

Softball cricketers prepare to make their pitch in Markham

League play to start Sunday at Elson Park

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

In the movie *A Field of Dreams*, Ray Kinsella had a vision that if he constructed a baseball stadium, the legends of the game would come to play and spectators would surely come to watch.

In the end, that's exactly what took place.

Nigel Vasagam shares a similar vision, except the 56-year-old Markham resident isn't a baseball buff.

Founder and president of the Markham Softball Cricket League, Vasagam firmly believes if a permanent facility were constructed, interest in the sport would follow.

Such a plan is currently in the works as Vasagam and other ardent supporters of the game have been working with the Town of Markham to create a first-class permanent pitch and adjacent to Fairtree Community Park, east of Hwy 48 and north of Steeles Avenue.

Under the proposed plans, which were shown at a public information meeting in late February, Vasagam noted the Town

of Markham would create an equipment room, bleacher seats, a restroom and have the pitch grass trimmed to one-inch, a necessity for cricket. The cost for such a proposed facility would be around \$750,000.

Vasagam notes that not only would their league utilize the facility.

Youngsters could also utilize it through school programs that offer the sport.

"If the town builds the facility, the people will come out," Vasagam said.

'We play the game just the same way as with a leather ball except our ball is a softer version so it's safer to play.'

In the meantime, Vasagam and the Markham Softball Cricket League are gearing up to launch their fourth season at Elson Park this Sunday with games each Sunday at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. before winding down with the championships July 30.

Starting out with four teams and known as the Milner Softball Cricket League, the league

expanded in the second year to its present eight teams with entries from Markham, Pickering, Scarborough and even as far away as Brampton and Mississauga.

This past offseason, Vasagam noted he could have expanded the league by three clubs.

But with a limited number of officials and volunteer help, he elected to keep the league this season with eight clubs.

"There's definitely been lots of interest in our league," he said. "And we could go to 10 teams next year. But it depends on getting volunteers and people who must know the game."

In explaining the league's success, Vasagam feels much of the credit is due to co-operation from the Town of Markham, not only in terms of giving them a but also in manicuring the pitch and adding restrooms and bleachers.

"They've definitely supported us through the years," he said.

As successful as the league has been though, Vasagam said there are still many who follow the sport but don't know about the local league.

"Cricket is a popular sport. We play the game just the same way as with a leather ball except our ball is a softer version so it's safer to play," he said.

Tornados blow Ironheads away in Ontario lacrosse action

SPORTS DIGEST

After snapping a three-game losing streak with a victory last Sunday, the Markham Ironheads will be out to end another this Sunday.

Playing host to the Barrie Tornados, occupants of first place in the Eastern Conference's mid-east Division, the Ironheads dropped a 13-7 decision in Ontario Lacrosse Association Junior B action Tuesday at Centennial Arena.

Joe Stanley scored three goals for the Ironheads, who trailed 4-3 after one period and 7-5 after two. Dan Ransom added two goals while Matt Evans and Shane Davidson each added single tallies. Ronnie Reed collected six assists and Blake Evans three.

Now 6-5 on the season and tied for third place with the Saints in the mid-east division, the Ironheads will host Oakville Sunday at 2 p.m.

Oakville is undefeated at 11-0 and sits in first place in the Eastern Conference's south-east division.

For more on the Ironheads, log on to: www.markhamlacrosse.com

Rugby club gets tackled

The Markham Rugby Football Club men's first and seconds went down to defeat when they faced Toronto Scottish at Fletcher's Field in Ontario Rugby Union action last Saturday.

In the first match, Chris Mandville scored Markham's lone try in a 15-5 loss.

The Markham seconds received tries from James Doorenspleet and Mike deVries in a 24-10 loss.

Currently 0-2 on the season, both

Markham entries will play in Lindsay this Sunday starting at 1:30 p.m.

In women's action, Markham battled Brock to a 12-12 tie.

The Markham women, now 0-1-1, will play host to Oshawa this Sunday at noon.

For more on the Markham Rugby Football Club, log on to: www.markhamrugbyclub.com

Junior Raiders lose opener

The York Region Raiders juniors kicked off its Ontario Varsity Football League regular season last Saturday with a 14-10 road loss to Kitchener Waterloo.

Trailing 7-2 at the half, the Raiders took a 10-7 lead early in the fourth quarter when quarterback Kyle Ptolemy threw a five-yard touchdown pass to Ryan Cristavoe and a subsequent two-point convert pass to Hugo Rajotte.

But Kitchener-Waterloo came back with less than two minutes remaining in regulation time to score the eventual-game winning touchdown.

Jacob Deslaurentis scored the first two points for the Raiders on missed field goal attempts.

The Raiders resume league play today in Brampton.

For more on the Raiders, log on to: www.yorkregionraiders.com

We have chosen our GOLF CONTEST WINNERS

GRAND PRIZE: A foursome at Angus Glen, home of the 2007 Canadian Open

WINNER: Tom Bernard of Richmond Hill

PRIZE: \$100 golf raffle ticket from Big Brothers Big Sisters of York (visit www.golffaffle.kintera.org for prize info)

WINNER: Mitch Satov of Markham

PRIZE: \$100 golf raffle ticket from Big Brothers Big Sisters of York

WINNER: Prad Lad of Unionville

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