

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

SPORTS

Lawn bowling convert
heads up town club*Ex-baseball player
says it isn't just
a sport for old folks*BY JIM THOMAS
Correspondent

Forty years ago, Bob Stover, while flagging down fly balls with the Stouffville Jr. baseball Cardinals, recalled looking over the fence towards the lawn bowling green and wondering "what possible enjoyment could those old folks achieve from that lacklustre sport?"

He wonders no more for, not only is he an aggressive advocate of the game, but president of the Stouffville Lawn Bowling Club.

"Never did I imagine myself a lawn bowler," said Stover, who became president in 2004, "but the first time I tried it, I was hooked. There's more skill required than most people think."

It was while living at Pt. Elgin that a close friend invited him to give the game a try. Initially, he refused then, after serious thought, gave in.

"It's a decision I've never regretted," he admits, "I love it."

Wife Nancy does too, in fact her husband admits she's rapidly gaining on him.

"There's so much about the game that fails to meet the eye," Stover claims. "And what better way to cool off on a warm summer night."

It was five years ago, following their return to Stouffville, that the Stovers became involved. Today, they're on location either playing or in an executive capacity, four times a week.

With 44 members, Nancy is the club treasurer. Other executive members include: Marg Curtis, past-president; Priscilla Gamble, recording secretary; Gertrud Brugger, membership secretary; Audrey Gibson, publicity; Alan Badgery, Ron Gibson, Bill Dart and Norm Nigh, site care.

