

# Take Me Out to the Dart Baseball Game

***Fredericka Manor residents relish their time on the diamond with competitive and fun play***

They go by colorful monikers like ... “The Commissioner,” “The Ace,” “The Rookie” and “Ms. October.” Like their baseball counterparts, they play to win but have plenty of fun. These appropriately named men and women are part of a group of athletes of all abilities who gather regularly to compete and pay tribute to an impressive, nearly 60-year tradition at Fredericka Manor - dart baseball.



The equipment is different from traditional baseball. Instead of bats and balls, players use darts. They release a dart 20 feet from the board with an underhand or overhand throw. The target is shaped like a baseball diamond with first, second and third base all getting progressively smaller to make sticking a triple more challenging than a single. A home run is the smallest target yet. Certain areas of the board represent walks, outs and double plays. There’s no instant replay so the umpire’s rulings are final!

The diamond hangs on a wall in a basement room colorfully decorated to resemble a n actual baseball stadium. Photos of baseball greats the likes of Ruth, Gehrig, Mantle, Mays, Aaron and The Duke adorn the walls. Cracker Jack and Candy fill player’s mouths.

Typical games can attract upwards of 60 cheering fans rooting for their favorite team — Padres, Dodgers, Royals, Tigers or Giants. The ultimate objective is the same for these players as it is in the Majors - score more runs than your opponent.

“I think we took America’s pastime and improved upon it,” said Stuart Robinson, also known as “The Ace,” a name given to him by his teammates who determined he was the league’s top player. “Our game is fast, never gets boring and anyone can play. We also have a pretty nice pregame ceremony.”

Prior to each game, as the crowd settles in, the commissioner reports on the previous week’s games. “After the crowd is settled, but before the Umpire yells ‘play ball!’ we sing *God Bless America* and *Take Me Out to the Ball Game*,” said Frank “The Commissioner” Marini. It doesn’t get any better than that!”



Frank has presided over the league for the past seven years. As commissioner, he chooses the team captains, figures out the schedule, officiates the player draft and keeps score and records player stats of every game. Players enjoy two seasons - one starts in spring and another in fall. Team captains and the commissioner choose team members from a list of those residents who signed up to play. Frank also serves as the league's historian confirming the first dart baseball game was played at Fredericka in October 1965.

"People of all abilities are welcome," Frank said. "We have had two blind players in the past. We helped them to the batting line, pointed them in the right direction, told them where their darts hit and suggested adjustments."

For those who do not want to be part of the league but still want to play, opportunities for "pick-up" games are plenty. "I love the pick-up games," said baseball enthusiast Hoppy Weis, who has played on amateur teams for much of his life. "I can come down to the stadium any time of day and there is usually always someone here to play with. Any time I come in here I feel like I'm a 12-year-old boy again."

"This dart baseball league promotes camaraderie among residents," said veteran player Howard Baker. "Usually, about 30 or 40 residents show up to play or watch so it's a great opportunity to make new friends and socialize."

"I think dart baseball is unique to Fredericka Manor," said Vickie "The Rookie" Kimball, who got her nickname for her extraordinary high average during her first season. "I don't think any other Front Porch community plays the game."



Nancy Slocum has been playing off and on for years. She's known in one game for hitting seven home runs, batting close to .600 and driving in 11 runs. "She was on fire that day," Hoppy remembered. Another player, Grace Johnson, is known as "Ms. October" for her heroics during the playoffs as was Major League Baseball hall of famer Reggie Jackson who was dubbed "Mr. October" for his similar heroics during October post seasons.

When the pandemic hit, the league had to adjust and move their playing field to the outdoors, but their enthusiasm did not wane.

The league was particularly excited a few years ago when the Fredericka Manor staff formed its own

team, the Tigers, led by team captain Executive Director Craig Sumner, to challenge residents.

“Craig loves the game and the staff team has been a welcome addition to the game,” Frank said. “Sometimes they beat a resident team and sometimes the other team wins, but there is always a good competitive spirit. This game has certainly endured at Fredericka Manor.”