

State-bound

North Olmsted senior shot putter Laura Derov and Olmsted Falls freshman high jumper Brittany Snider earn 1st trips to state meet. **Page C3**



SPORTS

WWW.CHRONICLET.COM

In this section:

Golf Insider
Page C8

Section

C

Thursday,
May 25,
2006



DAN COUGHLIN

Slowpitch softball has been reduced to merely a game

Some people in Chicago say that the popularity of 16-inch softball is waning, which is like saying, "Nobody goes to the Cubs games anymore." But that's what I read in the Chicago Tribune Sunday magazine.

Sixteen-inch softball always was the game in Chicago. In fact, that's the only city where it is played. You may need a perspective on this.

Most people around here probably have never even seen a 16-inch ball. The slowpitch game played everywhere else in the world uses a ball 12 inches in diameter. That's the ball we use. The behemoths who play slowpitch can jack that 12-inch ball well over 300 feet. I have seen them hit it 400 feet.

But the 16-inch ball is mushy. It travels neither far nor fast. As the game is played in Chicago, nobody uses gloves. It's a bare hands game. The Chicago Tribune article recalled that 30 years ago the late columnist Mike Royko raised a fuss when the Chicago Park District ruled that gloves could be used in the Grant Park League.

Royko, who played in that league, sued the city of Chicago on the grounds that the rule was adopted after his team's \$240 entry fee had been paid and that the rule "runs contrary to the spirit of 16-inch softball."

"It unfairly penalizes those with talent and callused hands and gives an unfair advantage to those with tender and well-manicured hands."

The judge ruled in Royko's favor.

The Chicago Tribune went on to recount an exchange between Royko and sports announcer Marty Robinson during the radio broadcast of a 16-inch game.

"In real life he's a fireman," Robinson said as a player stepped into the batter's box.

"This is real life," said Royko.

If Chicago is losing that, it's a tragedy.

We had that attitude here in Northeastern Ohio in the 1960s and '70s. Slowpitch was a way of life for many people. Thousands of dollars were bet on games at Morgana Park in the Polish neighborhood on Cleveland's South Side. Thousands of fans paid to see national tournament games at State Road Park in Parma. Newspapers turned men who worked days in the mills and slugged homers at night into celebrities. I watched a kid from Parma timorously approach Big Jim Galloway from Long Island (N.Y.) County Sports and ask him for an autograph.

Those days are gone. Slowpitch is just a game anymore, not a way of life.

But there are a handful of die-hards who are approaching 70 years old who still play the game with the same gusto they did when they were young. One team, in particular, that plays in a Rocky River over-60 league has won three national age-group championships in the last five years.

In the outfield on that team you would see Bob Andrews, 68, still running, hitting and fielding as he did in 1965 when his Ganim's Bar team won the big

See **COUGHLIN, C3**

THE TOURNAMENT TRAIL: REGIONAL

Flu no match for 'Stro'



Keystone's Sarah Stromack steps on the plate to give the Wildcats a 2-0 lead Wednesday. They won 2-1. **DAVID SCHNEIDER / CHRONICLE**

Sick Stromack helps Keystone edge Bellevue

Bob Daniels
The Chronicle-Telegram

BUCYRUS — Sarah Stromack, playing with the flu, circled the bases, made a diving catch behind the plate and did just about everything but look sick for Keystone's softball team on Wednesday.

The play that saw the junior catcher score behind Erica Reid in the fourth inning provided the runs Keystone needed for a 2-1 win over Bellevue in a Division II regional tournament nail-biter at Bucyrus High.

It sent Keystone into the regional title game Saturday against the winner of today's semifinal between Lexington and Lima Bath. If Lexington wins, the Saturday game starts at noon. If it's Bath, game time is 2:30 p.m. because Bath's commencement is at 10:30 a.m.

The Wildcats (29-2) are one step away from their 11th Final Four appearance and fourth in a row. They won a state championship in 1999. Bellevue leaves the tournament with a 27-3 record.

