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# SPORT FEST WINDSOR NEWS

## Softball's Mr. Jones Still Burns 'Em In

by CURT SYLVESTER Free Press Sports Writer

The youngster walked a few steps past the big, barrel-chested man the baseball glove, then stopped and stared. "Aren't you Bonnie Jones?" he asked reverently. "That's right."

"I thought so. I saw you pitch last year, but that mustache almost fooled me," the boy answered. He stared for another moment and finally trudged away, turning his attention to the softball game under way at Palmer park.

**EVEN WITH THE** mustache, Bonnie Jones doesn't fool more people at Palmer Park, or anywhere else where fastpitch softball is played in Detroit.

He is 41 years old now. He has added the mustache and he is as thick through the midsection now as he is through the chest. And the fastball may have popped a little louder a few years ago than it does now when it slams into Harry Haroian's mitt behind the plate.

But Bonnie Jones- a living legend in Detroit fastpitch softball- is still a master of his trade, which is slinging a softball past waiting batsmen at the rate of something like 90 or 100 miles an hour.

That is one of the reasons the Burch-Nothdurft team rates as one of the tops in the United States, although it often goes nearly unnoticed in the slopitch-crazy Detroit metropolitan area.

"How fast do you think I could throw back when I was younger," Jones asked Burch-Nothdurft team manager Joe Casterdale.

"At least a hundred miles per hour," answered Casterdale, who has watched Bonnie pitch for approximately the last 20 years.

**JONES OF COURSE**, isn't that fast anymore, he doesn't even have the velocity of big ED Johnson, the team's other gig winner. But he can still burn it in when he has to and the rest the rest of the time he relies on pitches rising or dropping to get the outs.

"I was thinking this would be the last year," Jones said, thoughtfully. "But I don't know now. I'm still throwing the ball pretty good and I like it."

"I like the game and I like to travel around the country a little bit," he added. "I guess I've been in



**Mr. Fastpitch Still Going Strong**  
*Bonnie Jones raises that golden arm for a high, hard one.*

probably 14 national tournaments." That 14 could actually be a conservative figure. Even when his own team didn't make it to the nationals, Bonnie was constantly in demand by the teams that were going under the provision that allowed them to pick up one extra man for the tournament play. Six times he has been named to the All-American team and three times he was named outstanding player in the country.

**THE ONLY PLAYER** that comes close to him in the category is first baseman Carl Walker, who is hitting above .430, with 19 homers and 53 runs batted in.

The records of Jones (19-2) Johnson (17-1) and Walker, along with the strong defensive game Burch-Nothdurft plays, are explanation enough of why the Burch-Nothdurft team is flying high with a 53-6 record for the season. They just returned from winning two out of two against the defending national champion Clearwater (Fla.) Bombers, with their sights set on a national title for themselves and then a trip to New Zealand for the world tournament.

Jones, of course remembers the days when you could get all the competition you wanted-or more-right in Detroit.

There used to be twenty...any one of 'em could beat you," Jones said, recalling the days before slopitch softball became the more popular sport in the Detroit area.

"We always had to play in the city tournament and it was tougher to win the city tournament than it was to win the regional."

While fastpitch has lost much of its popularity in the Detroit area, it remains a popular game in outstate regions and also in the southern US., as it gradually loses the reputation of being only a "pitcher's game."

"Years ago it was a pitchers' game admitted Walker. "But since the late '50s, the batters have been catching up with the pitcher. The pitching rubber has gradually been pushed back from 37 feet to 46 1/4 feet, giving hitters time to do more than just bunt or simply chop at the ball.

**BURCH-NOTHDURFT** obviously has a satisfactory combination of both pitching and hitting. The team is leading its Wednesday night Palmer Park League and is also atop the International Fastball League, made up of mostly Canadian teams.

And before they begin their month of travel in August they have several games left in the International League.

They will be in Merlin, Ont., Friday night but be back in Detroit on Saturday for a 6PM doubleheader against Sarnia. The games will be played at Kennedy Park in Southgate on Dix near Eureka.



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