

# Hey! Let's hear a big round of applause for volunteers

When the season turns from winter's cold and snow to fragrant breezes which carry the wafting aromas of freshly turned earth, kids of all ages put away their skates and root around for bats, balls, skateboards and soccer shoes.

With spring a young man's fancy turns to sport, be it on the diamond, the pitch, or the street.

As we near the millennium girls have also taken up the cry of their brothers and demanded equal access to sport.

Adults too have flocked to sport in the last decade.

Where once a baseball glove lay unloved and forgotten in some dingy, musty closet once a man married or reached the age where morning-after stiffness got the better of him, now it continues to see the light of day.

While the participation levels in our society have risen, it has caused a problem. There are a dwindling number of people left who are willing to coach the house league teams which make up the bulk of minor sports.

Given the opportunity to play adult sports and the limited time that a fast-paced



## Reaume With A Sports View

with BRAD REAUME

metropolitan lifestyle affords, it's no wonder volunteers are harder to come by.

When I was young the fathers would descend on the minor teams like locusts on a field of corn. We didn't realize the advantages of having a pitching coach, a batting coach and coaches for sliding, baserunning, and strategy as well as the head coach. Today kids are lucky to have the same face post the lineup each game.

More and more the volunteers in traditional male sports are mothers. It's a good thing too, that mothers realize the importance of attending to the mundane details.

It's little wonder that despite a reduction in volunteer personnel most leagues have been

able to stay in operation. It's a tribute to the organizational skills of mothers.

Of course, volunteers do more than coach. These people give huge amounts of time to fundraising, administration and financial concerns. In larger cities the budget for a minor sports league can run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Think about that when your next-door neighbour says he's the president of a minor soccer organization.

I've even seen examples of people volunteering for some of these positions solely to improve their resume.

It is a pretty marketable skill, being able to oversee a budget of \$250,000 and control the functions of hundreds of volunteer coaches and convenors, as well as paid personnel like referees and umpires.

In addition the ability to co-ordinate shipments of hundreds of uniforms, balls, bats and other equipment and get them out to the proper teams is almost superhuman.

And yet, it gets done. Somehow, through the admonishment of friends, relatives or participants the vast army

which runs minor sports to the enjoyment of thousands gets the job done. So in the next few weeks, when your neighbour trots out to his car, loads it up with baseballs and bats, or pylons for soccer practice, remember when you played minor sports and do as the pros do: "Give a little something back."

Surely the smile of a gapped-toothed kid is worth the trouble. The memories of parents waking at 5 a.m. to deliver kids to hockey practice live with a lot of us. Remember, some tired adult was already at the rink waiting for you to arrive.

If the difficulty of dealing with the troublesome kids or the untalented kids is a problem, think of the kids who need a little encouragement and maybe a little discipline. Kids look to adults for leadership, in deeds as well as words. Those adults can be parents, teachers and sometimes coaches.

So give a kid a break. Give your neighbours a break. Give your body a break. Instead of playing on three adult teams, drop one and get involved with your neighbours. Hey, it looks good on your resume.

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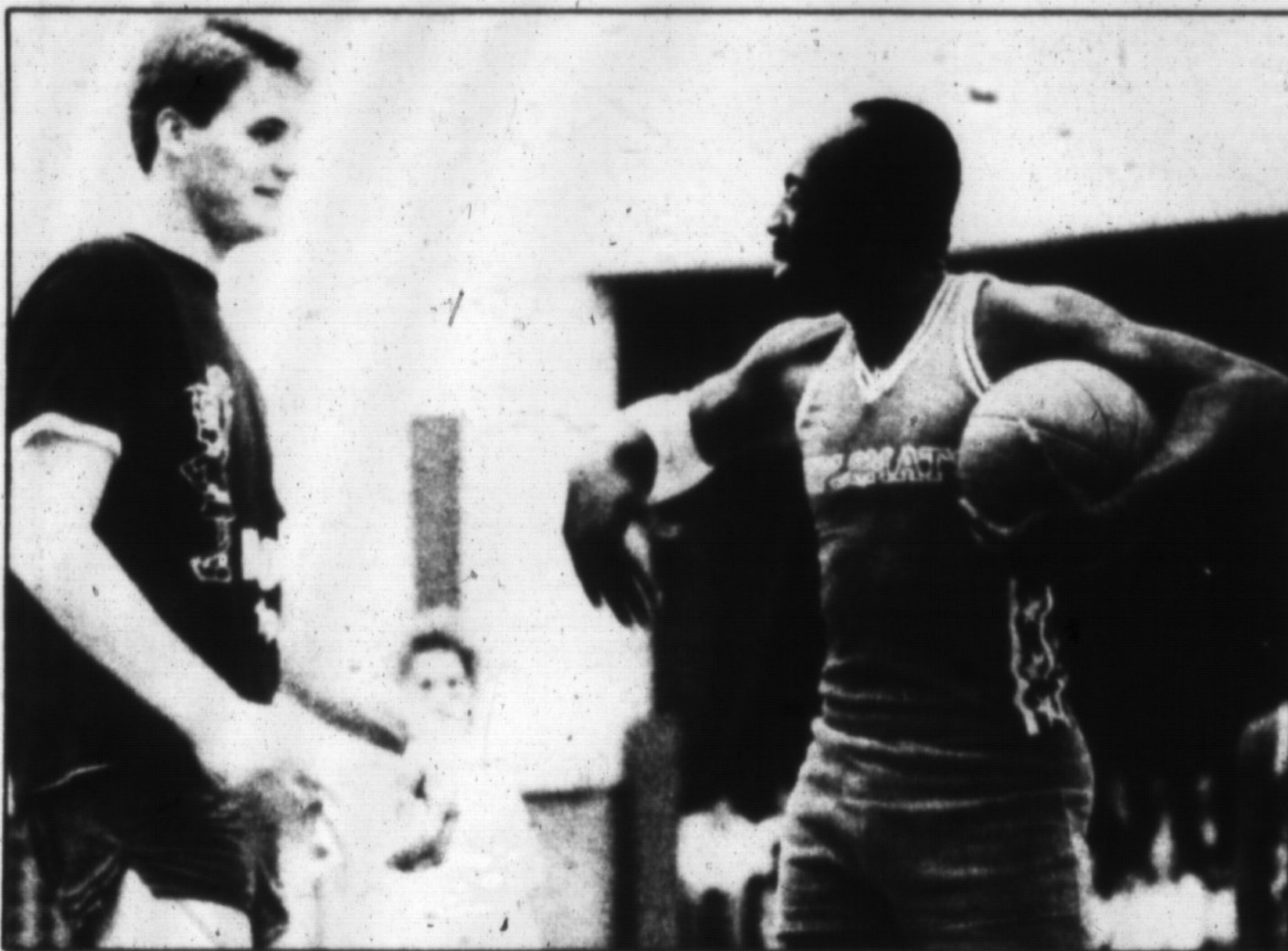
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THE RACER'S EDGE