"Anytime you got the flu and something like this happens, it makes you feel a little bit better," said Keystone coach Jim Piazza, who was also battling the flu. "What a trouper 'Stro' is. She was sick all day yesterday and she's sick today and she comes through like that."

See **KEYSTONE, C3**

Sito, Pioneers pound Garfield

Steve Byrne
The Chronicle-Telegram

CLYDE — Tess Sito has three more years to develop a gift of gab to her coach's satisfaction.

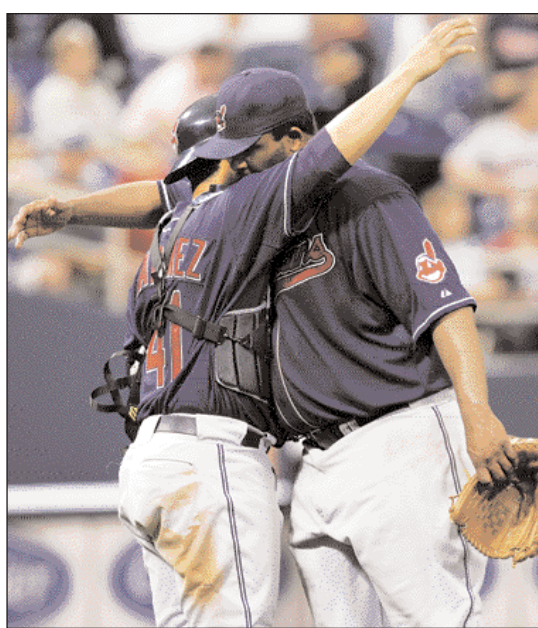
"Tess is a quiet girl," Elyria coach Ken Fenik said. "I coached three of her sisters. Tess is a different breed. I can't figure her out."

Sito let her arm and her bat do the talking in Elyria's 10-2 pounding of Garfield Heights in a Division I regional semifinal Wednesday. Sito, a freshman, shut out the Bulldogs for the opening six innings while collecting three hits, scoring two runs and driving in three.

Sito (11-3) walked none and struck out six. She allowed two hits with one out in the first inning before retiring 17 of the next 18 batters

See **ELYRIA, C3**

C.C. Sabathia (right) hugs catcher Victor Martinez after shutting out the Twins 11-0 Wednesday at the Metrodome.



AP

INDIANS 11, TWINS 0

C.C. effective, efficient

Sabathia shuts out Twins to split series

Sheldon Ocker
Knight Ridder Newspapers

MINNEAPOLIS — It's almost automatic anymore that every time C.C. Sabathia pitches, he becomes the story of the game.

He did it again Wednesday at the Metrodome. The Cleveland Indians beat the Minnesota Twins 11-0 to earn a split in the two-game series.

Holding the Twins to six harmless singles — one an infield roller, another

a bloop to the outfield — Sabathia threw the third shutout and eighth complete game of his career.

In addition to striking out eight, Sabathia (4-1, 1.52 ERA) did not walk a batter and did not go to a three-ball count on any hitter. He delivered only 26 called balls. In his past four starts, encompassing 34 innings, he has walked only two.

"C.C. controlled the ballgame," Indians manager Eric Wedge said. "He worked ahead all day."

Sabathia has made a remarkable alteration in his pitching style since

See **TRIBE, C4**

NEXT UP

WHO: Cleveland at Detroit

WHEN: Friday, 7:05 p.m.

WHERE: Comerica Park, Detroit

PITCHERS: Westbrook (4-2, 4.98 ERA) vs. Robertson (4-2, 3.02)

TV/RADIO: STO; WEOL 930-AM

OPEN TONIGHT TILL 9PM

NICE SELECTION
CARS • SUV'S
MINIVANS

3 Reasons to Buy at JDByrider:

- 1 BETTER CARS** Inspected, Certified, GOOD TO GO.
- 2 AFFORDABLE PAYMENTS** We can work with you to find a payment that fits your budget.
- 3 BETTER CAR CARE!** Ask about our limited warranties and extended service contracts. ...12 Month, 12,000 Miles, Limited Warranty

AMHERST
Rt. 58 (2 Miles South of I-90)
440-988-3000