

No Pain, No Game

Thirty years and still swinging

By Cathy Tyson



Go Daddies

“I’m lamenting throwing the ball because my arm is so sore, but I’m here despite the pain because of friendship and camaraderie,” reports Paul Coupin of Orinda. Lafayette resident Chris Caldwell is sporting not one, but two knee braces this season, “Yep, got ‘em sliding into home a couple of years ago, I live in pain,” he says half-jokingly.

What compels a 12-year old girl to forgo having a birthday party and instead plan to attend the Opening Night of the “Go Daddies?” It’s because for as long as she can remember she has tagged along with her daddy on Tuesday evenings.

Way back in 1977, the original members of what is now known as the “Go Daddies” got together for a friendly local adult-league game of softball at

Wagner Ranch. Then the team was known as “Vintage House,” because that’s where many of the founding members worked: Ignacio Vega, Josh Nichol, Bruno Walker, Eric Schroter, John Campagna, Jimmy Roux. Little did they know, these pals started what has become 30-year summer ritual.

Back in the day, when the guys were single, the tradition was to play the game, then have the whole team head to the Moraga Barn for hotdogs and beer. Sometimes, remember they were younger then, even go bowling at the Rheem Bowl, post game. These guys may have a little gray hair, but they’ve outlasted the Barn, the bowling alley and the Vintage House.

“As the team grew, it morphed into our summer family, and has grown to embrace our



Captain Ignacio Vega

children,” says Team Captain/Owner, Ignacio Vega. He generously pays the fee and keeps track of the post-game parties at members’ houses. “The

first question my kids ask on a summer Tuesday is, ‘where’s the party at tonight?’” Because of the number of players, wives and children the after-party has moved to players’ backyards.

Taking the mound for season thirty, Vega, President/CEO of Village Associates Real Estate is still smoking his trademark cigar and wearing his signature “Nantucket Red” shorts while he pitches. When it’s the Daddies turn at bat he retrieves the cigar when he’s safe on first. Greg “Oogie” Miller is always good for a number of inspired howls/barks. Jim “the Norse God” Larsen heckles the peanut gallery, and Paul Coupin is showing off his new goatee – its all part of the “Go Daddies” experience. The easy, laid back bond these men share is one of the reasons they keep coming back year after year. Priceless.

You’d hardly know the average age of the players was fifty. Brun-dog Walker scored the first run of the game and was only slightly winded. Time marches on and this season, David Banister, college graduate and son of one-time member John Banister, is playing.

“What it boils down to is men playing as boys for a few hours a week. We greet each other warmly, needle each other endlessly and laugh all game long. The recurring collective experience is what keeps this ball rolling along,” sums up Tom “Franko” Tyson.

In the last inning, Matt “Bye-Bye” Rei hits a stunning homer. When asked the final score, Bart “Bartatola” Penfold says, “A lot to a little.” Actually it was 16–8, good guys. They’ll be ready to take the field next week, after some Advil.

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