racing pictorial, for sure. But they don't belong in the grandma getup that adorns the persons of former baseball greats Willie Mays and Mickey Mantle. The two ex-sluggers were posing in blue bonnets for a margarine commercial.

BIRDS-EYE VIEWS — Youngsters of all ages, complexions, levels of ability, etc., reported for the Baltimore Orioles' tryouts last week at Hopkins. Hoping to catch the eyes of Birds scouts were (L) Van Paylor, a third base hopeful wearing his Arbutus uniform; (upper R) Michael McCory, his eyes on second base sometime in the future, and (lower R) Richard Corbin, who sought to impress the ivory hunters with his performance at shortstop. Incidentally, Corbin told AFRO photographer Mark Gail that he is a student at West Baltimore Middle School — and just 13 years old.

THEY WERE FIRST — As Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet, John Skinner (L) and Saletta Pinkett (R) were first in mixed doubles in the annual Alpha Phi Alpha tennis tournament, played recently at Druid Hill. In center is Larry Davis, a tourney official. Event benefitted inner city charity programs.

Cosmos, Gee slated to play in Africa

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — The Cosmos will play soccer in Africa for the first time, as part of their post-season tour this fall, club executive vice-president Rafael de la Sierra said Monday.

The world's most famous sports team which recently signed schoolboy Darryl Gee of Columbia, Md., will play games in Cairo on Oct. 21 and 24 as the feature events of the country's week-long national celebration.

Africa becomes the sixth of the seven continents the club has visited, with obvious exception being Anarctica.

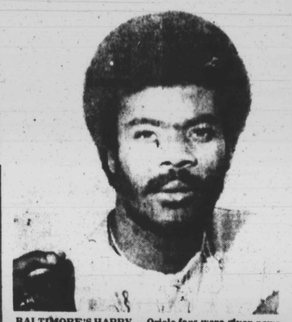
The rest of the club's fall tour, which will consist of of 10 games all over Europe, will be announced within the next two weeks.

Darryl Gee schoolboy phenom

Bears switch

Morgan State athletic director Earl Banks, has announced that the Golden Bear football team will play Cheyney State on Sept. 20, at Hughes Stadium.

The game will replace an earlier scheduled game with Delaware State.



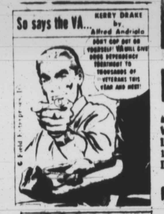
BALTIMORE'S HAPPY — Oriole fans were given news Tuesday when doctors determined that first baseman Eddie Murray may be able to return to the lineup tonight (Friday). The bone fracture over the right eye suffered when a bad-hop grounder struck him, was not as serious as feared.

Governor's youth meet set Aug. 2

The Maryland Commission on Physical Fitness, in cooperation with the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission in Prince George's County, will be hosting the 15th annual Governor's Track and Field Meet, on Aug. 2.

WE'RE NO. 1! — The Phillies of the Edmondson Village Little League closed out their season with a sparkling 17-2 record. Shown (L to R) are Lee Johnson, Keith Dunkley, Kevin Epps, Larry Cook, Robert Smith, Wayne Parker, statistician; Charles Ellis Jr., Rico Mashburn, Charles Ellis, manager; Reginald Ellis, Ryan Ellis and James Carter Jr., coach.

So says the VA...



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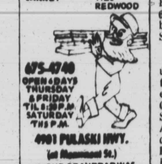
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Firefighters set benefit

The Baltimore City Fire Fighters Local 734 and Fire Officers Local 964 in conjunction with the Baltimore City Fire Department will hold an Oriole ticket rally at the Fire Training Academy, 8720 Pulaski Highway, beginning at noon Saturday.

The purpose is to sell upper reserved seat tickets at a cost of $4 each to the Baltimore Orioles-Chicago White Sox baseball game of Aug. 6, which is designated Fire Fighter's Night. Hospitals Burn Unit.

11 nations have No. 1 players in D.C. tennis

The fast-growing Washington Star International Tennis Classic opens tomorrow (Saturday) with no fewer than 11 players entered who are ranked No. 1 in their respective countries.

The tourney, now one of the major summer events on the Volvo Grand Prix Circuit, carries $175,000 in prizes as it moves into its July 19-27 run at Rock Creek Tennis Stadium, 16th and Kennedy Sts., N.W., in Washington.

Arthur Ashe, for several years a fixture in the event, will not compete. However, in his retirement Ashe may feel comfortable in being represented, in a sense, by Yannick Noah, the youngster he discovered, in the Cameroon in 1974, sponsored and helped develop.

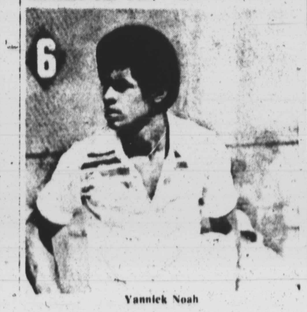
Noah, now living in Paris, is ranked No. 1 in France, and 13th in the world.

Others holding top status at home include Spain's Jose Higueras (ranked 12th in the world), Chile's Hans Gildemeister (14th) and Paraguay's Victor Pecci (17th), Italy's Corrado Barazzutti, Mexico's Raul Ramirez, Australia's Phil Dent, Ecuador's Andres Gomez, Yugoslavia's Zeljko Franulovic, Puerto Rico's Francisco Gonzalez and Bolivia's Mario Martinez.

Noah, who started the year ranked 25th in the world, reached the finals of the Italian Open and the fourth-round of the French Open, defeating the likes of Barazzutti, Eddie Dibbs, Eliot Teltscher and Jose-Luis Clerc, all of whom will compete.

Qualifying rounds for players wishing to enter who have not already done so, will be held Saturday and Sunday beginning each day at 11 a.m.

First-round action commences Monday at noon.



Yannick Noah

Colt Family Day July 26

The much-anticipated Colts Family Day has been firmed up and the annual event which provides funding for several inner-city youth programs will be held next Saturday (26th) in Annapolis.

This will be the 24th in the yearly series, and officials are expecting a record turnout of parents and youngsters eager to see the sights of historic Annapolis and the Naval Academy.

Highlighting the program which begins at noon will be the usual 2 p.m. football game between first and second-year players of the Colts and Washington Redskins.

No seats are reserved and $3 tickets may be purchased from any Baltimore City policeman.

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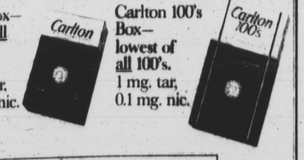

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