



# THE ROMEO OBSERVER

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**BASE BALL FUN.** Seen above is vintage base ball team, the Mt. Clemens Regulars, who will face the Northville Eclipse at the third-annual victorian Festival Saturday, May 17.

(Photo courtesy of Bob Hart)

## Vintage base ball game sure to be a hit at festival

by CHRIS GRAY  
Observer Staff Writer

It's still three strikes and you're out at the old ball game, but this game puts an emphasis on the "old."

To help enhance the ambiance of the third-annual Romeo Victorian Festival, the Romeo Lions Club has stepped up to the plate and will host the first area vintage base ball game at Romeo Lions Field.

The Mount Clemens Regulars will take on the Northville Eclipse starting at 3 p.m., with former Detroit Tiger pitcher Mickey Lolich throwing the opening pitch. Lolich was Most Valuable Player in the 1968 World Series Champion games against the St. Louis Cardinals.

Bleacher seats will be available, but it is advised to bring blankets or chairs.

Players, sometimes called "ballists," will play

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according to the rules in the 1860s. The crowd<called "cranks" in those days<will notice many differences when watching the game. For instance, ballists don't play with gloves, and a ball caught on its first bounce from the ground, fair or foul, is considered an out. Depending on where a ball first lands determines whether it is fair or foul as well.

In fact, base ball was two words until the end of the 19th century, said Bob "Bender" Newhouse of the Eclipse team.

"The rules are different, it's played in a sportsman-like way," he said. "It is courtesy rules and gentlemanly behavior, such as no sliding, swearing and spitting<nothing is done to offend the ladies in attendance."

The cranks will also notice they may help during the game. An umpire may ask the crowd to make a call on a close play, or may ask a player if they were out or not on gentleman's honor.

"It's a different type of spirit and competition," Newhouse said. "Teams will congratulate each other for well-struck balls or good plays.

"There is an appreciation for the opponent, and you don't find that in softball and baseball."

Of course, there is a risk to playing with these older rules. Newhouse said there have been plenty of instances where players break their fingers, especially since the ball is a bit larger than the typical hard ball.

On the plus side, teams make their own uniforms based on the outfits of Victorian times, and bats are also homemade for the games. Since there is a historical aspect to the game, both Newhouse and Bob Hart, Romeo Downtown Development Authority treasurer and Lions member, have said Romeo should start its own vintage base ball club.

"I thought, `wouldn't it be great if this could help inspire Romeo to put together a team?'" said Hart. "It would be great if we could have a team for next year's festival."

Hart said Romeo had a team known as the Inland Cities and has already heard some interest in the Lions for forming a team.

According to an article from the Detroit Tribune & Advertiser dated in 1867 found by a Northville player, there is historical basis for Romeo to begin a team. In the clip it states a Horse Fair will hold a base ball game as part of the festivities.

Also, Paul Hunkele, a member of the Regulars, has said the Romeo club had played the Regulars a number of times in that time period.

"If people are interested they don't necessarily need to have that history, they just need the spirit," Newhouse said.

Each vintage team will be featured in the parade, which is scheduled to start at 1 p.m.

Lions Field will also be the site of a Model T car show to celebrate the 100th birthday of the Ford Model T. Refreshments from Pamela's Catering will be available for sale at the field.

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