

SPORTS TURF MANAGER

... for better, safer Sports Turf

SEPTEMBER 1998

Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame

Grand Opening: June 4, 1998

On Thursday, June 4, my wife and I travelled to St. Mary's, Ontario to witness the opening of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and the initial induction of 17 women baseball players. These ladies represent "Canada's best kept secret for 45 years," and those who attended received a thunderous ovation.

The women, all from western Canada, are those who are left of 64 Canadians who played in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. The league began during the Second World War in 1943 and finished in 1954, playing games in Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. These ladies are now in their 70s and 80s. Those who couldn't attend were either too sick to travel or unable to be located. Many have died.

Also inducted into the Hall posthumously were Sylvan "Ron" Roncetti and George "Knotty" Lee, two who inspired

many children who yearned to play baseball. Lee spent more than 40 years as a player, manager, and league organizer. Roncetti also played, coached, and was the founder of the Toronto Leaside Baseball Association.

The opening was blessed with fine weather. A large tent was erected on the 32 acre site and an enormous crowd attended. The baseball field itself was sodded a few days before and although no screen or lights were in place yet, it was very professional looking (see the accompanying figures on page 2). These will be added as monies become available.

Part of the credit for construction of the field goes to Gordon Dol, one of our directors, Ron Martin, also a member of the Sports Turf Association, and of course, the designer Arthur Lierman, Landscape Architect, who has spent countless volunteer hours on the project.

Souvenirs were available from the museum (yet to be completed) and two RCMP officers handed out 125 year anniversary pins. The afternoon finished with the singing of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" and a barbecue. The ladies inducted were treated to flowers and a banquet at the local golf club. A poster was also available honouring them.

The reason for locating the Hall of Fame in St. Mary's, Ontario, is that the first recorded baseball game in Canada was in Beachville, west of Woodstock, on June 4, 1838 (please see the Field Day article for additional information). ◆

— Michael Bladon

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