

Are spring training camps really that necessary?

From the unabashed writer's book of completely make-believe quotes, we unabashedly offer this overheard conversation between an elderly man and his wife as they were touring somewhere in either southern Florida or Arizona.

"What was that?" asked the wife. "A Cardinal," replied the husband.

"And that?" she queried. "A Blue Jay," hubby answered.

"And what about that one?" she continued to insist. "It's only an Oriole," the husband testily replied, ending the conversation.

What have we here, an undiscovered bird-watching haven? No Martha, you can put away the travel folders. The birds the lady was seeing were not of the feathered kind - although some might argue otherwise - they were major league baseball's version of the fowl (foul) returning to the spring training nest.

Until a short while ago, not only spring training but the entire 1990 major league baseball season was in jeopardy because of the dispute between major league owners and the players.

Not wanting to prematurely kill off the fatted calf, both sides came to some sort of an agreement and waddled away from the negotiation table heavily laden with overburdened wallets.

This meant that the Grapefruit League season could get underway. Somewhat shortened this year because of the dispute between the owners and the players, it might best be termed baseball's version of the grapefruit diet with only half a portion being served.

Baseball is truly an amazing sport. It has survived down through the decades virtually unchanged.

Yet its attraction remains strong. In fact, over the last few years it has continued to amaze by attracting even more supporters.

Rumors, gossip and comic-relief provide the meat of news emanating from baseball's spring training camps. But this is as it should be.

It allows the fan to get himself into shape, without too much mental exercise, in time for the grinding rigors of the 162 game regular season.

But is spring training really all that necessary for the players?

The annual baseball spring sojourn to southern climes is reported to have begun in 1886 when legendary Cap Anson took his Chicago White Stockings to Hot Springs, Arkansas, to work off the beer the players drank over the winter months.

Colin Gibson
Sports Editor

"AS I SEE IT"



As more and more teams migrated south, spring training became accepted as an integral part of the baseball season.

But does success in Grapefruit League play (or lack thereof) translate into an actual barometer of how teams will do once regular season play begins.

Methinks not. But don't tell that to the family of Chick Stahl. A rookie manager with the Boston Red Sox in 1907, he committed suicide after his team got off to a rocky 5-13 start in Grapefruit League play.

The Toronto Blue Jays are looking more like bird droppings than baseball players, thus far in 1990 Grapefruit League play, but nobody is suggesting that manager Cito Gaston get the axe.

Last year, the Blue Jays topped all teams in the Grapefruit League then nosedived once regular season play began, leading to the firing of Jimmy Williams. Go figure.

But Cito might be having some niggling thoughts. In 1954, Phil Cavarretta of the Chicago Cubs became the only manager fired during spring training.

Since 1969, 84 teams have finished in first place during spring training, but only 17, however, went on to win their divisions during regular season play.

Ty Cobb and Tim Lincecum are the only players to hold out for the entire duration of spring training.

In 1911 Cobb stayed away from camp over a contract dispute then went on to bat .420 during the regular season.

In 1987 Lincecum, then a free agent, didn't find any takers and resigned with Montreal Expos on May 2. He went on to lead the league in runs scored (123) and hit .330.

Go figure.

The Georgetown Baseball Association will be holding a late registration session, Thursday, April 19 from 7 to 8 p.m. at Centennial School on Delrex Boulevard. The association is hoping to attract more bantam and midget-aged

players to form house leagues in those divisions.

Further information on the Georgetown Baseball Association can be obtained by contacting Donna Blight, 877-8379.

Former Stewarttown Public School teacher, Jim Ridley, also moonlights with the Toronto Blue Jays and scouts Southern Ontario for the major league club.

Ridley, who now teaches at Sam Sherratt Public School in Milton, saw the Blue Jays Ontario scouting staff increase by one recently.

Ron Roncetti, formerly associated with the New York Mets joins the Blue Jays scouting teams.

Other scouts include, Ron Cabot, Mississauga; Walt Jeffries, London; Greg Darichuck, Oakville and John Gill, Niagara Falls.

Now that Wrestlemania VI has been flushed down the toilet, here's a bit of info on Randy "Macho Man" Savage.

He was a switch hitting catcher/outfielder in the early 1970's who never made it past the minor professional level.

And believe it or not, his real name is Randy Poffo. He is the brother of motor-mouth, 'Leapin' Lanny Poffo.

I can see why he changed his name.

Somehow, Randy 'Macho Man' Poffo doesn't exactly instill dread.

Similarly, he is married to the beautiful Miss Elizabeth and can you imagine Randy introducing his children as "the little Poffo's".

This way, he can refer to his brood as 'the little Savages' and who is going to argue with him.

As I see it, anyway.

Georgetown 'Day of Champs'

Georgetown Minor Hockey Association is holding its final registration day today (Saturday) in the lobby of the Gordon Alcott Memorial Arena.

Registration is scheduled to run from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m.

With GMHA spring rep team tryouts running through until April 14 (with the exception of minor and major bantam) it should be noted that players wishing to tryout for a Rep team must first be registered with the GMHA.

The GMHA final spring registration day also coincides with the GMHA House League "Day of Champions" at Gordon Alcott Memorial Arena today (Saturday).

Young gymnast captures gold

Halton Hills Gymnastics Club member, Jennifer Stocks, carried the local club's banner high at a recent inter-club meet in Oakville.

The 10-year-old gymnast won the gold medal in the Pre-Argo floor exercises discipline with a score of 9.65, topping a field of 24 competitors from 10 other clubs.

Jennifer is the only competitive gymnast at the Halton Hills Gymnastics Club and this is her first season in inter-club competition.

On April 28, the Halton Hills Gymnastics Club will send a 21-member team to Guelph to compete in a pre-competitive, Advanced Rec, club competition.

On April 29, The Halton Hills Gymnastic Club will send its pre-competitive team to Milton for a competition.

Both the Guelph and Milton meets are recognized by the Central Ontario Section of the Ontario Gymnastics Federation.

From May 5-10, the Halton Hills Gymnastic Club's pre-competitive team will be competing in Toronto at the Toronto Gymnastics International Club against teams from all over Ontario.

The Halton Hills Gymnastics Club trains nightly in the Rose Room on the top floor of Georgetown Memorial Arena on Mill St.



Jennifer Stocks

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Georgetown resident Maurice "Mac" McLean realized a life-long dream when he and his wife Betty, were able to vacation in Florida recently (courtesy of son Doug) during major league baseball's spring training. A Detroit Tiger fan for roughly 50 years,

Mac and Betty took in a game between the Tigers and the St. Louis Cardinals at the Cardinals spring training camp in St. Petersburg, Florida. (Photo by Mac McLean)

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