

Stouffville's John White: the umpire strikes back

By BRUCE STAPLEY
John White believes that umpires should stick to umpiring, so that the players can play, and everyone has fun.

The Manitoba Street resident who is in his sixth year as a carded umpire, feels that it's vital for an ump to remember that it's the game that's important, not the person calling the balls, strikes and outs.

The ex-coach, who guided his Stouffville District Secondary School softball team to the York-Simcoe championships in 1981, is dedicated to the Whitchurch-Stouffville minor ball program.

He has watched it increase in size from 32 to over 60 teams since he became involved, and felt his greatest contribution would be as an umpire.

"There has always been a shortage of umpires," John states. "I had coached house league at the Pee-wee and Bantam level, but I realized I could contribute towards 30 kids having fun at once if I umpired, rather than 15 if I stayed on as a coach."

John is a member of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Umpires Association, and as such is called upon to officiate for area adult leagues, in fastball and slowpitch, as well as in the minor ball program.

He played hardball as a child in the Leaside League in Toronto, and was with the A&S Raiders slowpitch team in Stouffville for three years.

"I would like to be playing myself, but I can't find a team," he admits.

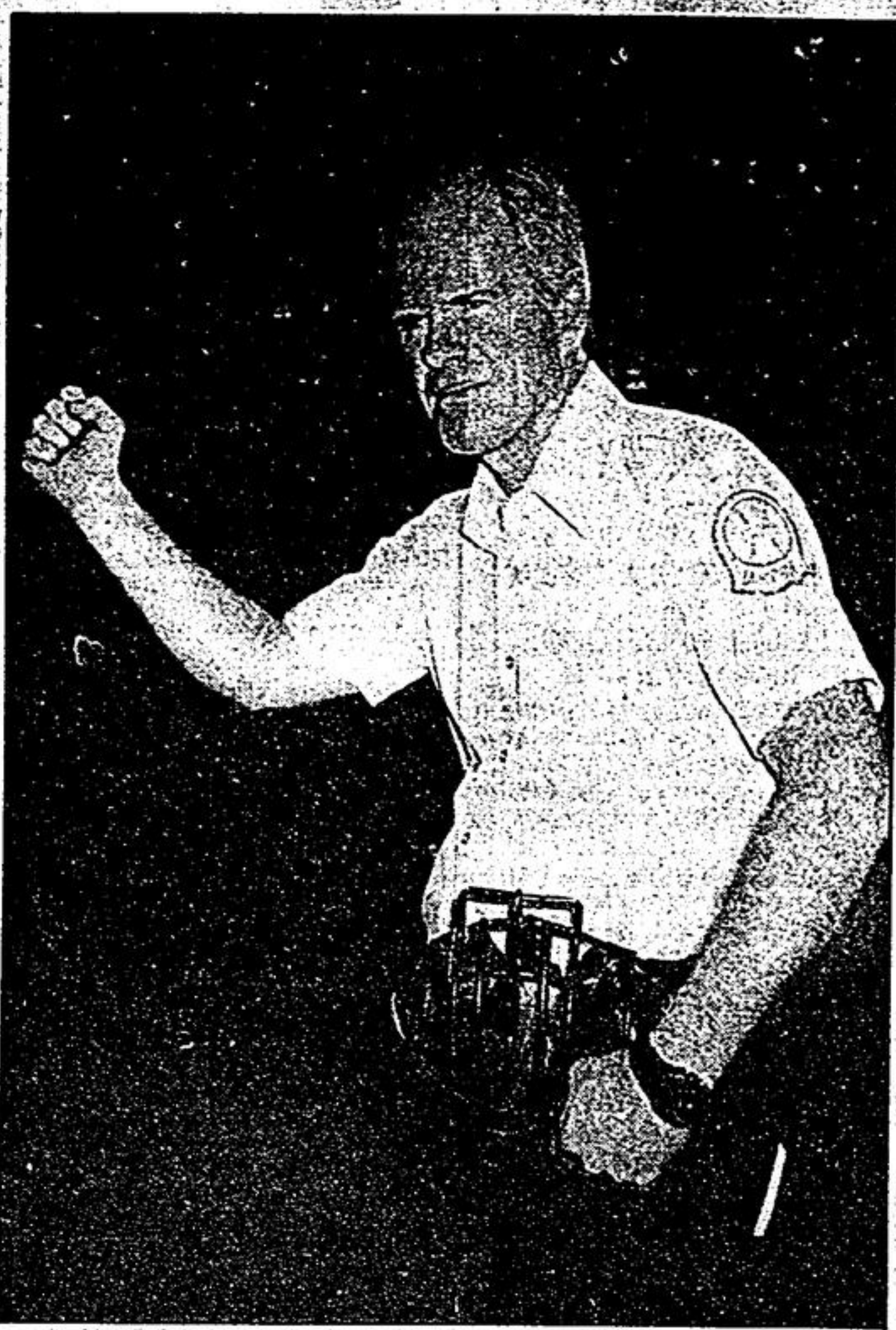
Baseball interest seems to run in the White family. John's wife Dianne has been involved in the administration of the local minor ball program for years, and all three daughters have played at one time or another. Kris, who is 14, umpires as well.

"It's certainly not for the money that I umpire," John says. "But someone's got to do it. Most people would rather sit back and watch, or play ball themselves than umpire."

