

Larry Sullivan's

SPORT SIDE

'Play Ball' Cry Of The Land

Touching All The Bases: Let's play.

That's the cry of the land beginning this week, when the bulk of the local youth recreational baseball leagues crank up regular season play. It's a time when summer's sport rushes to our forefront and grabs us with both hands.

For the most part, these games feature those still in the sport simply for its enjoyment. As a result, they're usually the most fun to watch, the younger the better. For some reason, as players progress in talent, they lose the game's true purpose — that of providing an outlet for enjoyment both for the players and the fans. Go to a T-Ball or Pee-Wee game, and that's what you've got. Attend games at inclining levels, and you get less and less enjoyment and more and more fusing and cussing.

Fortunately, there's more of the former and much less of the latter through local recreational play. And that's good.

Hot on the minds of recreational level organizers lately is the use, and non-use, of protective vests for batters. The controversy arrived when relatives of a youngster who was struck in the chest and killed by a pitch created a stir that stated every youth league in the lands should be required to wear protective vests, thereby assuring such a disaster would never happen again.

Few leagues are responding. One in the area has agreed to put the vests into use. It's getting more publicity for doing so than the many that still aren't.

Mooreville again this season will not be using the vests. Sandy Church, recreation superintendent, admitted that several parents have asked about using them. He says that, for now anyway, there are no plans for them to be instated.

Helmets, urged Church, are still the most vital and required piece of batting equipment. No player in any league, right up through high school and into legion, can step to the plate without a helmet. Those in college, the minors and majors wouldn't think about doing so without being similarly protected.

I dare not say the vest will never become a fixed part of batting equipment along with the helmet, pine tar and glove. Perhaps, in time, it will. For now, though, I agree with it not being required.

I hope we never receive proof that it is needed. To my knowledge, no local recreational player has been damaged by a pitch to the midsection. I've heard of those being knocked in and about the head, but helmets have saved their day.

'Tis the time for enjoyment, and nothing adds to it like our recreational league. Enjoy.

Camping Under An Infield Fly: Basketball is already a year-round sport for colleges and pros. This trend is trick-

ling down to the preps.

Those individuals with goals set on making a success in the sport work on their shots and other techniques around the clock, around the calendar. These are the ones destined for success.

It's rare to see such determination begin at such an early age. That's why we should patronize our area athletes when they show us this dedication.

Members of Senior High's girls basketball program will be making the most of a free day from school Friday, a day when most of them should be spending the day gussieing themselves up for that night's Junior-Senior prom. Instead, they'll be wallowing around in soap and suds by offering a day-long car wash.

Under the careful instruction of Cheryl Crawford, a former outstanding Devillete player who is now the varsity squad's head coach, and Sandy Sullivan, also a former Mooreville player now serving as the jayvees head coach, members of both teams will be going one-on-one with cars, applying a spit-polish finish. The car wash will do more than quicken their reactions.

Hopefully, according to Crawford, who has taken it upon herself to restore the girls program to the lofty perch it enjoyed during her own prep playing days, the project will create teamwork as well as raise proceeds to help cover expenses for summer basketball camps.

Few high school teams these days can all of a sudden pick up a basketball in November in and be competitive. Summer camps, catering to both individuals and entire teams, are a must. Mooreville is hopeful it can attend such camps this off-season. The more girls attending, the better.

The team will be washing cars throughout the day Friday in the Senior High parking lot. Hours are tentatively set at from around 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. That's when the girls call it quits to start primping for the night's prom.

And speaking of the prom, coach Crawford is quick to point out that her players will give a special treatment to vehicles planned on being used to carry dates to the big dance. After all, who knows but one of them may wind up on the passenger's side.

Pivoting On A Double Play: So you think we need to see more Atlanta Braves baseball games. And you think TBS doesn't broadcast enough of them. Too bad.

At the start of the season, the SportSouth network also televised several Braves contests. This will no longer be the case. On advisement from Lakeside Cable, the area's cable television service, SportSouth can no longer beam the Braves.

