

Old-Time Baseball Hits Hartford

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Three members of The Alert Fire Hose Company include father and sons Roger 'Molasses' Ratzenberger (center), Dan 'Flopsy' Ratzenberger (left) and Bobby 'One Shoe' Ratzenbergser

The Hartford organization adopts all Civil War era rules, uniforms and equipment. This means no gloves, no pitcher's mound and addressing the single umpire as "sir."

"It was a gentleman's game," Karen O'Maxfield, president of Friends of Vintage Baseball, said. "People were very polite to one another, and the opposite team would applaud for their opponents."

O'Maxfield also called the 1860s version of baseball a game of honor.

"If it was uncertain whether or not a player was out, the player would be expected to be honest. If the players couldn't agree, the umpire would ask the crowd if it was a fair play or an out," O'Maxfield said.

The organization hosts two different types of baseball, reminiscent of differing rules during the 19th century.

The 1861 version of the game, called a “Bound Game,” allows for the batter to be out if the ball was caught after bouncing once.

The 1865 version, known as the “Fly Game,” called for outs only when the ball was caught from the air. In both games, batters are expected to be ready to play the moment they touch home plate. If they aren’t, it is considered a strike.

“It’s a much faster-paced game,” O’Maxfield said. “A completely different feeling than today’s game.”

The Friends of Vintage Baseball also collaborate with student and senior groups, libraries, and historical societies. On Saturday, June 8, the organization commemorated the original Hartford baseball grounds with a special garden planted at first, second and third base.

On Friday, July 5, the organization will hold a game at Bushnell Park in Hartford at 6 p.m. in conjunction with the Hartford Marketing, Events and Cultural Affairs Division’s “Movies after Dark” series.

The game will precede a free screening of the 1992 film, “A League of their Own” starring Tom Hanks, Geena Davis and Madonna.

Games are scheduled on Fridays and Saturdays each week until the championship at Colt Meadows on Saturday, Aug. 24 at 1 p.m.

A full summer schedule is available on the organization’s website,

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<http://www.nbcconnecticut.com/news/local/Old-Timey-Baseball-Hits-Hartford-211070921.html>