

THE OAKLAND PRESS



Michael Jackson a daddy?

King of Pop's Pussé plans to bear his son, tabloid says
Page A-10

MONDAY

November 4, 1996

35¢

Artificial reefs offer fish refuge, room to grow

By MICHELE GLANZE

Staff Writer

OXFORD

Like colorful wildflowers in the rocky depths of Stony Creek Lake in Oxford, U.S. Scuba Center in Rochester and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources are working together on a freshwater experiment they hope will dramatically increase the number of bass living in Stony Creek Lake.

The experiment is meant to help because this is the only time a type of man-made reef has been used in a freshwater lake. The underwater structure consists of concrete and shaped like a dome. They are filled with rubble, allowing an entire pond to be transformed.

The project is successful, according to the underwater center which will be lakes throughout Michigan to help increase the fish population.

"This is the first study of its kind in Michigan," said Tim Sellick, a reef specialist at U.S. Scuba Center. "We're hoping this will allow bass to grow faster and to be considered populations within the lake."

Stony Creek already has about 30 yards of artificial reef, a combination of boulders, Sellick said. However, the installation of rock reefs and large-mouth bass is not restricted to artificial reefs will help the fish and increase the fish population.

"The fish lives inside this reef. It was a very small study but it means we've got a lot of things going on in the water, which should allow him to grow faster."

The staff at U.S. Scuba have already placed

about a dozen reefs on the east end of the 21-acre lake and plans to add four more reefs throughout the lake. The largest reef ball will be 4 to 5 feet in diameter.

Making the environmental friendly reefs in the lake is not different from merely dropping an old row boat in the lake for fish to live in, Sellick said.

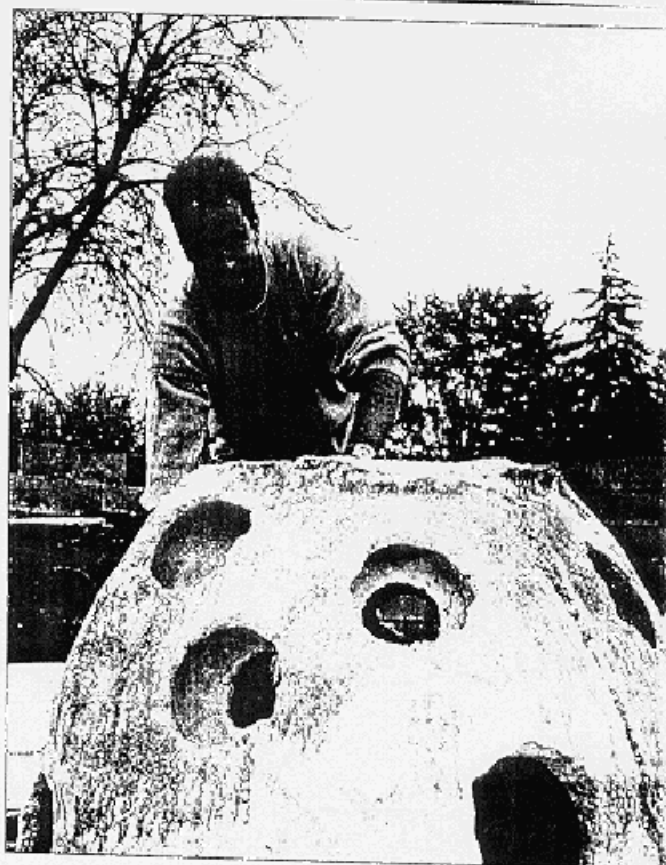
The reef balls are designed to blend in with the habitat. Where they're been used in Florida, construction to it will blend with the environment. This work happens here in Michigan, but the texture is seen that boulders or algae can attach to the reef ball, Sellick said.

The new study is determining the project's success will come in the spring when the bass begin laying their eggs. At that time, divers will be able to gauge how much the bass population is growing.

U.S. Scuba received a grant from the Reef Ball Development Group — an organization of 22 volunteers in Atlanta whose purpose is to help restore the world's marine ecosystems.

By setting up reefs that the reef balls are different from other artificial reefs, said Todd Barber, president of the Reef Ball Development Group. Other artificial reefs may attract a few fish in the short term. However, the long-term effect is that they attract a few fish in a certain area and make them easier to catch, the close monitoring the strength of the species over time.

The ability to create a diverse variety of fish through reef ball placement has already been documented with a winter experiment. Now the staff at U.S. Scuba



Tim Sellick of U.S. Scuba Center stands next to one of the artificial reef balls, sometimes called condoms, that are being placed in Stony Creek Lake in Oxford.

Center is hoping to prove the same type of success that was in fresh water.

The research diving center, owned by Sellick, divers are given 30-minute shifts to lay down the bottom of the lake and mark the numbers and varieties of fish entering and exiting a target area. In exchange for their help with the experiment, divers receive a free day's diving out on the lake.

The project, which will continue for the next three years, is exciting for divers as well as those concerned with the environment. Ray Hill, an Okemos Township resident, has been diving in Stony Creek Lake for the past three years.

"I was down there this weekend, and you can already see crayfish starting to live underneath a couple of them," Hill said. "That's a

good sign because there will be food for the fish, and the crayfish population has been down this year."

Hill also said that during the reef ball project will be an interesting work activity for upcoming diving sessions.

"I think it's an exciting project to see how much we can increase the population diversity of fish living in the lake," Hill said.