

Sports

Grafton Fastball Tournament



All Roads Lead to Grafton

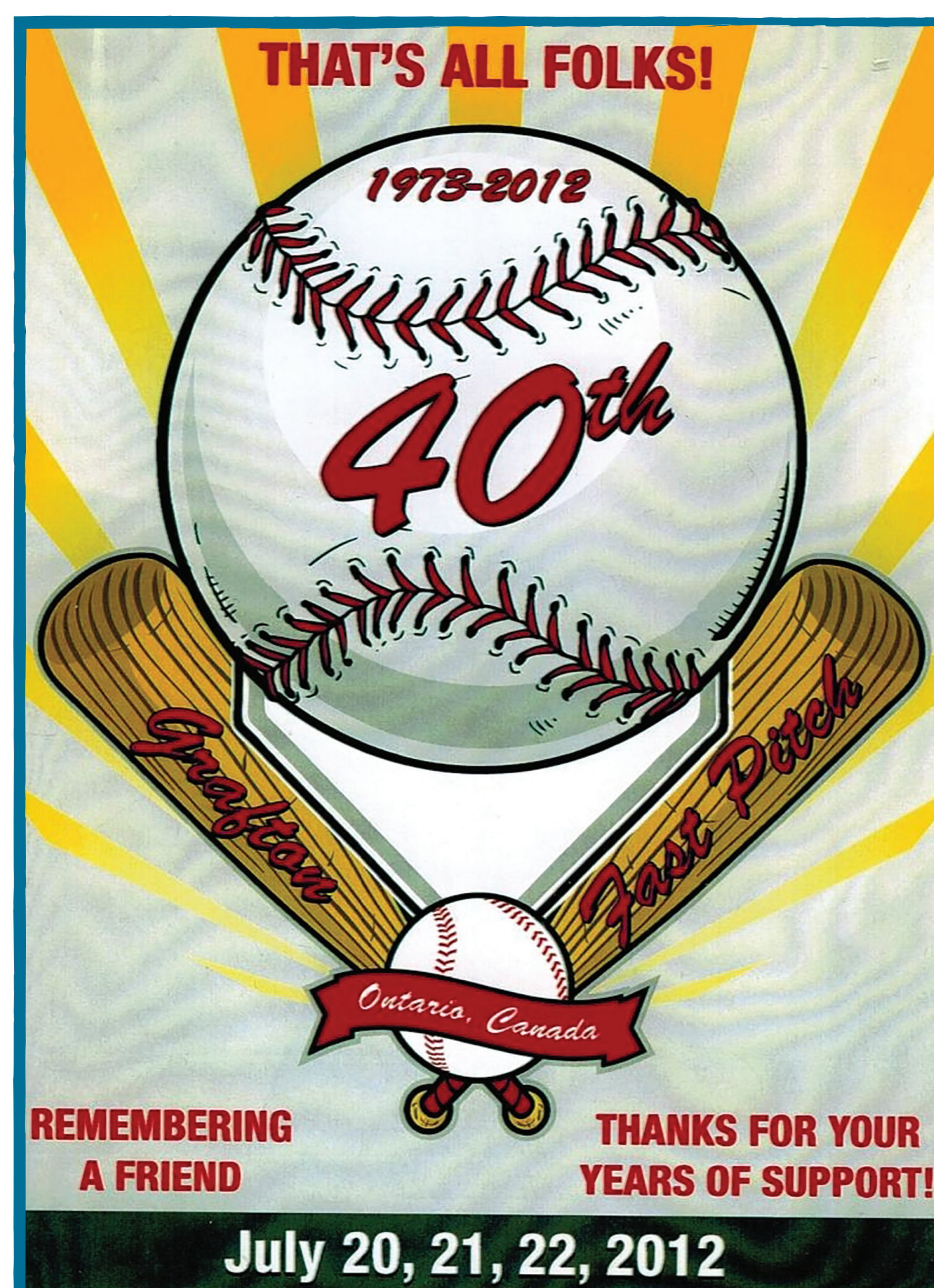
On the last weekend of July 1973, with the prospect of a **“Grand Prize” of just \$100.00**, twelve men's fastball teams competed from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon. It was the beginning of a tradition which lasted for 40 years. As *Cobourg Star* sports reporter Layton Dodge used to say, **“On the third weekend in July all roads lead to Grafton”**.

The tournament was conceived when Ann and Dick Raymond met with Pat and Jack Kernaghan. The Annual Cold Springs Tournament was being discontinued, but the enthusiasm of players and fans was still there. With a good facility already in place, **why couldn't Grafton host a tournament?** When Town officials didn't jump to the idea, the Raymonds took on financial responsibility for that first tournament. **It became the first of forty!**

Participation grew quickly with 7 ladies' teams added in the second year. 1984 saw the largest participation ever as the tournament boasted **32 men's and 20 ladies' teams playing 96 games on 5 diamonds** starting on Thursday evening and concluding Sunday night.

With the turn of the century there was a decline in fastball participation by both men and women. Local leagues were folding and it became extremely difficult to host an event that would attract both players and spectators.

In the spring of 2012 it was decided that 40 years was a great run. As word spread that this would be the final tournament many players contacted friends and made up teams so that **they could say that they played in the Last Grafton Tournament**. A total of 16 men's and 6 ladies' teams competed.



The facilities grew, too. Diamonds were added, along with permanent fencing. Lights on Diamond #1 were upgraded and a scorekeeping facility built. Other additions over the years included an electronic scoreboard on Diamond #1 and new lights on Diamond #2, all made possible through tournament profits and volunteer help.

Volunteers were the key to success. They looked after the diamonds, collected money at the gate, kept score, helped at the bar and canteen facilities... **When you joined this team you signed on for life!** Perhaps the most memorable volunteer was Layton Dodge. He always took his holidays in July to work at the tournament and showcase the event and it's athletes.

2013-2015

Happily, **the tradition has been continuing** with a new Grafton tournament named **in honour of Pat Kernaghan**.

1973-2012

Jack Kernaghan, Ann & Dick Raymond and Layton Dodge were involved in every tournament. Tanya Stittle (Raymond) and Tara Raymond were at every tournament since the day of their birth. At first they had no choice, but then they caught the fever and have many wonderful memories.

**One person played in the first and last tournament?
Can you guess who?**