On the field, John tries to be just one of the guys.

"I like to have fun. If I can have fun, then you know the kids are having fun."

But he is also in control of the game, and he feels the players have come to know just how far



John White is a familiar site at the Stouffville ball diamonds during the summer. He's the one who makes the calls and settles the brawls. John has been an umpire for six years.

they can push him.

"You have to maintain control of yourself, the situation and the game," he claims.

"I get to know most of the players, and they get to know me," he continues. "They know what they can get away with. They go so far, then they back off."

He admits there have been times he's had to eject a player or coach from a game, but adds he always considers the game and the situation before doing so.

"The situation will dictate how much you'll take," he says. "In a close game, you have to remember the player is intense — he's into the game. I have to

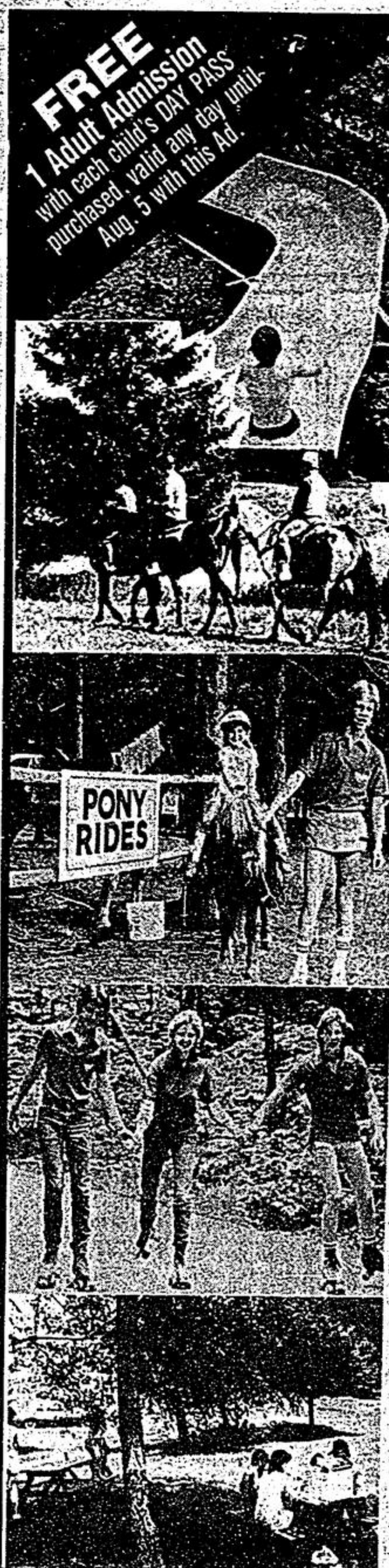
consider what happens if I toss him. Is the game going to end because there are no reserves? Is it their best player? Will it affect the outcome of the game?"

As for accurate calls, John admits to being human.

"My calls are not 100 per cent right, but I'd like to feel I'm right 95 per cent of the time."

And John White is pleased with the overall shape of minor ball in Stouffville.

"It's in good condition," he says. "There is good talent, and it's a good organization."



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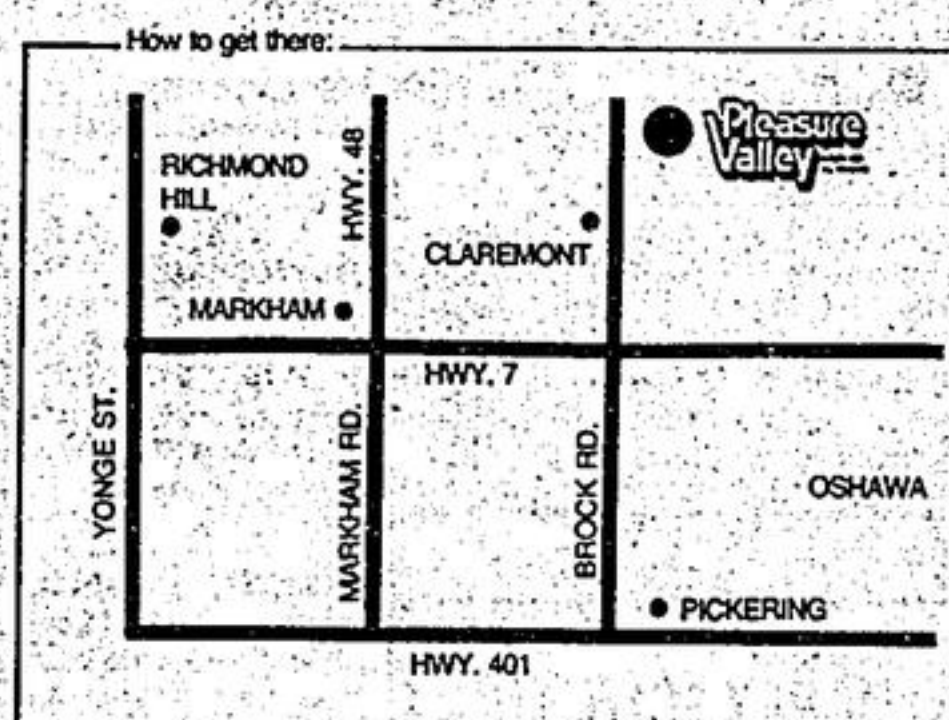
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