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Sports & Leisure

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Consistency needed from umpires

The illegal pitch frenzy which destroyed the Cable Tech midget girls' high hopes of winning the recent Provincial Women's Softball Association (PWSA) championships is an example of what can happen when every umpire in the province is on his own when it comes to interpreting a crucial rule.

For those who were on vacation and missed last Tuesday's Tribune horror story, the Stouffville midget girls fell victim to two Kingston area umpires who decided that after not being called for an illegal pitch (IP) all season, it was time to play catch up with Stouffville pitchers Amanda Connolly and Amanda Crowder. The two teens were left shocked, frustrated, and utterly broken in spirit by the endless calls, while coaches Dave Miller, Fred Timms and Paul Sheppard left shaking their heads in utter disbelief as their team's PWSA hopes were shattered by these two umpires.

The fact the Stouffville team wasn't called for a single IP in their third and final game with a different umpiring crew presiding spoke volumes for the province-wide problem of inconsistency in calling IPs. The bottom line is that the problem simply must be addressed by Softball Ontario, from whose jurisdiction all rules and their interpretations come. Apparently, the powers that be decreed at the start of the season to adopt a zero tolerance approach to IPs. But unfortunately, there has been no consistency in calling the foul pitches. "I can understand the concept of calling illegal pitches," said long-time Stouffville girls' softball advocate Cathy Bennett, who is in her second season as a PWSA director. "The boys have been getting away with murder. But the



Sports Notes

Bruce Stapley

problem is there are too many interpretations of the illegal pitch rule."

"They don't get called all summer long, then all of a sudden they're called at the finals," complained Cathy. "There's enough pressure on a

pitcher to pitch well."

She said there's danger this hit and miss approach to rules interpretation could serve to drive players away from the game.

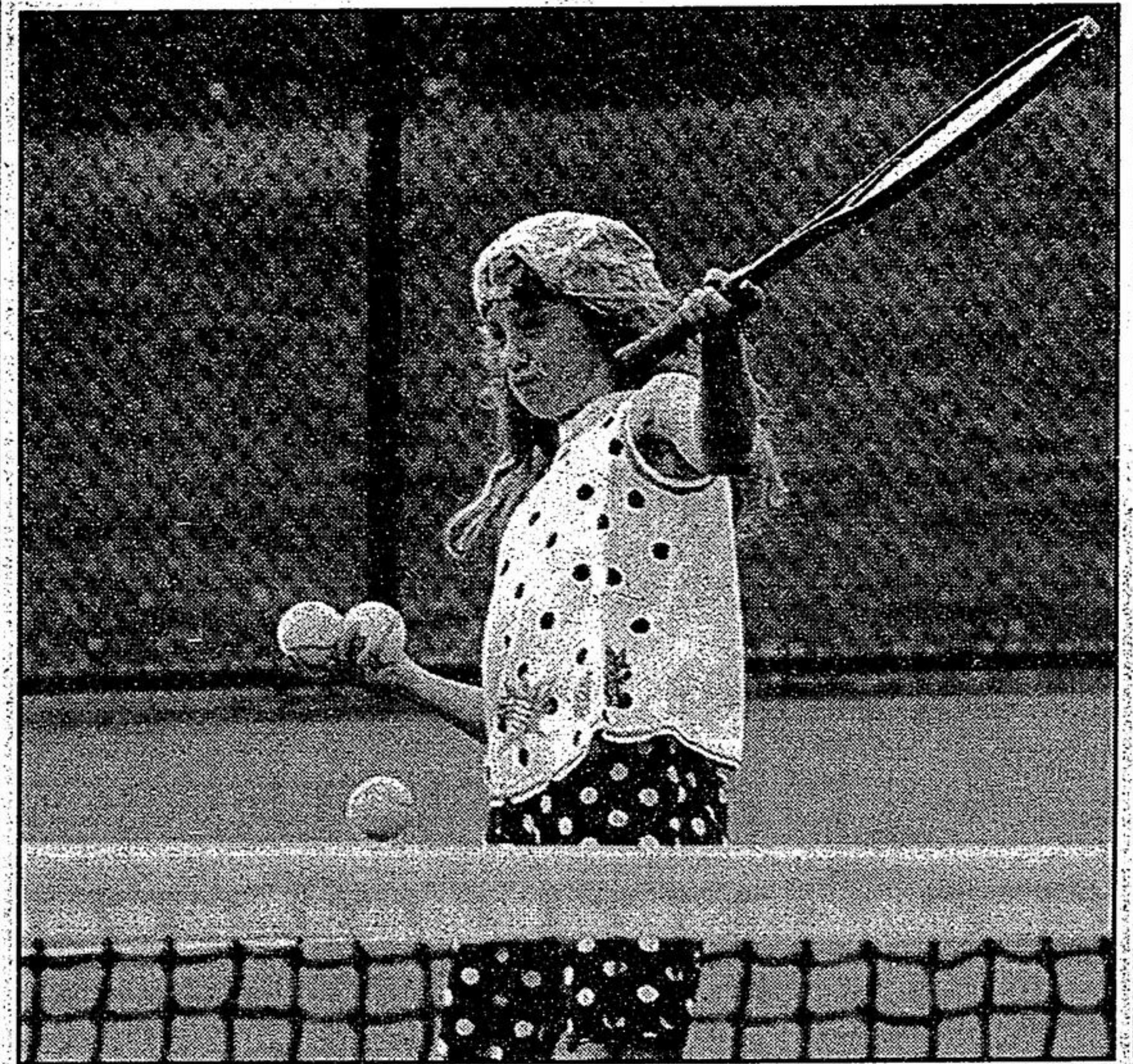
"It will be brought to the attention of the umpires association. We've got to clear it up for the girls or you're going to lose them. Some pitchers have been pitching this way since mite level. It's going to have to be dealt with," she concluded. "That's not what softball's all about."

Cathy said fellow PWSA director Joanne Maute of Downsview, who was in attendance for last weekend's debacle, was quite upset by what happened to the Stouffville squad.

Cliff Dunkeld, a former umpire who spent 13 years on the PWSA board before becoming an auditor with the Ontario Amateur Softball Association, is encouraging parents of the Stouffville players to write the PWSA as well as Softball Ontario. He said he never encountered anything like what befell the Stouffville midgets in all his time with the PWSA. Cliff wants to have all Stouffville pitchers shown a video of just what's legal and what's not at the beginning of next season, but allowed that umpires' differing interpretations of the IP rule could still cause turmoil.

"They must be consistent," he said of the umpires. Dave Miller allowed it was the "most frustrating thing I've ever experienced" in coaching softball. "It was just the biggest joke. Some

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RETURN TO SENDER: Eight-year-old Jessica Farrell of Stouffville squints as she attempts to return this shot to her grandmother while the pair were practicing their game this past weekend at the Uxbridge Arena tennis courts.

Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE

Minor hockey set to celebrate 50 years

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association (WSMHA) will celebrate 50 years of ice memories with a season long celebration.

The association is looking to the community for assistance with its planned roster of activities

A display will be going in the new lobby of the second ice pad, where it will remain all season.

The display will include pictures, news articles, trophies, sweaters and other memorabilia from past years.

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