

Sportscene



by

Garry Forbes

Jesters on top of game

An unassuming subdued-yellow van glides along Burke Street, stopping beside McGuire Park.

Ron Marchildon jogs out, speaks to the van's driver, jogs to a nearby house and runs out of breath but finds sanctuary for the vehicle.

Out climbs the show. "Who is this Jack fella, anyway?" cries an onlooker near the Georgian Bay Fastball League All-Stars' bench. The loud man chuckles, knowing his question will soon be answered as Jack and the Jesters prepare for their warm-up.

Jack and the Jesters are Rusty "Jack" Sparks, Rick Paychex, Les Barber, Harvey "Boogie Shoes" Burke, Archie Hamm and T.C. Collins. They are seven of the world's best softball players, and all but the latter two came to Penetanguishene Monday night to display their talents to more than 500 spectators—and inflict their prowess of a plucky Georgian Bay Fastball league delegation.

Sparks pitches

Sparks pitches: around his back, around his knees, around the batter. He pitches up, down, slow, fast. He throws whirligigs, spins, twists, turns, rewinds. He throws the purpose pitch, which only the catcher seems to see.

His jesters cajole and catch amazing catches and hit amazing hits.

Their opponents are having fun and the spectators are thrilled. Jack and the Jesters are talented entertainers. The performers arrive, make their money, and leave for a new town tomorrow night.

But they are more than mere barnstormers. Unlike some sporting entertainment like roller derby, "all-star" wrestling and Evel Knievel, Jack and the Jesters have something concrete to offer.

They enjoy the sport and are sincerely interested in its growth. Each is an enthusiastic, caring promoter of an activity that has been taking quite a beating in the last few years.

King and Court

Eddie (King and his Court) Feighner, the best softball pitcher in the world and model for Jack Sparks, told an American television audience last month that "softball is dying."

That's an overstatement, says Leroy Star, driving force behind the Jesters. In the U.S., men's softball is suffering, but it's growing in popularity among high school and college women's athletic programs.

In Canada, it was hurt by the arrival of major league baseball, but in the less densely populated areas, especially in the west, softball is flourishing. In some places the Peoria, Illinois-based Jesters have drawn more people than seemed possible for the size of the community.

But in most cases, when the Jesters leave and the local clubs return to the diamond, it's back to audiences composed of wives, winos and a few kids.

Leroy Star likes to see people cram into a rural ball park to watch the Jesters, but he likes just as much to see the same people cram in to watch the sport.

And it's the kids the Jesters want to sway. "I've been told that when we leave a place, sporting goods stores dust off their softball equipment stock because the kids want to try it out," Star said. "You'll see kids trying the tricks around the town's ball parks after we leave."

The Evel Knievel Syndrome?

They'll succeed

Yes. But the kids aren't breaking bones trying to ride their bikes over ravines. They're learning a recreation, expressing interest in something other than vandalism.

More importantly, if serious development in community softball grows, the kids' heroes turn out to live just down the street.

In an era of overpaid, egocentric professional ball players who have no more contact with their paying customers than a blank stare out of a bubble-gum card, it's refreshing to witness a sampling of the best in a sport which has its roots in the very hearts of communities across North America.

With the help of willing and able people like Frances St. Amant, Ron Marchildon and Mayor Vince Moreau, Jack and the Jesters will continue their campaign in communities across the continent in an effort to spark interest in a truly unique recreation.

And judging by their enthusiasm, they will succeed in that goal.



The pitch

Rusty "Jack" Sparks winds up to deliver his Purpose Pitch. "The purpose of the Purpose Pitch is to separate the hitter's head from his body," Sparks said. No one got hit, but no one hit it, either.

Staff photo



The swing

John Norton of Penetang Expos takes his best shot...

Staff photo



Next?

...but the only thing that flew was his hat.

Staff photo

Caswell's outhit Lercar - game ends in 2-2 tie

Caswell's Antiques outhit their opponents by almost three to one, but still came up with a 2-2 deadlock in Georgian Bay Fastball league action last Tuesday at McGuire Park.

Lercar Construction's Alvin Robillard, the league's top slugger with a .560 average, pitched five innings of relief and allowed three of Caswell's eleven game-long hits. Andy Forget gave up four hits in going the distance for Caswell's.

Lercar opened the scoring in the top of the first inning when Ken Edgar singled, advanced to third on a sacrifice and scored on a ground out.

Bob Larmand brought things back for Caswell's when he homered over the left field fence in the second inning, and Forget put his club ahead in the third after singling and crossing the plate, with help from Art Desroches' and Ron Blanchard's singles.

Lercar was saved in

their last at-bat when Robillard doubled and scored on a sacrifice fly.

