



Jamestown Man Member Of New York Horseshoe Hall Of Fame

By FRANK HYDE

George Hale has become Jamestown's first member of the New York State Horseshoe Pitching Hall of Fame in the division for participants. Larry Proudman, also a local man, was named earlier to the promoter's division.

Mention horseshoe pitching and many sports followers will look down their nose and sneer: "Ha, that's called the old barnyard game. Right?"

Right. But don't chirp too loudly, friends, your sarcasm may make you look foolish. There are 12 million horseshoe pitchers in the United States, almost five times the population of New York City. And horseshoe pitching is one of the oldest sports known to man. The Menke Encyclopedia of Sports says it is an outgrowth of the ancient game of quoits, played by the noblemen, and that shoes pitching came into being about 150 A.D.

Horseshoe pitching has been around this area as long as most oldtimers can remember and it is progressing. The Falconer Horseshoe Pitching Club has switched from its Falconer Rod and Gun Club site for many years (Marlin-Rockwell before that) to the more expansive Falconer Village Park area.

"We are erecting six new courts, adding to the eight already in operation at the village park," said Chuck Dickinson, a spokesman for the club and a top-notch player.

The New York State Tournament, held at the Falconer R & G site about 20 years ago through the promotional efforts of Proudman and Pete Scheria, will return to the Falconer club in 1983. It will be at Rome in 1981 and back to Canton in 1982, where Hale was enshrined in the hall a week or so ago.

It's kind of hush hush at the moment but there are members talking of bidding for the World Tournament in a few years.

The state Hall of Fame, Marilyn Hale, George's wife, points out, was formed in 1970, although the state association is much older. Aims of the Hall of Fame, she adds, are to honor those of outstanding ability and support of the game. George was honored principally, she adds, because of the latter, but a glance through his achievements on the courts indicated very conclusively that she and George are being modest.

Hale, who has operated Hale's Sunoco gas station on West Sixth Street for 33 years and is still in business at that site, has been in the state tournament 13 times, 1959 through 1980 and has never finished worse than third in Classes B, C and D. He won the state Class C title in 1962 and repeated in 1979. He copped the Class B crown three times, 1966, 1971 and 1975.

George hit the big time in various major tournaments such as the DeSoto Open at Plant City, Fla., where he finished first in Class B in 1969. He tackled another biggie in Florida in 1977, the Clearwater Fun'n Sun Classic, where he brought home a second place trophy in Class C. There was also two second-place finishes in Class C of the Eastern Nationals and two seconds in class B of the Kinzua County Classic.

George Hale's horseshoe pitching also shows up in many



MARILYN HALE GEORGE HALE
Ringers add up to plenty of trophies

other places down through the years.

There are two Chautauqua County Tournament Championships and seven Falconer Rod and Gun League doubles, titles, garnered with partner Virgil Williams; nine individual firsts, nine seconds and five third place finishes in tournaments from 1958 through 1980, mostly in Class A.

George lists his two greatest thrills from horseshoes as being named "player of the year" by the Falconer Club and being voted into the Hall of Fame.

reverse shoe as compared to the clockwise delivery by most players, does not close out his sports participation with horseshoes. He has been a strong shooter for the Jamestown Rifle Club for 30 years. This activity took him to many major tournaments, too, such as Camp Perry, along with such accomplished local gunners as Pete Shaka, Ilror Swanson, Ralph Mische and Carl Hoaglund. He is also a once-a-week bowler with Southern Tier Builders in the Troyer Farms Classic at Flamingo Lanes.

In horseshoes, of course, he has seen some of the best locally come and go such as Dickinson, Williams, Joe Johns (Sugargrove), Wally Lindstrom, Roy Gravink, (Clymer), "Doc" Clark, Harold Rosean, Chet Dannison, "Doc" Lindbeck, Tony Cusimano (who once won the state title), Art Grandin and Len Berggren, who he calls one of the best of the present crop of shooters, plus Dick Mudgett of Cattaraugus, who has just wrapped up the Tri-County tournament title. Hale praised the present league setup with Ken Hopkins as president and his son, "Hoppy," vice president.

Most shooters agree the greatest horseshoe men to appear in this area were Carl Steinfeldt of Rochester, who won the state title several times including at Falconer, now living in Florida where he is state champ, and Ted Allen. The latter appeared at the Gerry Rodeo a number of years ago. The stocky Arizona man was the world's ringer percentage man in 1955 and the consecutive ringers leader with 72 in 1951.

Hale is married to the former Marilyn Gould, also a crack shot in the competition and a member of a men's team. She competes weekly.

Horseshoe pitching is a by-product of war, dating back to 150 AD when the Roman army started shoeing its horses, according to history, soldiers organized the game by using discarded shoes when the animals were reshod.

During that period, the old Greek custom of throwing the discus led to quoits then to horseshoes, the former being more popular with royalty. As years passed, the game of horseshoes spread throughout Europe then to this country. It became popular and courts and stakes can be found near blacksmith shops and on recreation fields throughout the land. There is national and world competition for men and women plus seniors (over 60) and juniors, 17 and under.

Horseshoe pitching has come a long way since a day in Boston 150 years ago when a judge fined two men "for engaging in this silly and useless game when you could be working."

The National Horseshoe Pitching Association was formed in 1965. For years, shoes for the game have been manufactured. Using discarded horseshoes has been lost in the dim past. Official shoes cannot be more than 7½ inches long, 7 inches wide and weigh no more than 2½ pounds.

"You don't have to write much about the rules," one oldtimer laughed. "Everyone knows about horseshoes."

That's probably right.