

Sox and Tides Continue Close Pursuit of Blues

By STURGIS HEDRICK

AN IMAGINATIVE CHEF might call what transpired over the weekend a Baseball Barbecue. Perhaps a true culinary artist might even go so far as to christen the Carteret County Concoction a Seashore Stew.

By any name, the diamond doings certainly excited the appetite of our gourmet fans with a menu that highlighted Blues' Bouliabase, Carteret Canapes and Newport Newburgh.

Taking it from the top, this exciting Seashore League baseball feast featured the Eastern Blues' New Look. With all but three players turning up at new positions, the Blues nipped the Coastal Greys, 3-1, yesterday afternoon in Eastern Park, Smyrna.

The Newport Red Sox roared from behind in yesterday's other encounter to top the Salter Path Braves, 17-4, in Swinson Park. The Braves hardly looked as fired up as the same warriors who carried the Carteret Tides down to the wire before bowing, 7-2, Friday night in Swinson.

SUFFICE IT TO SAY that this Seashore struggle remains almost anybody's race, with just 4 weeks to go in the regular season. Then you can certainly look for a wide-open battle royal in the Sept. 13-26 playoffs.

Despite the Blues' New Look, the Red Sox closed to within 2 games of first place and the defending champion Tides won their 5th in a row to trail the Downeast leaders by 3 games and the Sox by one.

Then remember the regular schedule still contains 5 highly-critical makeup contests and we do indeed find ourselves right back at the complex ingredients of a Seashore Stew.

An All-Star cast of characters certainly fills the stage in a wide-open, frenetic league race like this one. But ever since the days of Babe Ruth and long before, exciting individuals have captured the fancy of the most discriminating spectators.



FLETCHER POULK stole the show in the Tides' 7-2 win over the Braves as have few individuals this season. And he didn't even need his motorcycle to heighten the spectacle.

He celebrated Friday the 13th with a single, double, 2 home runs, 4 runs-batted-in and a drive to left that was caught by Douglas Guthrie to deprive Fletcher of a 5-for-5 night at the plate.

But, incredible as it may seem, Poulk's third-base fielding outdid his hitting display in the final outcome of the game. He raced an astonishing distance to his left to handle 6 bullet shots that seemed destined as base hits through the hole.

FIELDING SUPPORT like Fletcher's helped John Turnage weather a withering 11-hit attack by the Braves. On the other hand, though, how many pitchers other than Turnage could drive more than 100 miles off a vacation, arrive on the scene 5 minutes before game time and hurl an 11-strikeout gem?

The Braves uncovered a brilliant 18-year-old pitcher of their own as Keith Waters made his first appearance. He came on the scene in relief and gave up 6 hits, walked 3 and fanned 13 in his 7 and two-thirds innings. Bruce Norman paced the Braves at bat with 2 singles and a double in 4 trips.

Yesterday's Salter Path loss to Newport proved quite a different story and a sad, sad one indeed. Despite their humbling defeat, the Braves have a far better ball club than they've shown. It hurt particularly to see stalwarts like Jimmy Davis and Benny Goldstein march off to college in such a heart-rending farewell.

DONNIE AYCOCK'S Sox look more and more like potential champions. They showed amazing depth at every position, with Craig Weber gaining the game ball in what well may prove his swan song, certainly for this season of 1976. He went 3 for 4 at the plate, scored 4 runs and drove in 3.

Bobby Shelton hammered 3 bristling base-hits in 5 at-bats in the 18-hit Newport barrage. Rusty Nelson pitched 6 brilliant relief innings,

giving up 6 hits, walking 1 and fanning 10.

But, when you mention potential champions, you always find the league's other contenders singing the Blues about Manager Wilson Davis' Downeasters.

Especially, now that he has unveiled the league leaders' New Look. Only Paul Damren at first and Milton Scott at third played their regular positions in yesterday's 3-1 victory over the sky-high Coastal Greys.

His new alignment of Manley Gaskill, catcher; Dale Lewis, back at shortstop; Kenny Lewis at second; Richard Arthur in center field, Dallas Arthur patrolling left and burly Joe-Boy Willis lending his added hustle in right.

DESPITE ALL THAT, the Greys deserved a far better fate. In a standout mound duel of right-handers, John Reels of the Greys matched Brad Piner pitch for pitch. Two errors leading to 2 unearned runs spelled the Greys' defeat.

But the Coastal entry still played glittering defensive ball, with a bang double play from Robert Hill to Richard Collins drawing special acknowledgement from a good crowd of better than 300.

The strong southwest wind that helped the distance hitting in hand-box Swinson Park hampered the long-ball sluggers in Eastern Park. Despite that handicap, Damren exploded his 6th home run to right field to take over the undisputed league lead in circuit blasts.

SEASHORE BASEBALL STANDINGS

	W	L	AVG.
Eastern Blues	11	4	.733
Newport Red Sox	8	5	.615
Carteret Tides	7	6	.538
Coastal Greys	6	8	.429
Salter Path Braves	3	12	.200