The official announcement reads: "Due to restrictions imposed by Major League Baseball, Atlanta Braves games cannot be shown on SportSouth network in the Charlotte market. Atlanta Braves games on appear on SportSouth network in other states."

Once again, Charlotte has shot us down. What makes MLB think we're in the Braves area. What is it, a six-hour drive from here. As a result, when the Braves are scheduled to appear on SportSouth, we'll be out of luck. Instead, we'll receive alternative programming.

Unless things change, it may not matter. The Braves are never in contention anyway. But since we've got the service, we should benefit. Atlanta is the closest thing we have to a major league franchise, and they should be eagerly accepting our following instead of denying it.

Driving Through The Fairway: Patching differences can be as easy as replacing a divot, or fixing a ball mark.

Such is the thinking behind the annual Mooreville-South Iredell and Statesville Chamber of Commerce's annual spring get-together. Members and invited guests of both gathered for a spring fling consisting of golf, first of the fun kind with a little competition thrown in for good measure.

Once again, the attraction was staged at Mallard Head, quickly becoming a recognized and welcome track. The feature was staged under ideal, although slightly windy, conditions last Wednesday afternoon. The Mooreville Chamber served as the host this time. The two chambers alternate hosting the event on a yearly basis.

Wednesday, nobody cared who won. There were 29, four-player teams. Play began with a shotgun start around 1 p.m., and ended near dark. This was after a post-round meal and awards ceremony. For the record — and none was kept — three teams shared first with eight-under par totals. Under par rounds were the rule under the captain's choice format that allowed for contributions from all team members.

It was a day for business folk to forget about business and concentrate on something really important, like that breaking, three-foot birdie putt. Now that's something to really worry about.

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Baseball Season Tonight

Mooreville's Mustang Baseball League is stampeding towards season-opening play tonight (Wednesday).

For that's when half the league members help christen a new season with season openers.

Tonight's two games open a full week of action in the Mustang League that will take place over the next four days and see all eight league members in action at least once.

As will be the case throughout the campaign, tonight's games will unfold on the Liberty Park diamond the Mustangs will call home.

In addition to tonight's doubleheader, two more battles will be fought tomorrow (Thursday) evening, and another two will be held Saturday morning to wrap up a busy opening week.

That's a playing routine the Mustangs will stick to all season. Their games will be held on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, and Saturday mornings, with two games being held each playing day.

All the games will be played at Liberty Park.

Once again, play in the Mustang League is being conducted through the Mooreville Recreation Department.

Teams making up the league roster this season include the Bandits, Pirates, Athletics, Phillies, Mets, Braves, Yankees, and Mets.

During the course of regular-season play, all eight teams will square off against the remaining seven twice each, accounting for a 14-game campaign for them all.

In addition to the regular season, one has also been set aside in case of rain outs. Any game lost by rain will be rescheduled as soon as possible.

Some of the rained out battles may take place on selected Sunday afternoons during the season.

Players in the Mustang League are those boys born between Aug. 1, 1980 and July 31, 1982.

Beginning with this evening's twinbill, the complete Mustang Baseball League schedule follows:

