

# SPORTS

SPORTS EDITOR: STEVE LeBLANC e-mail sleblanc@miltoncanadianchampion.com

## Glory days revisited

*Campbellville team's dynasty chronicled in The Village Nine*

When one thinks of sports dynasties, the Montreal Canadiens, Boston Celtics and New York Yankees are most likely the names that come to mind.



with STEVE LeBLANC

*In the stands*

Not if you're a longtime resident of a village immediately west of here, however.

While never gracing the cover of Sports Illustrated or making it on TV, the Campbellville Merchants intermediate men's baseball club enjoyed a championship heyday that rivals that of any team — in any sport, at any level.

Even those responsible for the success still find it hard to believe that during Len Andrews' 16-year run as manager (1952-67), the Villagers captured an astounding 12 Ontario titles — not to mention claiming the Halton crown 11 times in a row and amassing an overall record of 411-122-16.

"It's near impossible, when you think about it," said Cliff Bill, an outfielder who was part of the original team in '52. "I don't know if you want to use the word magical, but it kind of was. It'll never be done again."

Local fans can now re-live those glory days all over again through *The Village Nine*, a recently-released collection of newspaper articles and photographs chronicling the area's most prosperous sporting era.

Collected by a now-departed Andrews, the reports — primarily from the *Champion* — form the bulk of a 518-page book that's been extremely well received by both players and fans alike this summer.

"It's brought back an awful lot of fond memories," said Ken Moore, who played the most number of games during the dynasty and assisted Andrews' son-in-law Dan Waterson and granddaughter Katie in completing the project. "Len's father had played the era before, but there was very little written back then. It almost became the stuff of folklore, and Len wanted to make sure this ('50s and '60s dynasty) was remembered. He passed away two years ago, but it's great to see his hopes for this book realized."

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Historical Society, *The Village Nine* includes a forward from Andrews' son Peter, who recounts his years spent delivering his father's game reports to the *Champion's* Campbellville correspondent.

That Monday morning ritual is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the flavour provided in the book — which along with the newspaper coverage of the day includes

**LOOKING BACK:** Above, former Campbellville baseball players (from left) Harry Hamilton, Don Joyce, Cliff Bill and Jack Roberts display some old uniforms and equipment in front of the old scoreboard. At left, the old ball park's plaque lists the village's provincial championship teams, including the 12 during the era chronicled in *The Village Nine*.

GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

schedules, stats and a team photo from each year.

Of course, one aspect of the championship reign that would be downright impossible to convey on paper is just how much the team captivated the village and its surrounding hamlets. Comprised almost entirely of local boys — some with very little baseball experience before coming under Andrews' tutelage — the Merchants galvanized the village and surrounding hamlets like few young fans today can possibly imagine.

"Of course that was before TV was really around and golf was so popular," said former ace pitcher Harry Hamilton. "Baseball was a way of life back then and they'd come a long way to see us."

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