

Galt Gaytops

1957 Ontario Fastball Champions



Members of the 1957 Galt Gaytops fastball provincial champions were, front left: Violet Cohen (lf), Gwen Elsby (c), Pat Arsenault (rf), Theresa Graff (p), Marlene Holmes (p), Rosie Ball (3b), Audrey Holtzhauer (utl), Maxine Steele (cf). Back left: Tom Hawkshaw (coach), Merle Schoenfeld (2b), Barbara Wyganowski (utl), Valerie Toombs (rf), Reta Ball (3b), Melba Jewell (ss), Georgina Hawkshaw (utl), Joyce Leighton (1b).

The Galt Gaytops ladies fastball team was a talent-laden squad that drew hundreds of fans out to Lincoln Park, where they played their home games during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The team was founded by Ed Riley in the early 1950s, and Riley became the team's first coach and guided them through their early years.

Led by pitcher Marlene Holmes' arm and bat, as well as the bat of Maxine Steele (pitcher and OF), the team captured an Ontario title in 1957 and were a force to be reckoned with.

"They were very competitive," said coach Tom Hawkshaw, who took over the reigns after Riley left. "That's just the way the girls were. They found it more fun to win than to lose."

"That's the truth," said third baseman Reta Ball.

The team played through the 1950s against teams like Toronto, Stratford, Brantford, Sarnia and many others. Many of their home games were under the floodlights at Lincoln Park.

Ball, who also doubled as team manager for a while, "laid down the laws," said Georgina Hawkshaw. "She'd tell us there was to be no drinking or smoking. Maybe that's why we did so well."

Playing in the now-defunct Big Four Ladies Fastball League, the Gaytops not only won a league title but also advanced to the finals at another time.

Detroit came up around that time to play the Gaytops. "They were going to the worlds," recalled Hawkshaw, "and they needed some good competition." The

Gaytops, though they lost, gave them all they could handle in some extremely close games. "And we went down there and played," said Hawkshaw. "They were all close games."

Typical of the Gaytops' play was their 1957 drive to the Provincial Women's Softball Union (PWSU) title. They won the Ellen Anne trophy – emblematic of Intermediate AA supremacy – that year after beating Toronto's East York Kiwanis Girls 14-4 in a night game at Lincoln.

That night the Galt girls racked up five runs in the first inning, and three more in the second en route to the win. Steele earned the win on the mound, holding the Toronto squad to five singles, while fanning five. Galt managed 17 hits off Toronto hurler Moore, including Ball's homer and triple. Ball managed four hits in five trips to the plate.

Merle Schoenfeld and Melba Jewell hit doubles in the win, while all the Galt players had at least one hit each. Gwen Elsby was three-for-five at the plate, while first-baseman Joyce Leighton, who they called Satch, Marlene Holmes and Violet Cohen each went two-for-five.

"The infield was especially good and our pitchers were good," said Georgina Hawkshaw. "Mel Jewell was some shortstop and Reta Ball was great at third."

What was the reason for the Gaytops' success? They were a talented bunch, to be sure, but Ball had her own theory.

"I think the girls had a lot of fun. We all had fun doing it. That was probably the main thing."