

VINTAGE BASEBALL



JIM "GRANDDAD" APPLE of the Talbot Fair Plays warms up after coming in to pitch.

RON MACARTHUR PHOTOS

It's the way the sport is supposed to be played

Teams bring yesteryear's game to region

By Ron MacArthur
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The umpire issues a warning to the pitcher, but not for a brush-back pitch. He warns Jim "Granddad" Apple to throw hittable pitches. If not, he's going to start calling balls.

As players take the field, they are missing one very obvious piece of equipment taken for granted - a glove.

Catcher Scott "Curly" Murphy snags a foul tip on the bounce and it's counted as an out.

Is this some kind of strange dream about baseball? Actually, it's the way baseball was played after the Civil War in the late 1860s.

The Diamond State Vintage Baseball Club is resurrecting the roots of the American pastime as a team in the Mid-Atlantic Vintage Baseball League. The

teams play a complete schedule using vintage rules and equipment without gloves, which didn't become part of the game until the 1890s. Diamond State was an actual team based in Wilmington that played for about a decade after the Civil War.

Teams played with nine players and games went nine innings, but there were many variations on the rules of today's game such as three balls for a walk and foul balls not counting as strikes. In addition, balls could be caught on one bounce for an out.

Diamond State brought the vintage game to Lewes Saturday, Aug. 21, hosted by the Lewes, Rehoboth and Milton historical societies. Players from the Talbot Fair Plays in Easton, Md., the Elkton (Md.) Eclipse and Bohemia (Md.) Eureka combined with Diamond State to play on the grounds of the University of Delaware Virden Center before hundreds of enthu-

Game has changed over the past 150 years

The game of baseball has gone through an evolution, yet many of the basic rules (such as nine players) have never changed. Consider some of the rules during the mid- to late-1800s:

Fielders did not wear gloves.
Foul balls did not count as strikes.
The pitcher threw underhand 45 feet from home plate.

The catcher was one of the most important players on the field because any foul tips caught on a bounce counted as an out.

The first batter in an inning followed the batter who made the last out the previous inning.

If the pitcher failed to deliver hittable pitches, the umpire issued a warning and then called balls on subsequent pitches deemed to be unhittable.

If the batter (striker) did not attempt to hit good pitches, the umpire issued a

warning and called strikes on subsequent good pitches.

Even the terminology has changed: ballist - player; arbiter - umpire; tally - score; crank - fan; garden - outfield; dead - out; striker - batter.

See more rules at diamondstatebaseball.org.



Dan "Mini" Minutola of Diamond State is ready to step up to the plate.

siastic fans.

John Medkeff, captain and Diamond States' founder, went over the rules prior to the game. "You'll forget everything I have said, you really need to get out and play the game," he said.

He also spent time answering questions from fans. He said the older game was much quicker because batters didn't waste a lot of time in the batter's box. Once batters stepped near the plate, the pitcher could deliver his underhand pitch. Pitchers faced 25-cent fines for throwing curves or fastballs. Even though the game was quicker, high scores were not unusual because of rules that favored the hitting team.

Mike DiPaolo, executive director of the Lewes Historical Society, said he hopes the interest generated from the game will lead to the formation of a team from the Cape Region.

Participants echoed his sentiments. "I really like the game, especially the one-bounce rule," said Russ McCabe of Milton. "I'd like to see us form a team in this area." He liked the name Cape Henlopen Pirates, named after the Rehoboth Beach Eastern Shore League team.

Andy Lewes, who played right field,

agreed. The Lewes Little League president has attended a few vintage games in the past and was anxious to play under the old rules. But even the one-bounce rule could not help him catch a hard shot down the line that was a key hit in Diamond States' 11-run fourth inning.

Anyone wanting more information about forming a local team, contact DiPaolo at 645-7670.



Elkton Eclipse pitcher Tom "Schoolboy" Duffy delivers a throw to home.



Members of Diamond State making the trip to play in Lewes are (l-r) Chris "Ring" Goering, Jeff "Swampy" Kabacinski, John "El Jefe" Medkeff, Ken "Buzzsaw" Bonsall, Dan "Mini" Minutola, and Scott "Stretch" Rawding.