May 1

6:00 Bandits vs. Pirates

7:30 Athletics vs. Phillies

May 2

6:00 Bandits vs. Mets

7:30 Braves vs. Yankees

May 4

9:30 Pirates vs. Phillies

11:00 Astros vs. Athletics

May 6

6:00 Phillies vs. Astros

7:30 Yankees vs. Pirates

May 8

6:00 Mets vs. Braves

7:30 Athletics vs. Bandits

May 9

6:00 Pirates vs. Mets

7:30 Yankees vs. Athletics

May 11

9:30 Astros vs. Bandits

11:00 Phillies vs. Braves

May 13

6:00 Braves vs. Bandits

7:30 Mets vs. Astros

May 15

6:00 Athletics vs. Pirates

7:30 Phillies vs. Yankees

May 16

6:00 Mets vs. Athletics

7:30 Pirates vs. Braves

May 18

9:30 Astros vs. Yankees

11:00 Bandits vs. Phillies

May 20

6:00 Yankees vs. Bandits

7:30 Pirates vs. Astros

May 22

6:00 Braves vs. Athletics

7:30 Phillies vs. Mets

May 23

6:00 Yankees vs. Mets

7:30 Braves vs. Astros

May 25

6:00 Yankees vs. Braves

7:30 Mets vs. Bandits

May 30

6:00 Braves vs. Mets

7:30 Bandits vs. Athletics

June 1

9:30 Pirates vs. Yankees

11:00 Astros vs. Phillies

June 3

6:00 Athletics vs. Astros

7:30 Phillies vs. Pirates

June 5

6:00 Mets vs. Pirates

7:30 Athletics vs. Yankees

June 6

6:00 Braves vs. Phillies

7:30 Bandits vs. Astros

June 8

9:30 Astros vs. Mets

11:00 Bandits vs. Astros

June 10

6:00 Yankees vs. Phillies

7:30 Pirates vs. Athletics

June 12

6:00 Braves vs. Pirates

7:30 Athletics vs. Mets

June 13

6:00 Phillies vs. Bandits

7:30 Pirates vs. Astros

June 15

9:30 Astros vs. Pirates

11:00 Bandits vs. Yankees

June 17

6:00 Athletics vs. Braves

7:30 Mets vs. Phillies

June 19

6:00 Phillies vs. Athletics

7:30 Pirates vs. Bandits

June 20

6:00 Astros vs. Braves

7:30 Mets vs. Yankees

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Postseason Play Still Possible,
Devillettes Eye Peak Performances

A lot of things could be on the minds of members of Mooreville Senior High's softball team these days.

After all, it's prom season, and the end of school is not that far away. For some, that even means graduation.

But for the Devillettes, they remain centered on one thought — opening a postseason invitation.

Despite splitting Southern District Seven Conference decisions last week, the Lady Devils stayed in contention for the third and final playoff berth available, keeping their hopes alive after knocking off one of the three teams ranked above them in the league standings.

"We're still in there," plugged Nancy Dilks, Mooreville's head coach, after her squad bounced back from a last-inning, 3-2 loss at

second-place Bandys earlier in the week to hammer out a 10-3 blistering of third-place Chase Thursday that kept the Devillettes in the circuit's upper division.

"We've still got something to play for," offered Dilks, "and considering the kind of year we've had, with our injuries, that's something I still feel like we haven't reached our peak. If we can over the next couple of weeks, anything can happen. The girls haven't given up. This is a tough time of year to maintain your concentration, but the girls are doing a good job. They realize that our season isn't over with yet."

Last week's split decisions, in a week of travel, puts Mooreville's mark at 6-5 in the SD-7 with a crucial five league contests remaining.

West Lincoln entered the week practically assured of finishing first, remaining unbeaten in league play, with Bandys solidly positioned in second. Those two appear sure bets to land the top two playoff spots.

The race for third is just that, involving Mooreville, Chase, Maiden and Bunker Hill.

The Devillettes still have games remaining against both Maiden and Bunker Hill.

"We've still got a couple of tough games left," admitted Dilks. "But we have the potential to win them. If we can get and stay healthy for the stretch run, we can beat anybody."

The Devillettes proved that against hostessing Chase Thursday, gaining a split of the season series by avenging an earlier season defeat with the help of four multiple-run innings.

The guests set the tone immediately Thursday, clawing for three runs in the top of the first inning. The Devillettes raised their lead to 5-0 with two more runs in the third.

After the home team sawed into the lead with three runs in the bottom of the fifth, the visitors responded by matching that output in the top of the sixth.

Mooreville then led the issued with two more insurance runs in the top of the seventh.

All that support marked the successful return of senior

pitcher Jennifer Thompson, who was injured just before the Bandys game and missed her only game of the season.

Leading the way offensively was Tim McLaughlin, who contributed to the extra base barge with a double and a homer. Linda Redfear tagged a double as one of her two hits, while Becky Park, Thompson and Rochelle Gaston all collected a pair of hits apiece.

At Bandys to open the week of road work Tuesday afternoon, the guests failed to break a 3-3 tie in their at-bat in the seventh and watched as the homestanding Lady Trojans did, allowing the latter to sweep the season series by a 4-3 score.

