



Gord Ness, a 42-year-old Stouffville lawyer, is Marvin Betz's choice for team announcer at the ballpark this season. Betz is team sponsor of the defending champion fastball team. Gord's humorous patter and creative one-liners keep the fans — and

players — entertained. His irreverence, however, is accompanied by a deep love of baseball. He's also an avid sportsman himself and indulges in hockey and skiing.

Ness entertains at Betz Pools' games

By BRUCE STAPLEY

He sits in the little wooden hut behind home plate at Stouffville's main diamond, microphone in hand. The Oshawa and District Men's Fastball League defending champion Betz Pools squad is warming up to do battle with the Greenbank Gamblers.

"Welcome to the ballpark ladies and gentlemen," he pipes up. "Tonight the Betz Pools team takes on the Greenbank Gamblers. Er, I mean Gamblers."

The opening lineups are announced, and there's a witty remark, a pun, or a double entendre that goes with each player's name.

Gord Ness is in his element once again.

The 42-year-old Stouffville lawyer is club sponsor Marvin Betz's choice for announcer at his team's home games this season.

And Ness, off-the-wall humor combined with Betz's new electronic scoreboard has kept both fans and ballplayers entertained like never before.

Ever the opportunist when it comes to taking license with a name, Ness informs the fans that the first three batters in the visiting lineup all bear the surname Till.

He then proceeds to turn Trevor, Terry and Brian into Too Tall, Wait'n and his other brother Darryl.

Reaching for his portable tape deck, he cues up a Spike Jones version of the William Tell Overture, and announces that he's going to play a few bars of it, which is named after the Till brothers' father, William.

The audience eats it up. Even the Greenbank team eventually comes to develop a grudging appreciation of the slapstick routine.

Ness tells the fans that it's only fitting that he entertain them with appropriate music for such rural people.

On comes a string of Gene Autry cowboy tunes, Walter Brennan dialogues and a selection or two from an obscure tape entitled *Dancin' Banjos*.

The moaning from the players becomes rather audible. But Ness just sits in the booth with an enormous grin all over his face. He's having fun.

The game begins, and as each batter comes to the plate, Ness gives the fans the player's name and an aside or two.

Fielding plays are acknowledged, and although he's not always accurate in his player identifications, he usually rectifies his errors.

Going down the Greenbank roster, he lights up as he sees yet another opportunity for inanity.

"Now batting, Neil Rodd, followed by Rod Real. He's not the real rod. Neil Rodd is the real Rodd."

Then it's the Betz club's turn to face the music.

Steve Brooks, whom Ness mistakenly believes to hail from Newfoundland, is announced as 'Corner' Brooks. Newcomer Rick Wells suddenly becomes 'Oily' Wells. Terry Bowles is Terry 'Toilet' Bowles, and on it goes.

Feeling it's time for a little culture, Ness proclaims at the end of an inning that he's about to play *Beethoven's Worst Symphony*.

"This features his first through seventh movements — all at once," he explains.

When asked about his approach, Ness says he's simply trying to give the fans something to laugh at and help them enjoy themselves.

"I just want to lighten up the game a bit, make it interesting," he insists.

"Marvin thought that a little pizzazz would bring more people out. He's interested in entertaining people as well as providing a good ball game."

Ness admits he can get carried away.

"Maybe I go a little overboard sometimes," he says. "There is sometimes a stunned silence after I say something."

But he just goes on to the next one. He'd like to feel that in his own way, he is adding a touch of culture with his unusual music.

"Anyone can play rock songs," he maintains.

He claims he is bringing the Prelawney Male Choir from Aberystwyth, Wales, to sing live at an upcoming game.

"But if they can't make it, I'll just say Marvin was too cheap to fly them over, and I'll play my tape of them," he laughs.

His sense of irreverence,

however, is accompanied by a deep love of the game of baseball, and a healthy respect for the teams playing.

An accomplished athlete, Ness plays in the Stouffville Amateur Hockey Association and the Monday Night Men's Recreational League. He was a founding member of the infamous Nads slo-pitch team. He is also an avid skier who competes at high-level men's events.

He holds a keen loyalty to the town of Stouffville, and is an active promoter of all the area has to offer. His contributions to Music Mania through the years have been immeasurable.

But on Wednesday nights, the frustrated broadcaster in Gord Ness is given a chance to shine.

And while he may draw the odd uncomfortable stare, most agree that he knows how to brighten up a summer night at the ballpark.

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