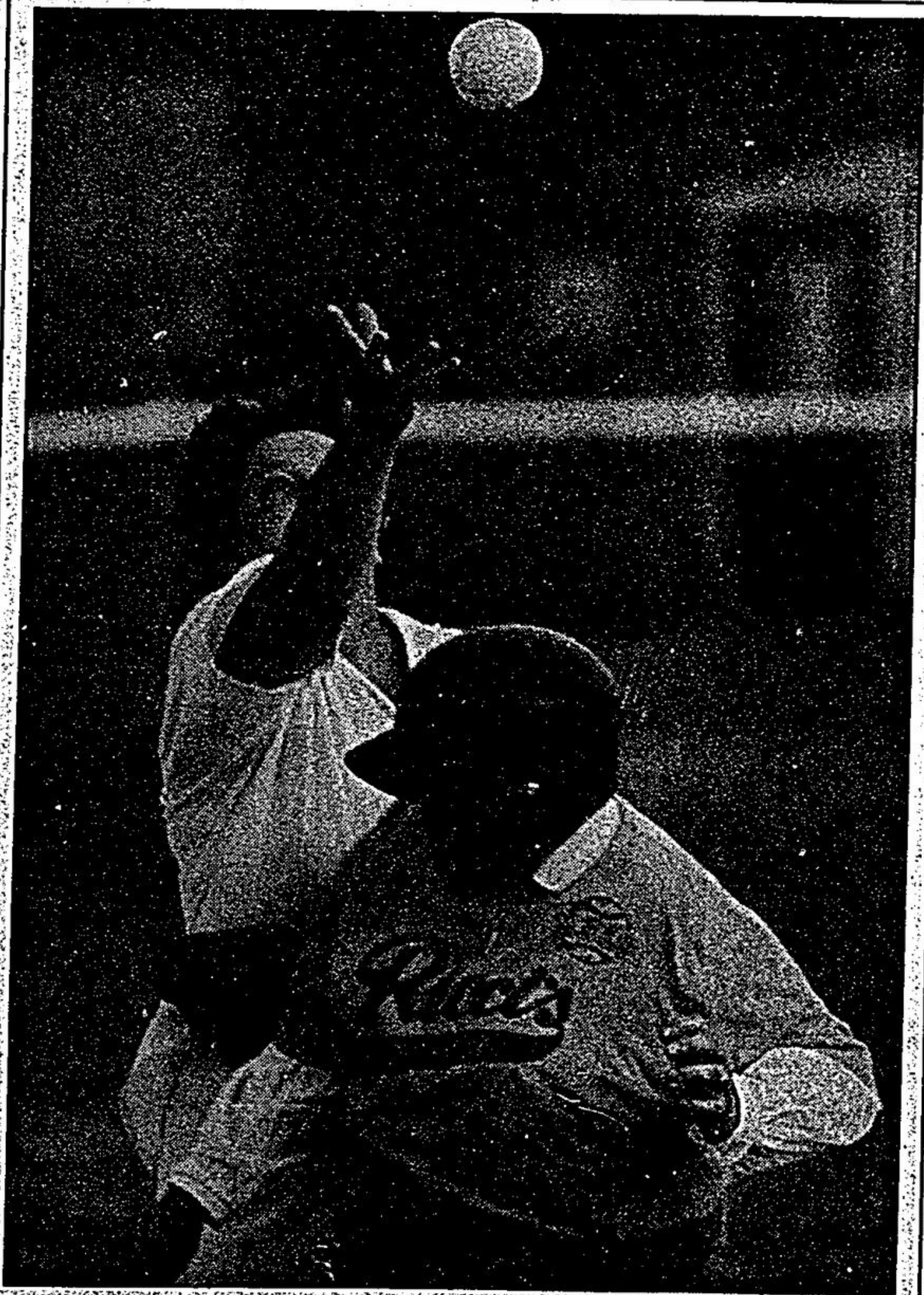


# Sports

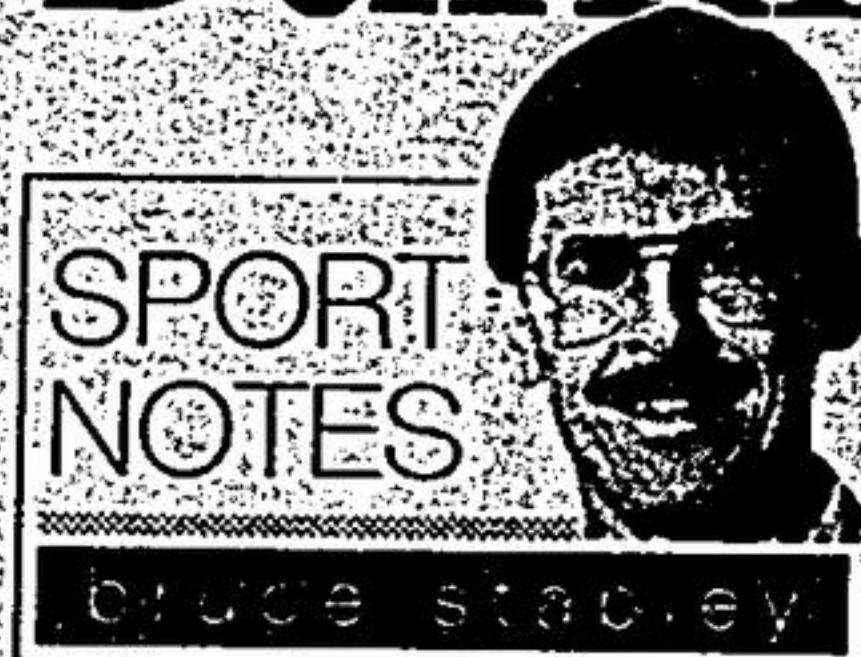
## It's been a different ball season for the Burkholder family