Mooreville had garnered a 1-0 lead in the first before Bandys jumped on top 2-1 in the second. The Lady Devils squared matters with a run in the third and then inched back ahead with another single tally in the fifth.

Bandys, still in the hunt for the league title, forged another tie with a run in the sixth and then, after holding Mooreville in the top of the seventh, constructed its winning rally in the last of the final regulation inning to squeeze out the win.

It marked the pitching debut of Mooreville freshman Debra Keller, called on after a pre-game injury to regular starter Thompson.

Amy Bentley tagged out four hits in many plate appearances to captain the Devillettes at the plate. Denise Douglas collected three hits, as did Redfear, while McLaughlin, Rodgers, Newton, Keller, and pinch-hitter Leslie Craig all added a base knock each.

Entering this week's shortened action due to Friday night's prom, Mooreville faced but one league foe on its agenda.

The Devillettes were to return home for the first time in more than a week to host Bunker Hill before observing an open date Friday.

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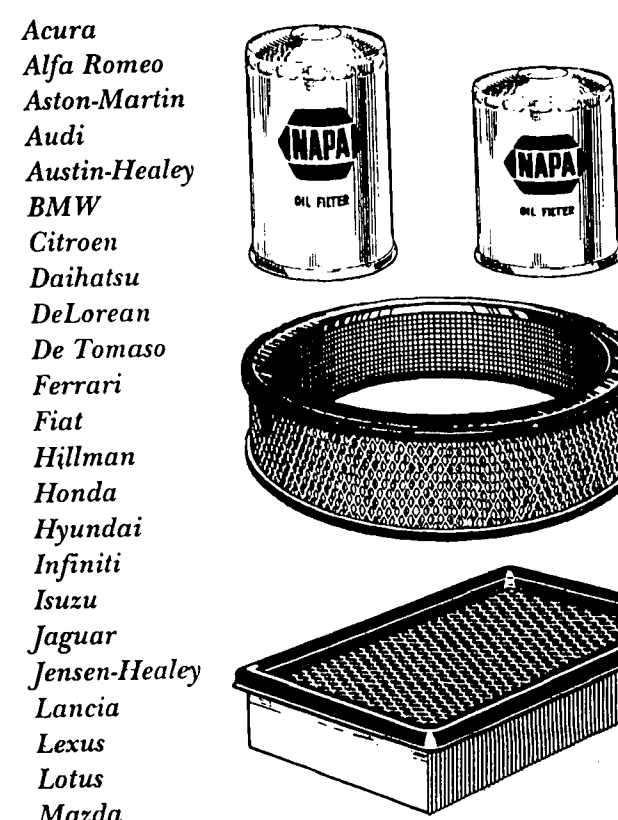
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Heather Robertson, left, Thompson combine to prevent run with put-out at home

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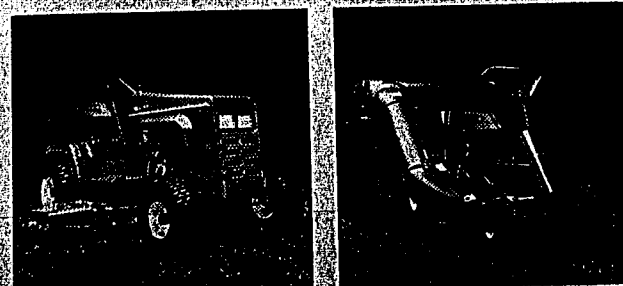
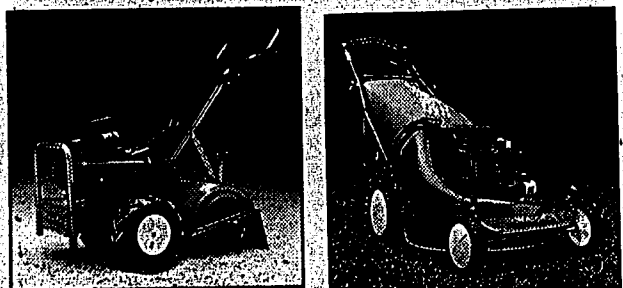


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