

SPORT SAGE

By Ralph "Red" Wakelin



(As "Red" indicated in last week's column, he is vacationing for two weeks in Florida. It affords us great pleasure, and brings back many pleasant memories to welcome Ford Loucks, originator of this column, back to the pages of The Watchman-Warder. Our personal thanks to Ford for a memorable column. - Editor's Note).

30 Years Ago

The request by "Red" to your truly to contribute to "Sport Sage" this week came at an opportune time since it was exactly 30 years ago that the column first saw the light of day. The initial gems were left at Ford Moynes Caroline St. residence about 6:45 a.m. when the author was on his way to work at the Kawartha Lumber Co. This embryo writer at that time had visions of becoming a columnist a la Ted Reeve but the lure, in Peterborough, of what is jokingly referred to as money these days, changed all that. Thus literature and the arts (for the benefit of all concerned) lost a budding impresario.

Affluent Moderns

This week's column is addressed to the young old-timers in Lindsay who can remember the halcyon days of the mid-thirties. The reason for this is obvious. A few years ago I gazed in wonderment while my son dressed for a pee-wee league game and said to myself: "Good heavens, he has better equipment than I had in the Junior and Intermediate O.H.A." So for to-day we'll just forget the affluent young moderns.

Felt Cup

One adventure that remains glued to memory was a voyage by special train to Haliburton with the Lindsay Juniors to play for the Felt Cup. With "Red", Rusty Ringland, the Nichols Bros. et al, we hit the ice at 8:30 p.m. Three games later, at 5:20 a.m., we finally won the trophy and then collapsed in the train for the return trip without bothering to wash the gore from sundry bruises. Upon our arrival in Lindsay, we had to write up the story before hitting the sack. Small wonder that there is bewildered head shaking when to-day's players flip over the board every two minutes at salaries up to \$30,000 a year. But the memories are pure gold.

Diving Tackle

In football all sorts of crazy things happened but the strangest in the experience of the writer was an Intermediate O.R.F.U. game played against Oshawa Blue Devils on the L.C.L. campus. A diving tackle was attempted at an Oshawa backfielder who had thighs of steel protected for some silly reason, by aluminum. Contacting this forehead first sent us into the fog-shrouded never-never land of fantasy....and when reason finally emerged, the two teams had changed ends on the field. For one moment of almost pure panic, we thought that somebody had turned the world upside down (Bill Breese may recall that incident).

Eight End

On the gentler curling scene, there's always the story about an eight end. Now there's nothing terribly spectacular about an 8 end but this one, occurring in 1948, happened to be the first in 35 years of the Quebec International Bonspiel. To explain it briefly, Skip Bill Bethune of Montreal Heather, had piled 8 stones in the right hand side of the house and these were all staring with cold, unblinking eyes when yours truly settled in the back to play the last rock. An outturn draw was tried to the open side of the house and the shot was a masterpiece of finesse - there was only one catch - it never stopped. A skip, placed in this happy position, is looked at by his team mates as if he had just crawled out of an apple.

During the International the following year, an Arvida skip (who happened to be the assistant works manager of the plant) was invited to go up on the stage at the curlers' civic reception in Quebec City's Chateau Frontenac to show how the 8 ender was scored.

He was told to throw, using his best style, a white porcelain receptacle with a handle on the side which, our ancestors would insist, was never manufactured for that kind of horse play and was religiously kept out of sight in the boudoir. It was all pretty hilarious (so I was told).

Fighting Irish

Looking at the more serious side, one wonders what kind of prayer the fighting Irish of Notre Dame recite before they take the field. There was one written by John Milton that always appeared to us as if it belonged to a sportsman's creed:

"This alone grant me that my means may lie,
Too low for envy, for contempt too high;
Some honour I would have, not from great deeds but
good alone;
Rumour can ope the grave:
Acquaintance I would have, but when it depends,
Not upon the number, but on the choice of friends".

Success, in sports above all else, is a balloon in a classroom full of kids armed with sharp pins.

The Instant Arena

The stamina for such escapades came from skating, for miles down the Scugog when the ice became firm enough after the first freeze-up. The arrival of snow meant a session with home made scrapers in the vicinity of the Carew Lumber Company to clear what we would to-day label an instant hockey rink.

Shin bones protected by a few editions of the Ladies' Home Journal, the kids learned to dippy-doodle with their one-piece sticks. When flooding became necessary, a hole was chopped in the ice and the Scugog bubbled up like an Alberta oil well. This was known as work-as-you-go recreation. We wonder if it still exists?