**Catch me if you can**

Third baseman Debbie Rennie (left), reaches for the ball in an effort to tag out Ricci's Sports Bar baserunner Jean Peardon in a softball game played at the town park diamond on Monday.

Photo/SJOERD WITTEVEEN



Laying fallow and waiting for rain.

That's the book on former Stouffville sports personality of the year Howard Burkholder these days as he tends to the family's Stouffville area farm during this hot, dry June.

Howard's taken the year off from coaching after guiding the Stouffville Merchants junior men's fastball team through four eventful seasons, including a third-place finish at the Canadian junior men's championship in 1991.

It's always been tough trying to juggle farm chores with coaching his three sons, Chris, Rich and Ryan and the rest of the ball players that talented trio have grown up with.

This season, however, with Howard wearing only his farmer's hat, the pressure has been lessened a little.

But while it's a year away from the ball diamond for Howard, his three boys and most of the other Merchants have scattered far and wide with the break up of the team that occurred when Howard backed off and several key players graduated from the junior ranks.

Chris Burkholder, the oldest of the three, is playing for the Greenbank Gamblers men's fastball team, along with former Merchants pitching star Byron Baranieski.

The pair, who played key roles in the Merchants near Ontario junior championship three-peat a few years back, have added their substantial talents to the Greenbank outfit, which always seems to be able to attract the higher calibre players.

Ryan and Rich Burkholder are with the Port Perry junior squad which plays out of the Oshawa City and

District Fastball League.

Brent Bonner and Bob Ferguson, the Uxbridge residents who played winter ball in Australia after the Merchants season ended last fall, are members of the Oshawa junior outfit, which also plays in the Oshawa loop.

The biggest surprise of the year has seen Scott Evans, who departed the Merchants after their 1990 Ontario championship season to play out west, reappear with the Claremont Rebels.

Evans established himself as the top junior men's pitcher in the country while playing for Canadian championship Alberta teams in 1992 and '93.

The Pefferlaw resident is throwing for the Rebels during the week, then heading off to Midland, Michigan to play with an American Softball Association men's team on weekends.

Evans is joined on the Rebels squad by old Merchants teammates Rob Parcells, Jason Yoshida and Jamie Showers.

The addition of Evans resulted in the upgrading of the Rebels from the North Durham Fastball League to the North York Fastball League.

So far, he hasn't disappointed.

While the former Merchant teammates have scattered in little clusters, the players still manage to make occasional contact with each other at the ball park.

Rich and Ryan Burkholder's Port Perry squad squares off against Ferguson, Bonner and the Oshawa juniors in an Oshawa league game every

now and then.

And recently, an unlikely encounter at a Toronto park involved Rich Burkholder and Baranieski.

When Rich arrived to watch an exhibition game between the internationally renowned Toronto Gators and the Waterloo Twins, he saw Baranieski's truck in the parking lot.

Assuming his former teammate was also in attendance at the game, he went looking for him so the two could sit together.

To Rich's surprise, Baranieski was suited up with the Waterloo outfit.

Even more amazing was how the tall righthander came within a couple of outs of shutting out the awesome Gators as he and the Waterloo boys settled for a 2-1 win.

The Gators would go on to drop both games of the night's double header, a shocker to be sure.

While gleaning this tidbit of fastball news from Howard and Rich as they took a lunch break from farm duties at a local burger joint Thursday, I asked Howard if he was praying for rain to help the crops along.

A devout Christian, he responded that he chooses not to engage in such self-indulgent prayer requests.

But we decided that if by some chance the skies should give way with a colossal downpour over the upcoming July 1 Canada Day weekend, at least one of us would be able to find something to smile about.

After all, when you're laying fallow, a rain storm that sends ball players scurrying for cover is just another act of nature.

### Correction on golf date

An article in the June 17 Weekender sports section erroneously stated that the Mayor's Golf Tournament would be held this past Wednesday, June 21 at the Sleepy Hollow Golf Course.

The tournament is actually scheduled for Thursday, July 21.

The Tribune regrets the error.



**BAY SPORTS**  
The Cycle & Hockey Specialists

ANNUAL  
**BIKE TENT SALE**  
2 WEEKS ONLY

BRAND NAMES: Bianchi, KHS,  
Diamond Back, Raleigh, Denali,  
Monacoose & Miyata

**SAVE UP TO 30%**  
**Helmets 1/2 Price**  
with every bike purchase

**Bike Tune-Ups Start \$19.99**

5762 Highway #7 in  
Markham, 1/2 mile  
west of Markham Rd. **471-1960**

5762 HWY. 7  
MARKHAM