

On Target

By Sturgis Hedrick



SEASHORE OPENERS SUNDAY, 2 P.M.

Carteret Tides at Eastern Blues,
Smyrna School Diamond.
Coastal Greys at Western Red Sox,
Swinson Park.

THE LONG HOT SUMMER which spells life and breath for many Carteret Countians for just about 12 months of every year rockets from its launching pad this Sunday.

And baseball's local space experts predict the best season ever in the 4-year history of the league. Clear logic backs their optimism. A slight change in the by-laws permits players from other counties to participate.

Obviously, this provides for better baseball when some clubs are bolstering their fosters with highly-respected stars from Onslow, Craven and as far away as Halifax and Sampson counties.

The league remains, however, 100 per cent amateur.

THEREIN PERHAPS LIES the Seashore League's greatest appeal in this weirdest of all baseball seasons. What price gold? Consider the highly-motivated and low-salaried Oakland A's and Toronto Blue Jays setting a sizzling pace and the billionaire New York Yankees holding down the cellar.

Television and the grotesque structure of organized pro ball's

finances have just about destroyed minor-league baseball.

North Carolina very possibly produces as many major-league stars as any state in the Union. Yet its ranks of organized pro ball clubs have dwindled to just two entries.

THAT'S WHAT SHINES the spotlight more brightly than ever on sandlot and college ball in The Old North State.

The Seashore League competitors play for sheer love of the game.

Willie McCovey, the old home-run immortal who has just returned to his beloved San Francisco Giants, expressed it best just the other day:

"When you are surrounded by young people, you have a tendency to stay young. I'm still a little boy in a sense. When you lose that, then it's really over. All players have that little boy in them."

SO THERE YOU HAVE the Seashore League zest and thrills which come our way, starting Sunday.

Now some capsule comments on the possible top contenders:

The Salter Path Braves — Manager Otis Pittman has a satchel full of surprises. Look for a slow start and then perhaps the strongest entry of them all.

The Coastal Greys — Better organized than ever with one of the sharpest left-hand pitchers in the league in Charley Hardesty.

The Western Red Sox — Another slow starter, but later perhaps the toughest in the league. Certainly a team that will score a lot of runs.

The Carteret Tides — Sunday's opener with the Blues will tell a great deal of what to expect. The addition of catcher Andy Raynor and his 22-year-old right-handed pitching brother, Gary, spells big trouble for all other contenders.

The Eastern Blues — Always the team to beat.

ONE OF THE GREATEST diamond characters ever to come out of Cuba died the other day at age 86 of a heart attack. His name: Miguel (Mike) Gonzalez, who caught in the major leagues for 17 years and then coached the St. Louis Cardinals for 14 years more.

Oddly, Mike will probably best be remembered for his scouting appraisal of a fine young shortstop: "Good field, no hit."

Gonzalez led the good life in his native Havana until Fidel Castro took charge. Few people realize it, but Senor Castro outlawed professionalism as such. Cuba now has something I would call professional amateurism.

Castro wanted to honor Mike Gonzalez a few years ago. Then Don Miguel celebrated perhaps his finest hour.

He said, "No."

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