



information acquired from the WSHPA Hall of Fame Book, newsletters and other sources

BOB HITT

Plymouth, MI

inducted 1967

Bob was known as the boy wonder back in the middle 30s. At the age of eleven years he pitched a game of 78%.

He won the state championship title in 1936-37-38. In 1936 he had 25 wins and 2 losses and averaged 68.4%

He was Runner-up in 1939-40-41.

Bob was also known as a professional bowler and appeared on the Milton Berle show as well as other televised bowling shows.

He pitched in the state tournament in Iron River MI where he pitches his all time high game of 90.5%

In 1938 Bob set a state record of 38 doubles in a single game.



Bob Hitt, Michigan horseshoe pitching champion, began learning the rudiments of the game when he was 8. This picture was taken by the late Romeo Wood, long-time Plymouth photographer, when Hitt was 14.

Bob and Joe Latzko set a state record for the most four deads in a single game. 26 in 1938.

Bob was a great promoter and pitched in exhibition matches with the world champ Ted Allen. He defeated Fernando Isais in a match before Isais became world champ in 1934.

Bob was a member of the Dearborn Horseshoe team and pitched 12 doubles in a row in 1933.

Paul Wishon, Bob Hitt and Oscar Hope

Footnote:

Bob visited the 1989 state tournament at the River Raisin Horseshoe club in Adrian and was quite amazed at the horseshoe courts we have today. This was his first appearance at a state tournament in 50 years. He expressed some interest of making a come-back. On this date Sept 3rd 1989 he is only 67 years old.

Bob was introduced to many pitchers and was telling of his many exhibition matches and where he would light matches with his ringers at the opposite stake.



Bob was talked into pitching a few shoes with Dave Double during the practice session and was soon pitching double ringers, We would all like to see him come back and join the WSHPA

Newspaper Article - date unknown

NOTE: article is typed exactly as it appeared.

Plymouth past and present

Horseshoe champ remembered

Bob Hitt, Michigan's horseshoe pitching champion from 1936 through 1938, was born in Bryan, Ohio, January 1, 1922, of English-Irish stock. The family came to Plymouth when he was about 3 years old. His father, Vern, who established the family home at 761 S. Harvey, taught the game of horseshoes to Bobbie and appeared in many tournaments and exhibitions with him.

Living across the street from the Hitt's was William Garrett (Bill the Barber) who had a horseshoe court in his backyard. It was on Garrett's court that young Hitt, age 8, learned the rudiments of the game.

Hitt remembers buying his first pair of horseshoes with money he earned picking beans. The farm where he picked them was located almost on the spot on Rose Street where his home now stands.

One day after Bob had become accomplished at horseshoes, he and his father were returning from a tournament in which his father had defeated him. During the journey home, his father turned to Bob and said something the youngster never forgot.

"There is no way I could have beat you today, if you had really tried," he said. "Bobbie, you have to bear down."

As in any sport, success did not come without hard work. Hitt had to practice every day. At 6 a.m. he was usually in the court his father built at the back of their house, waking the neighbors with the sound of heavy horseshoes hitting the metal stakes. He practiced a half our every morning and

that kept the crowd applauding. (Vernell Hitt now owns a greenhouse at Five Mile and Beck).

When he was state champion, Bob Hitt was asked to give an exhibition at a garden party held at the Newburg Methodist Church on Ann Arbor Trail. The description of the event, in the Plymouth Mall, evokes memories of the area's rural past:

"The party included a bean supper, a fortune tell, a homemade candy booth, a fishpond, a blind man selling pencils, and a limited supply of Mrs. Otto Grimm's famous German coffee cake," the paper reported.

At previously indicated, Bobbie at age 11, became a regular member of the Dearborn Horseshoe Pitching Club. The club, captained by Lee Rose, was gung-ho about horseshoes. A newspaper account in 1933 said that "fist fights culminated several matches in which Dearborn was engaged."

Bob Hitt was in the sixth grade at Plymouth Grade School at the time. He weighed only 64 pounds, and could not have been of any help in the fisticuffs. But even the opposition was continually amazed at the ease with which the youngster handled the two and half pound horseshoes during the matches.

The winners prizes in the '30s were ridiculously small. When Hitt won his three state championships, his share of the prize money was a mere \$40 per tournament. When he was in a fairgrounds exhibition, he rarely made over \$15. His father, who placed sixth in the Marquette tournament when Bobbie won his first state championship, received only \$10 prize money.

After he had won his first State title, young Bobbie told a report:

"With the \$40 I got I bought a suit of clothes, my school supplies and took in a ball game."

He explained to the reporter the technique he used in throwing a horseshoe:

"I throw my shoe with a turn of one and a quarter, with the calk facing me when i am pitching. The

was back again for more after school let out.

In the winter, Ernie Allison, the local Chevrolet dealer, would let Bobbie and his father practice in a loft over the garage at his place of business on Main Street, corner of Amelia.

After Hitt became well known, he was asked to give many exhibitions. When he was 10, he pitched 52.6 percent ringers in four games in Dearborn. When he was 12, he beat the State Champion, Ralph Baxter, 55, in an exhibition match at Monroe, Michigan.

In the same year, 1933, he was invited to pitch at the Michigan State Fair and at the Hillsdale Fair.

At a University of Michigan Open House in Ann Arbor, young Hitt, assisted by his brother, Vernell, put on a trick performance. Bob delighted the crowd by pitching over blankets and over Vernell's body. He lighted matches by hitting their heads with horseshoes, and performed other feats

calk is the spur, or heel, in the bend, which prevents slipping. I bring the shoe straight back and twist it at me knee."

The writer recently watched Earl Merriman, the local insurance agent, pitching horseshoes at a Rotary Club outing.

"Where did you learn to hold the shoe like that," I asked.

"From Bob Hitt," he told me. "I used to watch him by the hour."