

# Ages Lowered for Midget

## Football and Track

By M. JOAN ROUCHER

Proposals to lower the entry age to seven for both midget football and track got the nod from the Recreation Committee Monday night, amidst some misgivings about starting contact sports at too early an age, and about program competing for kids.

Football chairman Ted Hart requested that seven-year-olds be allowed to sign up, because "we have been losing the young age group for four or five years to other sports that would take them at a lower age. The past two years, this has cost us a loss of numbers throughout our other age groups." The starting age for football Super Pee Wees has been eight. Children

may join the soccer program in the second grade.

"Last year," wrote Hart, "we were so low at our Pee Wee level that we had to forfeit our second game."

On behalf of the track and field program, Len Pietrewicz and Norm Leon wrote that "the size of the nine- and 10-year-old group had become too large with just the small number of these (seven and eights) youngsters that have been with us over the last few years." With some informal exceptions, such as younger brothers and sisters, local children have had to be nine to start in track and field.

Track organizers plan a separate

clinic-style program for the seven- and eight-year-old group, with practices twice a week and non-scoring meets on Saturdays. Pietrewicz noted that the Lakeland Junior Track League already had four teams interested in this program — Randolph, Hopatcong, Denville and Mt. Olive.

The new age group would compete in the 50-meter, 200-meter, mile, shotput, long jump, four-by-400-meter relay, and eight-by-50-meter shuttle. Practices would begin April 8 with signups this Saturday.

The football coordinators had not "worked out details," but said they intend "to put these (seven-year-

old) boys in an instructional clinic (possibly flag football) where they will be taught fundamentals and not pressured . . . to start them later and have less practices . . . to have scrimmage games for them, either amongst themselves or occasionally with another team, in their age group, under heavy supervision."

"We hope this will give us a fair share of the available boys up and down the line in our football program," Hart wrote.

Hart said football organizers will meet with parents in April to explain the details and get their cooperation. Signups are scheduled for late May, early June.

Commenting on the two proposals, committee member George Nelson noted, "One letter had a positive program (track), but football really said they were competing for youngsters. I find that disappointing. I'm sad to hear that has to be true."

Nelson believed "there's a useful participation age for each sport. An early start could be advantageous, he thought, in program involving leg coordination, like track, soccer, hockey. (Hockey offers skating skills - instruction for ages six and seven.) The young age-group would generally have trouble with sports demanding primarily hand-eye coordination, he said, like basketball and baseball.

Al Shaffer worried about seven-year-olds getting hit. "Even flag football can be a hard game on the line."

Hart replied that "eight-year-olds don't hit that hard," and that "personally, I think football in pads is safer than flag football."

"Football would be cutting its own throats if they throw kids out there and bang heads," commented Don Ayers.

Ayers felt a discussion of standardized entry ages could be a topic for the next meeting of the recreation policy committee, along with residency requirements and male-female eligibility.

With track signups this Saturday and a recreation department flyer on year-round activities about to go to press, the committee decided to vote on the age-lowering proposals Monday night. Al Napolliello and Carl Joseph cast the only nays.

## Recreation Track Practices Open Next Week

This month like so many years before, the Randolph midget track and field team will start indoor practices at the Intermediate School for competition in the Lakeland Junior Track and Field League.

Randolph has an unmatched record in recreation track and field — 46 consecutive wins in dual meets since the formation of the league in 1972.

Participation in recreation track was extended for the first time this year to 7-8-year-olds, who'll be offered a clinic program together with separate track meets and a full range of activities.

The recreation track season will open indoors on Tuesday night, March 18 at the Intermediate School, with the 11-14 year olds starting at 6 p.m., followed on Monday night, March 24, with the 9-10-year-olds. The 7-8 clinic program will begin at the high school track on April 8 at 6 p.m.

Children who were unable to sign-up for recreation track due to the heavy snow on registration day may still do so at the start of practice. A parent must accompany the child.

Coordinating the local track program this year will be Norm Leon, an active Randolph recreation volunteer since 1965 who has been associated with the track team since it joined the Lakeland League. Assisting in coordinating local activities is Len Pietrewicz, this year's league president.

Heading up the coaching staffs

for each age groups are: Gerry Lucas and Barbara Hayford, 7-8; George Intille, 9-10; Dave Laird and Gary Schindler, 11-12; and John Hayes and Larry Golan 13-14. In addition, 20 community volunteers assist at all age groups.

### Midget Track Practice Schedule

**Indoor practice — March 18-April 4.**  
Intermediate School, 6-7:30 p.m.

Nine-10-year-olds: Monday & Wednesday.

Eleven-14-year-olds: Tuesday & Thursday.

(No practice March 19 and 26.)

**Outdoor practice: April 7-24**

High school track and lower lot, 6-7 p.m.

Nine-10-year-olds: Monday & Wednesday.

Eleven-14-year-olds: Tuesday & Thursday.

Seven-year-olds: Tuesday & Friday.

**Outdoor practice: April 28-June 12**

High school track and lower lot, 6-7:30 p.m.

Nine-14-year-olds: Monday and Thursday.

Seven-year-olds: Tuesday and Friday.

**Saturday practice: April to June**  
High school track and lower lot, 8:30-10 a.m.

Nine-14-year-olds: (check group for correct days).

## Midget Track Adds a Pair To Nine-Year Win Streak

The Randolph midget track and field team began its quest for a fourth straight Lakeland League title by defeating Mount Olive and Harding Townships in a tri-meet at Randolph on Sunday. The score was Randolph 312, Mount Olive 109, Harding Twp. 86.

The highly organized meet, under the direction of Norm Leon, accommodated over 400 athletes in the 9-14 age groups. The two wins upped the Randolph undefeated streak to 48 over nine years. Approximately 40 adults helped in coaching or non-coaching capacity during the afternoon.

Winners for the local team included:

### 13-14 Boys:

Marty Connaughton, 400m, 66.0; 800m, 2:50.5; Jim Bauer, 200m, 27.3; long jump, 16-9.

### 13-14 Girls:

Wanda Golan, 100m, 14.0; shot put, 23-7½; 400m relay, 56.4. Tanya Smolin, 200m, 28.5; 400m, 65.5; long jump, 14-5; 400m relay, 56.4.

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### 11-12 Boys:

John Hayes, 800m, 2:31.5; mile, 5:30.7; Chris Shilakes, 100m, 13.7 (second — tied team record).

### 11-12 Girls:

Taryn Barnes, 100m, 14.4; 200m, 30.3; medley relay, 2:15.9. Kathy Smith, 800m, 2:48.8; mile, 6:03.4; shot put, 26-7½.

