

### Sports Views



by Ron Johnson

## Sour grapes and the SRFL

Let's be controversial this week, and maybe just a little nasty!

Midland Athenian Raiders first-place finishers in the regular season of the Simcoe Rural Fastball League, got knocked out of the league playoffs in the opening round last week.

Now maybe that's earth-shattering news, or maybe it's not.

The Raiders had won the SRFL championship the past four seasons, and this season won their final 10 starts to cop first place in the 11-team loop.

It may not be surprising that they got knocked off by Hillsdale Hustlers, because some folks, this person included, thought that Hustlers were the best club in the league at the start of the season.

What is a little surprising is the way in which the Raiders met their demise.

In the old eight, nine, and 10 team set-ups of the Rural League, only six teams made the post-season playoffs, with the first-place team going straight into a best-of-seven semi-final series with the lowest playoff qualifier.

Last year, in revamping the constitution to better suit the league, the new playoff format called for the top eight teams to be involved with all four opening round series to be of the very deadly best-of-three type.

There are no advantages to ending high up in the regular season standings, since the top team faces the fifth-place team, second plays sixth, etc.

Therefore, by this stranger-than-life situation, it makes it almost inevitable that one or more of the top four teams will meet disaster in the first round of the playoffs.

It was an obvious ploy on several of the teams in the league, who unmistakably and irrevocably dislike and envy the Raiders' winning legacy of the past few years, to make it easier to GET the Raiders.

Raiders, although disdained and despised by some around the SRFL, have always represented the league in the finest fashion in local and other tournaments. They are also the number one drawing card around the league.

So, to those who set the playoff "trap" for Midland, here's to you. It worked. (It also cost you the Phelpston team!)

For all you disgruntled fans around the league-you won't have the Raiders to blame if your team doesn't win it this year!

Does this sound like sour grapes? It is, but it also is an accurate description of the playoff system we all hate so much in the National Hockey League each spring.

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And now for something completely different.

How about that Midland Therrien's intermediate ladies fastball team? Leading their playoff game against Sturgeon Bay by the score of 19-17 last Thursday, they walked off the playing field because the dark made it unsafe to play.

They originally had to forfeit the game to Sturgeon Bay, and trailed the best-of-five series, two games to one.

Ladies, this may have been the right and safe thing to do, but what did it cost? It's the umpire's duty to call the game on account of darkness, not yours. Let the losing side walk off, if anyone does.

Doesn't the game itself mean anything anymore?

Now, as it turns out, the game will be resumed tomorrow night, starting where they left off in the bottom of the seventh inning. Midland leads by two runs, so maybe they did the right thing after all.

We disagree though!

