

A Not-so Brief History of TOT

If you are a current player or if you have long since retired, we encourage you to look through the History section. You are sure to see names you know, be surprised at who is still playing or which guys played back in the 1990s, but most of all, we hope it puts a smile on your face ... and that you'll come out to the park.

Year-by-Year Summary

Please be sure to check out the [year-by-year summary](#) that lists the executive, team awards and team rosters plus the odd historical tidbit for their corresponding year.

Also check out the [play-off results](#), starting from 2008.

The following information was compiled and written by Ron (Bucky) Buxton and Steve Ross with contributions from Colin Mann.

Initial Formation

It all started in the fall of 1985 at a street dance in the parking lot at the Tottenham Mall with a conversation between baseball party-goers Al Duchesne, Colin Mann and Lorne Smith. They were frustrated with competing in the local men's slo-pitch league that was getting younger each year and discussed the idea of forming a 35-and-over recreational league. Their thought process behind the idea was to rekindle past glories but on a more level playing field.

The three contacted about 25 individuals, determined that there was enough interest to create a 4-team league and through phone calls, word of mouth and newspaper ads, the Tottenham Oldtimers Slo-Pitch league was formed.

The league's membership appointed a President (Al Duchesne) and a Vice President (Colin Mann) whose initial acts were to:

- (a) Create an executive
- (b) Form a constitution
- (c) Have a common draft
- (d) Determine league fees
- (e) Create a substitutes list to be used when teams were short players

In the spring of 1986 the Tottenham Oldtimers began its inaugural season using both the Community Centre and Keogh Park diamonds. The Pall Bearers, captained by Colin Mann became the first champions.

Expansion of the League

Al Duchesne continued as the League President, with Colin Mann and Jim Gorrie serving as Vice-Presidents, until the end of the 1989 season when Al announced at the Annual General Meeting that he would not be returning in that capacity. The ensuing election saw Ron Buxton voted in as President with Jim Gorrie, Al Edward and Colin Mann elected as VPs. Al McInnis was acclaimed as the treasurer, Wayne Burnie as statistician and Rick Bertram as sub controller. This was the first annual election where the general body elected the Executive. Prior to this, they were appointed.

Anyone who currently plays or has played in the Tottenham Oldtimers owes a debt of gratitude to both Al and Colin for their efforts in creating what has become Tottenham's premier baseball league.

Word about the league's "fun first" attitude got around and each year the league grew - 6 teams in 1987, 7 in 1988, 9 in 1989 and then to 12 in 1990. Several prominent local ball players came from the long-established Tottenham Men's League and provided TOT with credibility as a local league. Some of these local ball-players included Ralph Brown, Bob Candy, Bill Clouthier, Charlie Crowley, Jay Feehely, Ron Fortier, Bill Gould, Ed Hopkins, Bill Jonkman, Donny McLocklin, Tom Perry, the late Ken Riggs, Pat Ruffalo, Art Sagert, Cliff Scott, and the late Jack Talbot.

Editors Note: As of May 2015, Bob Candy, Bill Clouthier, Ed Hopkins, and Art Sagert are still active players in TOT.

In 1990 there was enough interest to expand to 12 teams, however due to a lack of available diamonds, had to leave Tottenham and use the newly lit Palgrave south diamond. This situation led to local organizations such as Community Recreational Improvement Committee (CRIC) and the Town of New Tecumseth to build a brand new facility, Coventry Park, that opened in 1996.

Player Ratings and Registration

The initial way of drafting players was based on an A, B, C rating. However, when the league began expanding beyond half a dozen teams in 1989, Ron Buxton formed a rating committee and expanded the categories to 10.

In the ensuing years rating sheets were handed out to the captains to assess their individual players and these were adjusted by the ratings committee to arrive at a final rating for each player. During this time, records on each player's statistics throughout the year were compiled (e.g., at-bats, hits, runs scored, etc.) that allowed the ratings committee to compare a player's stats against the league average to make an adjusted

rating. This proved highly successful and the draft resulted in the league evolving toward parity across the teams.

Further adding to the success of the ratings and the draft is the assessment of non-baseball related attributes which include such characteristics as: Attendance and demonstrating being a team player.

In 1992, Don Robertson suggested that a pre-season registration be held where players would pay a portion of their league fees up front. Prior to this, team captains were tasked with collecting fees at the beginning of the season and often a last minute scramble to fill out team rosters would be needed as there were always players that had moved or had chosen not to return. This pre-season registration event resolved many of these challenges and the advance of funds allowed the league to purchase equipment prior to the beginning of the season.

