

SOUTH WINNIPEG SENIORS' MIXED SLOW PITCH CLUB

HISTORY

The Early Years

South Winnipeg Seniors Mixed Softball

In the late 1980s, a new trend was developing among softball enthusiasts in South Winnipeg who reached retirement and had leisure time on their hands. They began playing slow pitch softball - - - a day-time game ideally designed for seniors.

A number of seniors from southern areas of the city played the game in Kildonan Park for several years with the "All-Stars" slow pitch league. However, they found the playing atmosphere not the best as it seemed everyone had their own rules. Nothing was standard.

The All Stars did not compete with other house league teams. It did not participate in the Manitoba Society of Seniors annual tournament. The travelling distance for South Winnipeg area residents, (including the bicycle-riding trips by Nettie Stadnyk) added to the dissatisfaction.

In 1987, after exchanges of opinions and ideas, 13 determined, sports-minded seniors held a meeting on Oct. 23, 1987, at the Victoria Community Club to form a new slow pitch softball league in South Winnipeg.

A special invited guest at this first historic meeting was Esther Korochny, official representative of The New Horizons Foundation agency. She was there to offer "assistance in funding the new softball league."

When she asked the group how much money was required to form the new league, the answer was, "\$6,000." She was then asked, "Do you think there is any chance we will get any money?"

"Of course!" she replied, "I'm not wasting my time being here!"

An application for the grant from New Horizons required 10 names and was quickly signed by:

Dave Klassen,	Susan Klassen,	Jake Bergen,
Betty Bergen	Jake Falk	Dave Weibe,
Jack Hunter,	Ted Degen,	Isabelle Degen
Martin Peach.		

With the grant application approved and money problem solved, the group elected its founding executive and installed Dave Klassen as president; Jack Hunter, vice-president; and Isabelle Degen, secretary. The executive members would, "remain in office for two years and at the end of that time, only one officer would be replaced."

The new league was to be known as "South Winnipeg Seniors." Following considerable discussion on uniform colors of white with black stripe, powder blue with white stripe or white with maroon stripe, the suggestions were tabled for subsequent selection.

Leibel Hirschfield agreed to set up a Rules Committee for the new league. The meeting was adjourned with everyone encouraged to spread the word and recruit new members to the organization.

To solve the selection of uniforms, the manager of a sports shop in St. Vital Shopping Centre was approached. He surprised everyone by making a special trip to the Century Arena ball diamond where he personally measured everyone for proper fitting.

The first windup banquet was held at the Victoria Community Club. The food was supplied by Porteous Catering, costing \$10.65 per meal - - nonmembers paid \$12 each. By December 3rd, more than one month later, the club had 35 members signed.

April - 1988

In April 18th, nine members of the executive met to discuss operations of the coming ball season. Present were:

Dave Klassen

Ted Degen

Dorothy Schellenberg

Jack Hunter

Sue Klassen

Martin Peach

Isabelle Degen

Jake Bergen

Dorothy Chapman

The club received an approved contract with the City of Winnipeg Parks and Recreation department giving South Winnipeg permission to use the two ball diamonds at Ray Fennel Park in Fort Garry. Total cost to the club: \$1.



South Winnipeg Seniors' slow pitch 1988 team won the gold medal at the Manitoba Society of Seniors tournament in Carmen. Standing, from left: Martin Peach, Dave Klassen, Jack Hunter, Lloyd Fisher, Jake Bergen, Larry Friesen, Ted Degen, Bill Hulobow, John Sandberg, Mike Kibbons, Reta Kibbons. Front row, from left: Rene Provost, Jake Falk, Isabelle Degen.

The ball games would be played on Monday and Wednesday afternoons. Umpires for these House League games would wear white jerseys and caps bearing the inscription "Umpire" for the benefit of all players.

Items recorded in the club's spending included "Ike" purchasing an umpire's shirt costing \$22. This was more than the annual membership fee. Also noted was a South Winnipeg team participating in a tournament at Portage la Prairie, and Jack Falk replacing Danny Lepowick on the " Board of Directors."

Sept. 26, 1988.

A meeting held on this day formed a committee consisting of Mike Kibbons, Dorothy Sandburg and Frank Humphries to " look into a fall banquet." Perry Crow submitted a motion, which was approved, requiring all members to pay for their own meal at the banquet.

Other decisions reached by the membership included:

- Ladies to be allowed to play at age 55 years
- Minimum age for men was set at 60 years
- In case of an emergency on the field, a telephone at Flo Form Industries was available.
- Uniforms to be returned at the end of the ball season in the fall.

September - 1989

One year later, at the annual meeting held Sept. 25th, the election of the executive for the coming term produced six nominations for president and all nominees declined.

With no one willing to take the reins of a young, growing organization, Mike Skoropata volunteered to serve as President. Gordon Sim agreed to work as secretary-treasurer of the club which now had 57 signed members.

A financial report submitted at the meeting revealed the club had received \$2,089.78 from the New Horizons Foundation. This grant enabled the club to purchase uniforms costing \$1,550. An additional 16 uniforms purchased from Sports Experts cost \$801.22. The softball equipment purchases totalled \$1,087.12. A motion was passed to order 72 caps and crests at \$4.25 each

The membership decided to drop the men's minimum age to 58 years on a one-year trial basis. During the meeting, Nettie Stadnyk proposed the club purchase " tops" to differentiate the house league teams. Ray Little agreed to be in charge of the playing fields.

Interest in seniors' slow pitch softball was quickly spreading throughout Manitoba as indicated in a report by Mike Skoropata. He told the members that a group of the top (most competitive) seniors was formed to play games against each other on days that did not conflict with the House League schedule.

The Manitoba Society of Seniors (MSOS), was planning to hold a seniors' slow pitch tournament in Flin Flon in 1990 and was asking for entries from teams across the province. This created great interest among South Winnipeg members and an application was made to New Horizons for a grant to cover two-thirds of the expenses involved in participating at Flin Flon. However, the request was turned down.

May - 1990

There were 44 members at the club's annual spring meeting held May 1st in preparation for the coming softball season. As players registered and paid their \$20 fees, they received their uniforms consisting of a top shirt, pants and cap. The meeting approved purchase of colored arm bands to identify House League teams and players on the field.

The financial report showed there was a bank balance of \$2,981 after purchasing 18 softballs costing \$181.20.

The membership decided to hold the fall banquet at the Windsor Park Inn on Oct. 11th. Team players would be allowed to keep their uniforms during the winter. Some discussion centered on insurance coverage for members when playing the slow pitch games.

This was also the year that Mike Skoropata organized the John Blumberg seniors' slow pitch tournaments. Teams from various parts of Winnipeg and the province participated. Mike and his wife, Nellie, donated and presented a trophy to the winning team. The tournament and trophy presentation continues to this day.

The annual meeting was held Sept. 27th. Outgoing president Mike Skoropata nominated Bill Burdeyny to replace him for the next term and the selection was approved by the membership. Frank Humphries was elected vice-president and Gordon Sim continued his services as secretary-treasurer.

The club also decided to enter a team in the 1991 MSOS tournament at Hamiota. John Dyck and Bill Friesen agreed to look after the arrangements.

April - 1991

The preseason meeting held April 30th, established a ruling that each House League team be allowed to have one male player between 55-58 years of age.