

Sports & Leisure

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Lawn bowling pair get deserved recognition



Sports Notes

Bruce Stapley

Forget Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and all the other legends who have been chasing after little white balls and six-figure paycheques the past four decades.

Stouffville's husband-wife tandem of Elmer and Doris Farthing have made their own niche in a game which, while lacking in pizzazz and payoffs, provides a welcome blend of skill and social satisfaction.

The Farthings were honoured Friday at the opening ceremonies of the Strawberry Festival as they came up on stage to receive the town's Sports Personality of the Year award.

The Stouffville Sun-sponsored tribute was in recognition of the couple's 40-plus years of service to the Stouffville Lawn Bowling Club. Both are past-presidents of the venerable club, with Doris acting as tournament secretary for 10 years as well.

The Farthing, who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last year, see their game of choice as much more than a chance for seniors to get outside and take some air.

Elmer insists he enjoyed the sport as much when he was an employee at the old Stouffville Machine and Tool works in the mid-1950's as he did when he retired 11 years ago.

"It's a really good game," he says. "I've often wondered why people wait so long to join that they're too old to be really good at it."

Elmer, who was born and raised in Stouffville, suggests lawn bowling is a little like learning a foreign language - you pick it up best when you're young.

"It's like baseball," insists Elmer. "The younger you start the better you get at it."

For lawn bowling, Elmer insists, is a game of strategy.

"It's not like alley bowling where you just fire the ball at a head pin. It's a finesse game."

He said that while the game is some-

what like curling, it's more complicated. "The numbers aren't set there on the ice. Things are always moving around in lawn bowling."

He said that while most people playing the game are of average skill level, there are those who play it with dazzling prowess at the provincial and national level. And the best bowlers, contrary to popular belief, are not the seniors.

"There are no old people at the national championships."

Elmer and Doris traveled to Nova Scotia last summer to take in the Canadian Lawn Bowling championships and found it a thoroughly enjoyable experience indeed.

Elmer insists that the bottom line today as far as the popularity of a sport is concerned is how lucrative it is at the upper levels.

"You don't hear much about lawn bowling because there's no money in it."

While the Farthings enjoy their two or three outings a week to Memorial Park to play on the local green, they also like to take to the road to play and to socialize.

And you can't beat the price, he added. "For a lot of us who can't afford to play golf every day, it's quite reasonable."

Doris and Elmer have succeeded in passing along their love of lawn bowling to one of their two grown children.

Bill Farthing is an active member of the Uxbridge Lawn Bowling Club. Daughter Lois Marshman of Musselman's Lake is yet to take up the game. Elmer said he hopes he can eventually turn the couple's four grandchildren onto the sport.

Thanks in large part to the contributions of Elmer and Doris, the local lawn bowling club is more than holding its own these days. "The club seems to be on a bit of an upswing," said Elmer, who said there are roughly 50 members in tow.

Part of the appeal and the relaxation aspect of lawn bowling is that, like baseball, the game stays basically the same as the decades roll past. Skills mastered years ago continue to be of use on the green, unlike so many other areas of life in the mean, lean 1990's.

"Basically the game is the same," said Elmer.



SURPRISE! Stouffville's Karen D'Andrea (centre), catches Thornhill's Nicky Noseworthy a bit off guard as she steals the ball from her during action in Wednesday's York Region under-15 girls' soccer action at the Rec. Centre on Wednesday. D'Andrea scored twice to help Stouffville prevail 6-3.

Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE

Hockey school is set to cover all of the basics

It's back to the rink as a six-week hockey school takes to the Rec Centre's new ice surface beginning July 6.

The camp, which is being run by Skills Hockey Development of Toronto, is to include six one-week sessions. Categories include Power Skating, Puckhandling and Shooting, Shoot to Score, Early Development, a Girls Program, Defence and Elite.

Camp director David Gillespie said the two-year-old school is open to houseleague and rep players of all ages.

"The majority of the kids at the camps are usually between eight and 13 years old," he said.

Gillespie, a former U.S. college hockey player, said he hopes to draw players from the Stouffville, Markham and Uxbridge areas.

Among those attending the Stouffville camp are several youths from the state of Alabama. Gillespie is to run a body checking clinic and skills class in that southern state in mid-August.

Gillespie, a teacher, is former head instructor and program coordinator with Hockey Tech International. He coached the Toronto Nats

minor atom/AAA hockey team, which included Stouffville's Justin Hitchen last season.

Gillespie said the response to the camp so far has been good.

"We're doing okay in every category except the girls camp."

He said the week of Aug. 17-21, which had been designated for the girls, will be used to provide a camp for a Toronto area girls squad if there is insufficient response.

Gillespie said he'd decide which direction to take the hockey camp in Stouffville after this initial summer session is completed.

"It's trial and error this year."

He said if the elite level session scheduled for the Aug. 31-Sept. 4 week is well attended, he might offer a similar program for Stouffville and Markham area AA and AAA players next summer. If not, he'll probably add a power skating session next year.

The camp, which offers a five-to-one instructor ratio, runs from \$300 to \$350 per session. Call Gillespie at (416) 444-4300 for registration information.

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