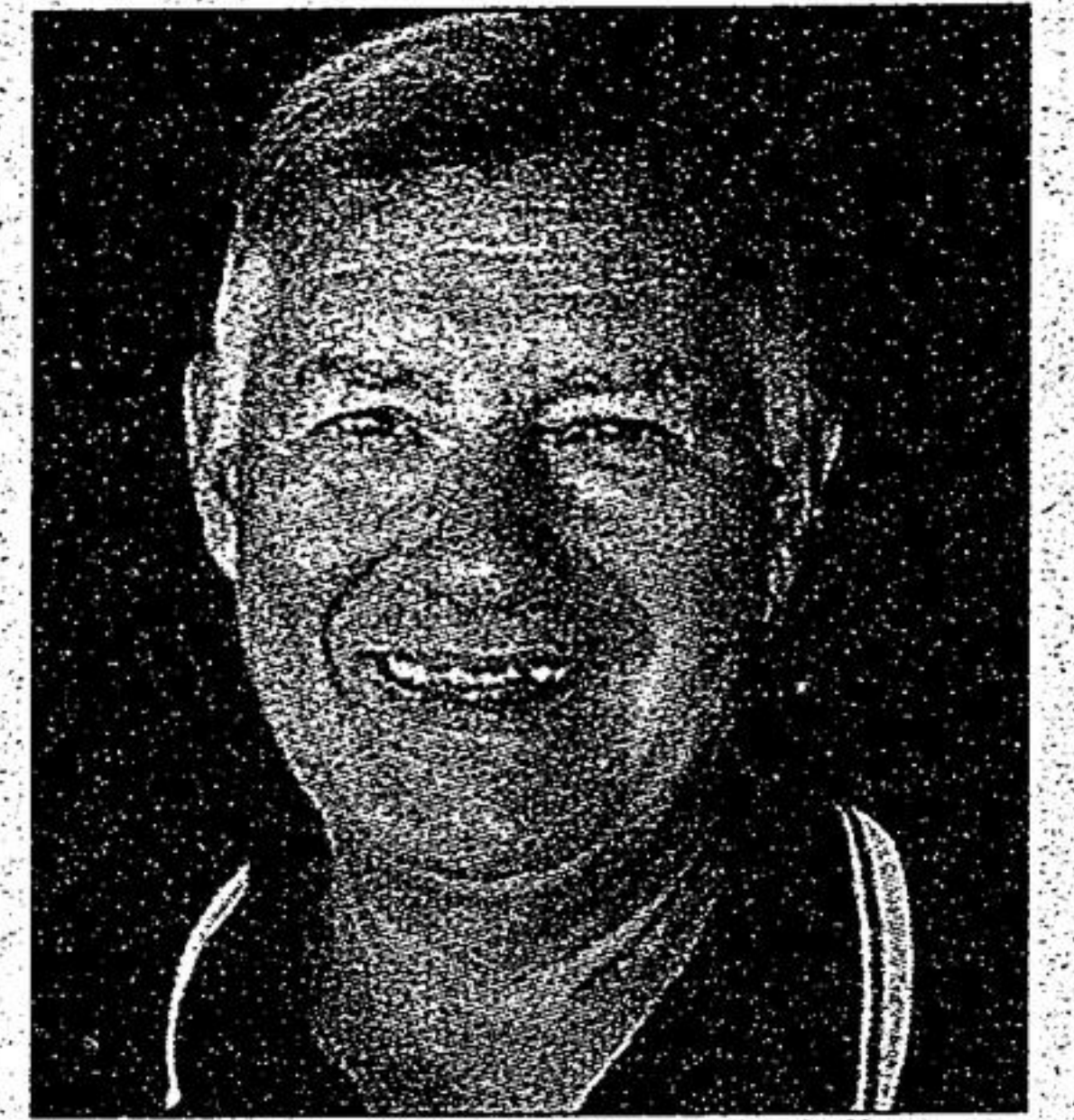
CLUB HAS WINNING TRADITION

Established in 1894, the club has compiled an amazing record in both district and provincial competitions. In 1952, Reta Laushway and Eleanor Crossen won the provincial ladies doubles. In 1954, Eleanor Crossen won the provincial ladies singles, repeating this achievement in 1966. In 1958 and again in 1974, Dorothy Wagg, Laushway and Crossen brought the provincial ladies triples championship to Stouffville.

Stover admits lawn bowling is trying to shake the age-old image of "an old people's game."

To do this, he plans to address the principal of Stouffville District Secondary School and suggest the sport be made a 2005-2006 elective for students of grades 11 and 12.

Stover points with enthusiasm to 20-year-old Ryan Bester of Hanover, Ont. Bester, whose mode of attire



BOB STOVER: Stouffville resident has been president of the Stouffville Lawn Bowling Club since 2004.

and style of delivery has shaken the foundations of the lawn bowling world, competing at the World Games in Scotland in 2004 and the Commonwealth Games in England in 2002. He's already qualified for the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, Australia.

"He's leading the charge," Stover says, remembering how, at age 14, Bester bowled against him in a tournament at Pt. Elgin.

In an effort to entice participation by younger people, minor rule changes have been enacted. Many clubs, for example, have departed from wearing the traditional white uniforms for more attractive colour figurations, including Stouffville. Here, white outfits are still basic but red and black trim has been added.

While a brand new set of bowls can cost up to \$300, Stover says savings are available through buying second-hand. A full membership is \$85, but newcomers are welcomed at a reduced rate of \$60.

"Compared to golf, it's a good deal," Stover claims.

As for moving to another site, Stover says the pressure's off now that the Clock Tower Theatre project is on the back burner. Had the theatre proceeded, a part of the bowling green would have been needed for building expansion and parking. However, the lawn bowling club wants to be ready should the plan be resurrected. A committee, including Cliff Dunkeld, Margaret Curtis and Gary Gornik, is working with the town's department of leisure services to seek a potential new location.

As far as Stover is concerned, the club's vision statement says it all: "The Stouffville Lawn Bowling Club is made up of friendly people, committed to enjoying lawn-bowling to its fullest; playing well; expanding friendships; aggressively building for the future and fostering community health."

Or, to be precise, "it's a game of fun and skill for all ages".

While this sport was the furthest thing from Stover's mind 40 years ago, it's now central to everything he does.



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Long arms of law prevail

Stouffville's Rebeca D'Alessandro, 9, tries to keep the ball away from the long arms of Natasha Papulks, 11, during a skills session Tuesday at the Cardinal Sports Camp at Brother Andre Catholic High School in Markham. The two-week basketball camp, which started in 1989, is run by Stouffville teacher/coach Rick Maloney.

Storm mites rally for two victories

Call them the comeback kids.

In two York Durham Minor Softball League contests, the Stouffville Storm mites were forced to play catch-up.

And in both instances, their late heroics paid off in victories.

Playing in Newmarket Monday, the Storm overcame a

one-run deficit in their last trip to the plate in the fifth inning to emerge with a convincing 8-4 win.

Sean Hoey began the fireworks with a two-run homer to put the Storm ahead for good.

Pitcher Troy Connor came in to throw a nine-pitch, three-strikeout inning to help pre-

serve the victory for the Storm.

Last Thursday at Memorial Park, the Storm overcame a one-run deficit in the third inning by erupting for 10 runs en route to a 16-7 win over Bradford.

Now 9-1 in league play, the Storm will host Oshawa tonight at Memorial Park at 6:30 p.m.