

SPORTS AND RECREATION

ORGANIZED SPORTS IN VIRDEN 1954 TO 1970

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

In 1954 a group of interested citizens of the Town of Virden and the Virden Consolidated School District formed the Virden Sports Booster Club to co-ordinate the activities of the community.

The fall of 1954 Mr. Fred DePourque was retained to coach the minor hockey team in Virden. Fred looked after all the hockey between the ages of six and 16. Bob Hood and Clarence Braybrook looked after the Juvenile or 18-and-under group while Cec Papke coached Virden's entry into the Southwest Hockey League, the Virden Oil Kings.

In 1955 the Virden Sports Booster Club hired Laurie Artiss of Dauphin as Sports Director and organized the baseball for the Town of Virden as well as the oil dome baseball league for the minor ball team of the area. Laurie was a born organizer and created the first minor hockey league in Virden. Saturdays were busy from dawn till dark in the old tin arena in Victoria Park as children of all ages exercised their talents.

The '55-'56 season, a Bantam "A" team from Virden with some players from Oak Lake captured the MAHA Bantam "A" championship. Some of these players have gone on to make a name for themselves in the hockey world. Commercial Senior League was organized the following year with some of Virden's former greats taking part as well as home teams from the oil fields which were booming at the time.

Virden Oil Kings was one of the top teams in the southwest Hockey League that season. Amongst the stars of the team were Bill Dutton, Murray Slawson, Clarence Braybrook, Henry Palk, Cecil Papke, Jim Wilson and Art Thomspen.

No provincial championships were won in hockey that year, but organization was kept up and the juvenile hockey team of that year made the best showing. Laurie Artiss left in 1957 to take up the position of Sports Editor for The Brandon Sun.

Curling came to the limelight in 1957 as Virden represented Manitoba in the Canadian School Boy Championship. Henry Riendeau's rink of Jack Suter, third, Ken Shoemaker at second, and Ted Bridgett leading, won third place in the event.