The Umpire-in-Chief Position

From the very start in 1986, Al McMullin (Slo-Pitch Ontario) handled umpiring the league until 1992 when the league, as a cost management experiment, chose to umpire its own games. Wayne Burnie was elected as umpire-in-chief in 1993 and a selection of volunteer players umpired games they were not playing in. The experiment only lasted a single year.

For the 1994 season, Colin Mann created of a new local SPN chapter and ran a series of clinics to establish SPN carded umpires from within and outside of our leagues. This resulted in maintaining the original goal of managing costs as the rates were lower but more importantly created a local pool of umpires. Colin expanded the local chapter to include umpiring Tottenham Ladies Lob-ball League and the Beeton Mens League, an arrangement that continues to the present day, expanding further in 2007 to include the Tottenham Men's Slo-Pitch League. Colin continued as umpire-in-chief until the end of 1999 when the role was taken over by Wally Kuberski. Roman Dasek took on the position in 2004 and Roman continues to fulfill this role presently.

The importance of having a stable umpire situation for so long has been instrumental in the success of the league. TOT has a unique feature of friendly banter between our umpires and players throughout games - this situation is refreshing to new players as many have played in leagues where the umpire-player relationship is often a negative experience. However, this trust relationship has its foundation in the league's zero tolerance of any abusive behaviour directed at an umpire.

Years of Stability and New Communications

During the 1990s, the league operated each year with more or less 12 teams, picking up a few new players each year and losing roughly the same amount. It was during this time that many of the local rules of play were "tweaked" and the Constitution expanded to cover situations and ideas that arose.

In 1996, Ron (Bucky) Buxton stepped aside and Steve Kennedy was elected as President, holding the position until 2001.

Bob Blewett served as President from 2001 to 2005 and during this period the league ran either 12 or 13 teams. At this time, much of the league records and administration moved from the traditional paper-based, hand-updated forms to the digital age with the majority of the records updated and stored on computer. Year-over-year changes became much easier to manage and continuity of information is more comprehensive - for example player ratings are available from as far back as 2002.

The league domain (tottenhamoldtimers.ca) and the first version of the web site were launched in 2004 with standings, schedules and player statistics being posted regularly to the web site. Clayton Campbell was instrumental in getting the domain and the web site launched.

Chris Ross was elected as the 5th TOT President in 2005 and began to move the league communications completely into an electronic format. Emails and the web site became the primary ways of reaching out to players for communicating announcements. By 2008, the league had retired the paper-based registration mailings and implemented an on-line registration program, supplemented by a series of registration dates in March for any players still wishing to sign-up "in person".

25th Anniversary

2010 was a watershed year for TOT as it celebrated its 25th year. Secretary/Treasurer Kevin (Radar) Boston formed a committee to organize a series of celebrations in honour of the league's continued success. These celebrations included:

- ***Design-the-League-Logo Contest.*** 18 logos were submitted with the winning design being an amalgamation of different logos, one submitted by Kevin Boston and the other by Kevin Hollingshead. [Click to see the final contest result for both the 25th anniversary and regular logos.](#)
- ***25th Anniversary Hats.*** 400 of the hats were produced and were distributed to all players at the beginning of the 2010 season in addition to be used throughout 2010 for promotional and good-will purposes. [Click to see the Hat.](#)

- **Alumni game.** An alumni game was organized where 32 retired and long-time current TOT players participated in a 3-inning fun game held during the Michael Worrod Help the Kids Play Tournament. The alumni game was a smashing success and is planned to be an annual event during the tournament. [Click to see a write-up of the game](#) and a full compliment of photos may be found in the 2010 Alumni Game Photo Gallery.
- **All-Star Game.** The Oldtimers were challenged by the Tottenham Men's League to a best-of-the-best game where each league assembled an all-star team and played a 7-inning game during the Michael Worrod Help the Kids Play Tournament. [Click to see a write-up of the game](#) and a full compliment of photos may be found in the 2010 All-Star Game Photo Gallery.
- **Re-branded Web Site.** tottenhamoldtimers.ca underwent a major renovation and restructuring throughout 2010. The new site was launched in August 2010 with expanded content, a photo gallery, and a completely new look-and-feel.

Into our 4th Decade

After the 2011 season, Chris Ross stepped down as President and Jamie McClean was elected to succeed Chris. The season saw the second annual Alumni and All-Star Games take place during the HTKP weekend, with special note that the Oldtimer's All-Stars avenged their 2010 defeat by beating the Men's All-Stars in a truly remarkable game of slo-pitch that went into extra innings.

