

BASEBALL

PORT AU PORT

VIKINGS !





Above is one of the first baseball teams from Port au Port following the Second World War in the late 1940s. From left to right, front row, are: Eddy Hawco, Harold Benoit, Fintan Hynes, Will Hynes; (back) P. S. Hynes (president of the Port au Port Baseball Association and first vice-president of

the Newfoundland Amateur Baseball Association for the Port au Port area), Danny MacDonald, Douglas Campbell, Tom Hawco, Fintan Abbott, Cyril Dubourdieu, Kevin Campbell and Charlie Hynes.



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"Stan the Man" masterminds ball setup in Port au Port

By RICHIE WILLIAMS
Star Sports Writer

Stan LaFitte is "Stan the Man" when it comes to baseball in Port au Port.

To baseball players and fans alike, he's the mastermind behind baseball operations in the tiny community, just outside Stephenville.

Stan's baseball interest stretches back about 16 years. He played junior and senior ball in Port au Port and was a top-rate centerfielder. After eight years of play he hung up the spikes and took over the post of head of the Port au Port Baseball League. He has held the presidency ever since.

He's a jack of all trades concerning the sport. Besides heading the league, Stan finds time to assist in the selection and training of the community's junior and senior baseball teams, arranges the games, looks after visiting teams and practically runs the show at the ball park.

A native of Port au Port, Stan figures baseball is still growing in that area. "Interest picked up in baseball here this year. Baseball seems to be getting better now," he says. "Before there was a great rivalry between Port au Port and Stephenville but Stephenville wasn't in this season. A lot of interest was lost there."

The genial president attributes the interest growth to the round robin schedule drawn up for NABA teams in 1967. "I think the round robin schedule was a success," he said. "Before we usually played a best of five series against Corner Brook and were eliminated. This year we had a shot at every team and our



Stan LaFitte

left. The good players go and that hurts us."

Some of the most notable losses to Port au Port baseball are pitchers Phonse Jesso and Mike O'Neill, both in Corner Brook, and second baseman Mike Gushue, now in St. John's.

"If we had all our players here, we could be in the thick of things," he stated.

"Our best season ever was

in 1964 when we won the Carnell Trophy in the Little Four by beating Gander. We have never won a provincial title," he said.

Port au Port didn't operate a local senior league this year because squads from Stephenville and Lourdes did not enter. However, a junior league was in operation with games against St. George's.

"One thing we always had was fan support," LaFitte noted. "We had to start our own ball field. We've had it for about 20 years and the Port au Port Sports Club and the people built it."

Stan feels baseball will enjoy good years in the future in Port au Port. "We have a lot of players now playing with our senior and junior teams.

Those fellows got a lot of experience this year and provided they don't move away we will have a good team in a few years. It looks a lot better in the future," he added.

With a man like Stan LaFitte spearheading baseball, Port au Port is bound to enjoy better years ahead. He has been a credit to the game in the past.

"I get a great kick out of it," he says.

Viking seeking win

The Port au Port junior Vikings will be looking for a berth in the Newfoundland junior baseball finals tonight when they meet the defending champion Corner Brook Baronets at Jubilee Field.

The Vikings, out of the play-off picture for the past 10 years, took a one-game lead in the western division semifinals Thursday night with a 7-3 win over the Baronets at Port au Port.

It was their first win over Corner Brook since 1957.

Tonight the Baronets will have home advantage as they hope to even the series and force a third and deciding game in Port au Port Saturday.

Port coach Bernie MacLean will start either Jerry Jesso or Jack McDonald tonight in search of the

big win. Jesso is no stranger to local baseball. A brother of one of the best pitchers in provincial ball, Phonse Jesso, Jerry pitched one game in the local junior this year. He led the Humber Hawks to a 3-2 win over the Town Aces.

Sporting a good curve and fastball, Jesso had planned to remain in Corner Brook for the summer, but returned to Lourdes before the registration deadline.

Joe Mullins, coaching the Baronets in the absence of regular coach Don Wells, is scheduled to start righthander Ches Thorne tonight.

In addition, the Baronets may have regular rightfielder Alex Blanchard in the lineup for tonight's fixture. Blanchard missed last night's game due to work commitments.

Game time is 6 p.m.