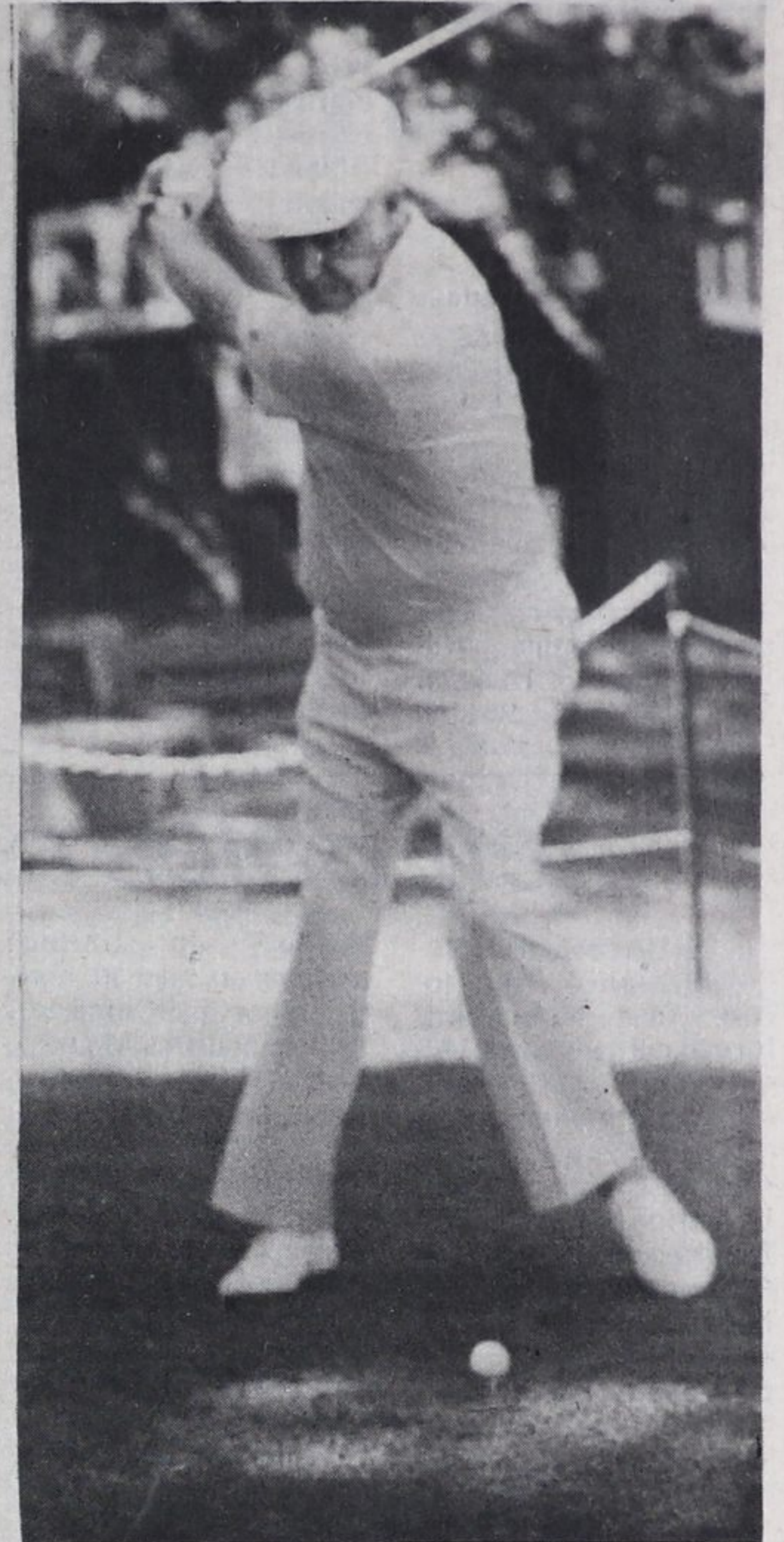


### Les Marsell Day

Saturday was a special day at Midland Golf and Country Club. It was Les Marsell Day, and a chance for members of the club to say thanks to Les for his 20 years of service as the pro, and to play a friendly

round of golf with him. In the photo at left, Wilf Parker, who was the MGCC pro from 1952 to 1963 when Les took over, returned to the club to share in Marsell's day.

Parker is on the left and Marsell is on the right in the picture. In the photo at right, Les Marsell shows off his winning style as he tees off on the first hole.



## Les Marsell Day at Midland GCC

Saturday at Midland Golf and Country Club, was Les Marsell Day. It was an opportunity for the members of the club to show their appreciation and say thanks to Les for the dedicated job he has done as the club pro over the last two decades.

The day began with a round of golf, played by about 75 club members,

and continued into the evening with a dance and dinner in Marsell's honour.

Les Marsell is retiring after 20 years on the job at MGCC. He began in 1963, taking over from Wilf Parker.

When asked to assess his years as pro at Midland, this was Marsell's answer.

"It's been an opportunity to enjoy a

beautiful golf course, a beautiful job, and some beautiful people. It's been an enjoyable 20 years."

Now that he is retired and free to get away, obviously Les will spend some time travelling and enjoying his leisure, right?

Not so. This is what Marsell has planned. "I'm going to play some golf, and enjoy

this course. I haven't played 18 holes on the course yet this year."

The tournament on Saturday was a complete surprise to Marsell until Thursday, when he encountered some old friends who were in Midland to attend the ceremonies.

In all, about 75 players took the opportunity to play a friendly round of golf

with Les Marsell, and about 100 enjoyed the dinner and dance in the evening.

Marsell played his round with Wilf Parker, "Toots" Wallace, and Bob Martin, and teed off about 11:30 a.m. As is fitting, his initial tee shot went long and straight down the fairway.

We hope that all your shots remain just that good! Enjoy retirement, Les Marsell!

### End of an era

## Hillsdale eliminates Athenian Raiders

The Midland Athenian Raiders will not be the champions of the Simcoe Rural Fastball League in 1983.

Raiders' four year hold on the SRFL title came to an end last Thursday night when Hillsdale Hustlers defeated them 4-2 in the third and deciding game of their best-of-three playoff series.

It was the second straight win for Hillsdale after Midland opened the series with a 4-2 win at home. Score of the second contest was 8-6 for Hillsdale.

Hustlers started the game off in the second frame. Greg Wolfenden, who played a fine game at third base, singled with one out in the top of the inning. Rob Greenlaw tried to sacrifice him to second, and was safe on first

when Wolfenden beat the throw to second.

Mike Halleyburton cleared the bases with a booming triple, and scored himself when Joe Melnyk singled behind him.

This three-run outburst proved to be all the offence that Hillsdale would need for the evening.

They tacked on an insurance run in the fifth inning when Dan Breeden singled and scored on Mark Ronald's double to deep left-centre.

For the game, Hillsdale had nine hits and left six runners stranded on the base paths.

Athenian Raiders made the game close in the bottom of the second inning when they tallied twice and left two other runners on base.

Kim Ormiston singled with one out, and Brent Gordon followed with the first of his two singles in the game.

After Butch Smitten, the designated hitter, grounded out to second and advanced the runners, Dave Sarson singled for the first run. Mike Huffman followed with another single to plate Gordon.

There was a controversial play on Huffman's single to centre. Sarson, who was on second after Halleyburton's throw to the plate on his single, ran into Hillsdale shortstop Rob Greenlaw on his way to third.

The umpires, Ron McKay behind the plate and Dan Cousineau on the bases, did not call interference on the play, and Sarson only advanced to third. He had

a chance to score on Huffman's well-hit shot to centre, but with the collision at shortstop, he stayed on third.

The way that Halleyburton was throwing bullets to the plate all evening, the question of Sarson scoring on the play was left to speculation.

Winning pitcher for Hillsdale was Mark Ronald, who gave up just six hits, fanned two, and walked just one.

Bruce Guthrie took the loss, allowing all nine hits, and walking two. He struck out no one.

So, for the first time in five years, Midland Athenian Raiders will not be playing ball in the last weeks of August. The dynasty has come to an end, and the pressure on the Raiders' players to repeat as

champions has been removed.

Now they have to worry about regaining a lost championship.

In other SRFL playoff action on Thursday, Wyebridge Warriors advanced to the semi-finals with a 3-2 win over Elmvale Expos. The win gave Wyebridge the series two games to one.

Caswell's Antiques and Vasey Royals tied the third game of their best-of-three series, and scheduled their fourth game for Monday night in Vasey.

Semi-final match-ups this year, will pit Vasey Seniors against the winner of the Royals-Caswell series in one set. The other series will see Wyebridge square off against Hillsdale. Both series will be three-out-of-five affairs.