Jamie, after two successful years as league President was succeeded by Steve Ross who seamlessly continued the tradition of stability and confidence that has been a hallmark of the League through the 2014 and 2015 seasons.

Change of Seasons

After four years of smooth sailing and steadfast leadership under Jamie and Steve, it was time to acknowledge our role in the rapidly growing Tottenham community and position ourselves to absorb the influx of new people. Our 2016 diamond situation did not allow for growth and the only means to accept more players was by lighting a fourth diamond in Tottenham. That was the stated intention at the 2016 Annual General Meeting, "To grow baseball, reduce costs and position ourselves to avoid rate increases to players for the next 7-10 years".

The first two years were very much about cutting costs. League meetings were moved to the Legion to the benefit both organizations. Employing different strategies at tournaments

(moving from kegs to cans) made us more financially cognizant and responsible. Removing software that supported VISA payments, changing our website hosting, piggybacking purchasing with other leagues, changing our jersey vendor, changing our sponsorship program, selling secondary advertising, developing a partnership with the JAK Fund and capitalizing on alternative revenue streams; saw our economic outlook rapidly change.

The Tottenham Oldtimers were quickly in a position to contribute 15K to lights at C1. We forged a partnership with C.R.I.C. who also agreed to put in 15k. We made several presentations to Town Council, committing to donating money for lights if they would put the work in their budget. The Town did add it to their budget and we madly and privately fundraised another 30k led by our league members, members of the ladies league and local people who are exceptionally community oriented and brilliant fundraisers.

From the outside view, the overall 50k target was seemingly met with ease; but the truth is that it was achieved on the diligence and stick-to-itiveness of those who led projects and refused to have them fail to meet expectations.

With 17 teams and an annual 8-12 person waiting list, the Tottenham Oldtimers now has the diamond capacity to advertise for the first time 4 years and grow the league. The financial foundation is there and sustainable with multiple revenue streams that will be included as part of culture and exploited year after year.

2020 – The Season that wasn't to be

While 2020 marked the 35th consecutive year for the league which one of the oldest leagues in Ontario, the COVID-19 pandemic derailed our plans to carry out the season as the Executive Committee voted against any sort of modified season because of health and safety reasons. We postponed all related activities and events beyond the June 2020 Executive Meeting and set a date to get back to business in February 2021.

The league is able to keep a great dialogue going during the season and even over the winter - at the park, at the Legion, on the streets and on Facebook, Twitter and on the blogs that several of our captains maintain. The league remains active in our community with our member in Help the Kids Play (HTKP), Minor baseball and the JAK Fund. We also, unofficially, support many worthy community initiatives simply as a proud and organized collective of citizens.

2021 - The Road back

As the pandemic restrictions lifted, TOT began to calculate what a shortened / compressed season could look like in the event we were cleared to get back on the field. In March, we

opened registration with the intent of throwing the first pitch in late June / Early July. Registrations were strong enough to field 10 teams for a compressed season. TOT held 3 full weeks of "spring training", 3 nights a week to help players get the blood flowing, the bodies moving and the feel of bat on ball again. During the pandemic, C1 diamond went through a renovation that introduced new LED lighting that was funded by a partnership with TOT, CRIC & the Town of New Tecumseth.

2022 - Full Swing

A renewed sense of normal had settled in across the globe and this meant that TOT could resume the complete line-up of usual events. Live Executive meetings, a proper draft held at the legion, post-game beer at the legion, tournaments. We were back, baby!! 2022 was lead by Paul Piellusch as our president for the 3rd year in row. Paul had helped the league navigate the pandemic and he championed a revival as the league successfully regained it's membership and we offered 14 franchises in this season. While we said good-bye to the Hot Tub Woody's after 20 seasons, Ed and Jeff passed the torch onto David Connolly and Troy Hope who launched the Gamblers franchise in 2022. We also had a chance to see Doug Dwyer (past president & former captain of the Grisslies) have one more year leading a team along with Tim Osmond. The Strange Crew had their inaugural and only season in TOT.

Over the course of the 30+ years, the league has evolved and introduced many changes but has never waivered from its "fun-first" foundations.

We'll close with how we started this section - if you are a current player or if you have long since retired, we encourage you to look through the History section. You are sure to see names you know, be surprised at who is still playing or which guys played back in the 1990s, but most of all, we hope it puts a smile on your face ... and that you'll come out to the park.

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Please see [Awards & Trophies](#) for the team and individual honours.