

# SPORTS

## GETTING DOWN WITH IT

*Newmarket football league going strong after a quarter century of action*

BY JOHN CUDMORE  
Staff Writer

Long before the National Football League sunk its hooks into Sunday afternoons, the boys in the Newmarket Flag Football League were celebrating their own quarterback sacks and long bombs.

Though clearly a less widely known and unlicensed property lacking TV network exposure, the league plays primarily on Sundays at the Ray Twinney Complex from September to early November.

### BEER LEAGUE

Essentially, the football version of hockey's adult beer leagues, the NFFL provides a competitive setting for guys to get together and work on their shoulder fakes and body shakes.

"It's just a good time and something to look forward to once a week," says Al Booth, who, after about 25 years in the league as a player, referee and chief administrator, is ready to hand off his flags.

"The camaraderie comes first, but eventually when you get to the playoffs and down to one game to win, the intensity has been known to step up."

Outside Toronto, flag football leagues are few and far between. In fact, the Newmarket men's league is the only such entity in York Region and, as such, attracts players from a broad area.

"One of the things is that there are (few) junior (football) programs around anymore and a lot of high schools are shutting down their programs. A lot of guys just want to play and a lot of young guys are coming to play," says Booth, a retired teacher.

The rules in this seven-per-side game are reasonably simple,



PHOTO/BILLROBERTS

Brian Soucie (far right) of Burling Ranger team goes for Mark Crawford's flag of Ricci's Sports Bar during flag football action at Ray Twinney Complex field. The Newmarket league, which plays from September to early November, was established 25 years ago, the only such league in York Region.

including four downs per possession to churn up yardage. A five-count — one steamboat ... two steamboats ... — no-rush rule protects the passer at the line of scrimmage. The goal of the defence is to pluck a velcro strip, or flag, from the belt loop of the offensive team player in possession of the football.

Turning 60 this week, Dale Pegg is by far the elder statesman

of the Newmarket league. He also has been the league's common denominator since the first snap of the ball in the mid-1960s.

"Actually, I guess I've been in it since before the league was a league," says Pegg, whose next oldest teammate is more than a decade younger. "It was four teams and we went out and bought J-cloths to use for flags."

Though it's not exactly certain

when it officially started, it is evident that the league was something of a pick-up nature, an athletic outlet for an autumn Sunday morning, perhaps to bridge the softball and hockey seasons. The league presently has 14 teams competing in two divisions — a six-team A division and eight-team B division. The latter is con-

See WOMEN'S, page 33.



Linda Johnson

Been There, Done That

## Four key principles to Pilates

When it comes to exercise, as in most other things, baby boomers have it.

As they begin to creak, ache and otherwise cool off, they're also making a new exercise hot.

It's called Pilates, (pronounced pi-lah-teez) and, though it has actually been around for about 80 years, it's only now really coming into its own.

As the population ages, many people just don't like the frenetic pace and stress of high impact aerobics.

But that doesn't mean it's easy. I know, because I have more than a few muscles that, during the hour-long workout I joined at Pilates North in Richmond Hill, told me so. At the advanced level, it's intense.

Pilates is a progressive form of training that conditions the whole body. Based on stretching and strengthening exercises, it aims at improving posture, abdominal control, flexibility, balance and co-ordination.

The workout begins, for both the beginner and advanced alike, on a mat. The exercises are done slowly, carefully, under the eye of the trainer.

"We start with mat work, to begin building awareness," trainer Lisa Schklar tells me before we start. She and her sister Rachel opened this studio,

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