

Fastball Bandits ready for Markham showdown

It was argued by die-hard soccer fans during the World Cup earlier this summer that the most entertaining soccer games end up with scores of 1-0 or even 0-0.

Now that can be a difficult notion to swallow in a continent where hockey, football and baseball moguls are forever trying to dream up ways to increase offensive output in their games.

North Americans, it seems, like to see points put up on the board. Basketball, considered THE sport in the eyes of some Americans, has more scoring than trees have leaves.

So it would appear that the game of fastball (as in softball played by men who can chuck the 11-inch ball at amazing speed, underhand) may some day go the way of the dodo bird.

You see, like soccer, a barn burner of a men's fastball game is likely to result in a 1-0 or 0-0 final score. Fastball teams live and die by their pitching. Simply put, unless you've got a flame thrower who can go out there and strike out 10 or more in a seven-inning game, you're in for a long and difficult season.

In Uxbridge, for now, anyway, fastball seems to have been replaced by baseball — the same game the Blue Jays play with a hardball and pitch-overhand.

Except, of course, for the Uxbridge Bandits, who, like any other timeless institution, just keep rolling along.

The Bandits, last year's North Durham Men's Fastball League champs, are one of only two remaining adult fastball-softball teams in the town. Their counterparts are the Precision Auto Ladies team who compete in the South Lake Simcoe Loop.

The Intermediate C Bandits, it seems, have that quiet confidence about them that veteran outfits often have. Especially veteran outfits which open the doors to the odd newcomer.

Which was the case this year when the Uxbridge club, with a nucleus that has been together for a decade or so, succeeded in attracting Al Heinzman to their side.

Heinzman, a pitcher who helped put the Bandits out of the provincial title chase last season as a member of the Port Perry XL Eagles, is the kind of hurler who can put a lot of zeroes on the other team's scoresheet, while adding a few numbers on his own team's with his potent bat.

When Heinzman is teamed up with Darryl Norton, the Bandits' other regular chucker, what you have is a pitching tandem which can involve you in a lot of games similar to those goal-starved soccer matches.

The Bandits seem to be set on a collision course with another fastball institution, the Markham Menos. Last time we checked, the Menos held down first



sport notes

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place in the league with an aggressive young team and hot pitching.

Bandits' player-coach Steve Yake said recently after a tough 2-1 loss to Markham that he thought the two teams would

produce an entertaining league championship series.

The Menos have taken both league games between the two teams so far, but the scores have been close.

The Bandits, however, bested

the Markham crew in a tournament in Mt. Albert last month, and you have to know there is more significance in a tournament win than a regular season affair.

It will be a toss up for sure if the Bandits and the Menos do square off for the league title.

And with fastball, like any other type of ball, being a game of breaks, streaks and momentum, it will boil down to how hot the Bandits bats are come playoff time.

The hitters in question here are Paul Graham, Gary Brown,

Grant Carter, Barry and Don Ferguson, Rick Shaw, Larry Pilkey and Heinzman. If they get the bats going, the Bandits will be a force to reckon with.

And, at the same time, Yake and his crew are preparing themselves for the Intermediate C Provincial Playdowns as well, the World Cup of Ontario fastball.

And with a little luck, the Bandits will win a couple of overtime "shootouts" as they go after both their league crown and the Ontario title.

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