

Old pro shows them how it is done

There will be other Monday nights spent down at the ball park playing fun baseball with the boys.

There will even be the odd dazzling fielding play where, momentarily, a once-a-week athlete takes on the appearance of a seasoned pro.

But if the guys keep the thing going another 100 years, there will never be another drama to equal what went on last Monday night, just before quitting time at 11 p.m. in the Stouffville Park.

For you non-jocks out there, those people who would just as soon take a walk in the garden as tune the Blue Jays in on the tube, I



FROM WHERE I LIVE
Bruce Stapley

must point out that this is not really a baseball story. It's an account of one man's refusal to accept the usual restrictions imposed by the aging process.

Both Hassard has known the glory of a Stanley Cup victory. The Stouffville resident played

for the Toronto Maple Leaf teams of the early 50s. Teams that knew what it was like to win.

His earlier years in Stouffville saw him impart his knowledge of things sporting to the likes of Keith Acton, and many others who have achieved various levels of success.

But now, at the age of 59, Bob is quite happy to ride his bike down to the park every Monday night and play a rather casual brand of baseball with all the other over 25 year olds.

And while everybody still respects his savvy and his skills, there can be a tendency to go a little easy on the elder statesman.

So when old Has found himself caught in a run down between third base and home plate on Monday, there were some, like myself, who were more than a little concerned for the old veteran.

A run down is perhaps the most grueling ordeal a ball player can go through, as he is required to sprint back and forth in an effort to elude the tag of two, three, or more opposing players bent on touching him with the ball.

It's a test of stamina for even the best conditioned ball player. But here was Has darting this way and that, a look of grim determination all over his face, as he

played the game like a caged animal.

Back and forth he went, eluding men 25 years his junior. At the peak of the action, there were five red-shirted members of the other team in pursuit, surrounding him trying to finally put an end to this contest.

"I wanted to run out and yell 'Time', and insist they just let Has go back to third. But they had no intentions of letting him off the hook. It was, after all, still a competition."

Has made one last desperation dart towards the plate. The third baseman made a quick toss towards the catcher. Surely this

time they'd get him. He had to be out of gas by now.

But the ball bounced off a glove. The catcher scrambled to retrieve it. Has dove head first towards the plate, landing on his stomach, six feet short of his goal.

In a final determined effort, he jumped up on his hands and knees, crawling the last few feet, slapping the plate with outstretched hand. He was safe.

His team mates poured out onto the field as one. Both teams broke into thunderous applause.

The old guy had defied all the odds, teaching his juniors a textbook lesson on one of the finer points of baseball.

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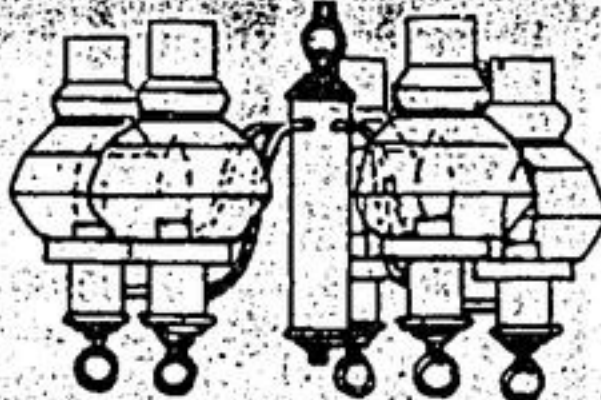
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