Photos by JON BLACKER

Mustang basketball player Lance Postma got right into the action when the Harlem Diplomats visited Milton District High School Wednesday. The touring team aims to put on a show to entertain the crowd with comedy and displays of basketball skill and trickery. In both pictures Postma is the center of Goose Junior's attention. Goose is the spark of the Diplomats show.



## Harlem Diplomats bring their basketball roadshow to MDHS

By BRAD REAUME

The Harlem Diplomats hit the court at Milton District High School Wednesday to display their particular brand of entertainment.

The mixture of comedy, basketball skill and tricks left each member of the crowd with a smile. The Diplomats were on tap to play at MDHS a few weeks ago, but a snowstorm threw a wrench into the works of their tight schedule, forcing cancellation.

The team is led by Goose Junior, who has been with the Diplomats from shortly after their creation in the mid-1960s. Frank Starks, a 15-year veteran, George Daniels (a five year Diplomat) and Kenny Lee (three years) form the core of the squad.

Jason Little, a Toronto native, is presently touring with the Diplomats while team members Robert McCloud and Keith Money are unable to travel. McCloud is expected back with the team shortly after a stay in hospital and Money is taking some time to attend to family matters.

"We are doing a major tour of Canada now," said Goose Junior. "We have a promotional possibility with Brooks Shoes of Canada. There could be a television commercial involved and

the company wants us to concentrate our tour in Canada."

The team is also marketing a line of sweats and assorted knick-knacks, Goose mentioned.

The Diplomats played at Milton District four years ago. This year they faced a squad of students and teachers including Betsy Merry, Gary Hans, Carla Johnson and Lance Postma, MDHS' representative in the Halton Classic all star basketball game last week.

"We've toured all over Ontario including North Bay and Timmins," said Goose. "By the end of this season I expect we'll have played from Vancouver right through to Halifax."

The Diplomats play a seven month season from October to May. "We play every day," Goose said. "A lot of those northern towns are very receptive because they don't get this stuff very often. We do okay in the States but people their get this kind of thing on a regular basis."

On the court Goose is the centre of attention. He directs the troops and is the butt of most jokes. Most importantly, his unusual hook shot, performed while walking away from the basket and usually from a great distance, helps to keep the Diplomats ahead on the scoreboard.

"We don't worry about the Globetrotters (whose act they emulate), we're an entertainment. If we get invited back, then we've been successful, and we've been invited back to a lot of places," Goose explained.

The team makes good money, he said, and they give talks to students about drug abuse and growing up. "I do it because I love it," he stressed. "It's a rewarding job. I hope to touch someone either in the classroom or on the court."

The game featured the talents of the Diplomats and their repertoire of tried and true routines, which depend upon the typical reactions of their opponents. When he failed to act as calculated, Postma took a hard pass in the side of the head, which he cheerfully shook off.

"For some reason the Catholic schools are better draws for us," Goose said. "We absolutely packed Loyola in Oakville and St.

Thomas Aquinas in Brampton. At Dante High School in Toronto we had to play two shows."

Goose said the Diplomats don't think about the Globetrotters at all but they do bow to an opening display of ball handling with the Globetrotters theme music "Sweet Georgia Brown" booming through the sound system.

Goose also mentioned that during his 20 years with the team he has seen the level of high school basketball rise dramatically in Canada. The Diplomats often play in high schools and they are usually provided with a team of local high school players as their opposition. His unique vantage point gives Goose a platform from which to judge.

Almost as an afterthought the Diplomats performed a piggy-back alley-oop dunk at the buzzer to seal the locals' fate 40-39.

Judging by the happy faces, the Diplomats will wend their way back to Milton for yet another show.