The win was Lercar's sixth of the season, moving them to within six points of Hotel Brule with two games in hand.

Caswell's July 3 game against Athenian Raiders was rained out and will be replayed Sunday.

Raiders 4, Islanders 0
John Young allowed only two hits, walked one batter and struck out 13 Christian Island Islanders as his Athenian

Raiders earned a 4-0 victory last Wednesday.

Keith Bath started Raiders in the third inning by doubling and scoring on one of Islanders' three errors. A double from Young, Rick Lemieux's single and another Islander error produced two more runs in the fifth inning.

Scoring was completed in the sixth when Jim Marchand doubled and scored on Earl Cousineau's single.

Tim Sylvester took the loss after throwing two strikeouts, allowing two walks and only one earned run on seven Raiders' hits.

Victory for C and G team

Donna Brooks hit two home runs to lead Penetang G and C to a 26-9 thumping of Victoria Harbour in Georgian Bay Intermediate Ladies' Softball league play last Thursday at McGuire Park.

Brooks also slugged three singles and walked once. Other hot Penetang bats were held by Pat Robitaille, who had four singles, Marg Dorion,

who hits two singles and a homer, and Dale Butt, who hit one home run.

Penetang outhit their opponents 28-26 and only committed three errors to Victoria Harbour's five. Joyce Puddicombe and Doreen Ramanowski each hit two singles for the visitors.

Dorion and Butt shared the win, and Lucy Larmand and Ramanowski took the loss.

Fin, Fur and Feather

by Bryan Berreault

The start of the 1978 Little Lake Bass derby was second only to the Indy 500. Six in the morning saw over 100 contestants heading for the open waters in hopes of being the number one finisher in the 78 Derby.

As most entrants will agree the fishing was poor. Smaller bass were eager to bite, but the big old mossbacks were hiding to hit another day. By the noon weigh-in the largest fish weight in at three pounds and as the day progressed it proved to be the eventual winner. Steve Spence will wear the crown as winner of the 1978 Little Lake Bass Derby. Steve was using a jitterbug when the smallmouth bass smashed the bait. After a short tussle the fish was netted and was to win the Derby.

Stories of a stringer full of monster fish somewhere on the bottom of Little Lake send many of the unsuccessful fisherman out on the lake to tread the bottom for the possible winner. Runner-up to Spence were Dan Fontana, John Pitonczko, Bill Clarke, Smokey Woods and George Smith.

As the number of entrants proves the Derby is growing fast. If the growth rates continues we will have to fish in shifts to get enough room to wet a line.

Penetang-Midland Ball Hockey

Dupuis defeats EG Mink

Dupuis Groceteria Leafs maintained their dominance of the Penetang-Midland Ball Hockey League's Letter Division by sinking E. G. Mink Insurance 5-2 at Penetanguishene Arena Sunday.

League scoring leader Gary Bellisle scored once and assisted Terry King for the winner. Mark Lavigne also picked up a goal and an assist, and other Leafs goals were scored by Martin Duquette and Basil

Ladouceur. Gary Baker and Steve Agnew were the Mink marksmen, and Peter Knight picked up assists on both goals.

Leafs outhot Mink 39-19.

Stompers 3, Graphicteam 1
Cumming-Nicholson Stompers fired 31 shots at Graphicteam goaltender Terry Dubeau in their successful takeover bid of the league's Number Division.

Joe Gagnon. Dave

Ogilvie and Byron Webster each managed to get the ball past Dubeau, and Greg Marchildon was Graphicteam's lone goal-scorer.

The win was Stompers' third of the season, giving them eight points—one more than second-place E.G. Mink Insurance.

Stompers 2, Bantus 2
Bantus capitalized on a two-man power-play with only 38 seconds remaining in the game to

earn a 2-2 tie with Penetang IGA Strikers.

Strikers opened up a 2-0 lead on goals by Ken Ladouceur and Mike Duval, and held the margin until ten minutes remained in the contest.

Steve Graham put Bantus back in the game at that point, and Dave Parent received a pass from Roland Beausoleil to even it up in the dwindling seconds.

Hawks 4, Blues 1
Blues reserve

goaltender Ozzie Marion didn't leave much to shoot at but what he did leave was found by Olympia Sports Hawks' Ron Lalonde.

Lalonde connected on three of the 40 shots fired at Marion, and Gerald Gignac scored Hawks' other goal. Peter Dupuis had the only Blues marker.

The win moved Hawks into a second-place tie with Graphicteam in the league's Number Division.



Ball hockey

A Dupuis Groceteria Leafs player breaks across the blueline between two E.G. Mink Insurance defenders in Penetang-Midland

Ball Hockey league play at Penetanguishene Arena Sunday. Leafs, top team in the eight-entry league, won the game 5-2. Staff photo