

# 1963 Galt Terriers

## Ontario Senior Baseball Champions 1963

The 1963 Galt Terriers produced one of the most memorable playoff runs in local baseball lore, culminating in an Ontario Baseball Association Senior championship.

It was a time of Kennedy, Pearson, Palmer and Nicklaus, of Ted Williams and Sandy Kofax, of astronauts and the Sunset drive-in.

In Galt, the Terriers knew they had a good team at the outset of the Intercounty Baseball season, but they also knew they had their work cut out for themselves if they wanted to unseat the perennially strong Brantford Red Sox.

At the halfway mark of the season, as the dog days of summer approached, *Reporter* sports editor Carl Fletcher wrote that shooting down the Red Sox was "everyone's goal."

By mid-summer the Red Sox had 10 wins in 13 games. "Unless someone deflates them soon the flag race will be over by mid-July," wrote *Reporter* sportswriter Carl Fletcher, noting the Terriers were in the best position of any team to take down the Red Sox. Early predictions had the Red Sox and the Terriers as the class of the league; at mid-season, they were battling for top spot.

But there were concerns for the Terriers, including the injured Fred Thompson, the club's leading rbi man and a .311 hitter. "He sprained an ankle while holidaying at the beach with his family on the weekend," said Fletcher, "and he'll be hard to replace. Impossible might be a better word."

Even without Thompson, and Larry Cunningham, who was working a night shift, they managed to beat Kitchener 5-4, another one-run victory that seemed to be their hallmark all season long.

Led by GM Len Gaudette, and field manager Wray Upper, their executive included Treasurer Ross Paton, Equipment Manager Tom Hower, and Directors Freddie Thompson, Reg. Prickett and Tom Zareski.

The Terriers were trying to rekindle some of their past magic, even if some of the old legends were proving to be mortal. Early in the season Wilbur Kress, one of the top pitchers in the province, was killed in an auto accident at the age of 62. In the 1920s he attracted the attention of professional baseball teams like the Toronto Maple Leafs of the International League. He had also been a good hockey player and was a key member of the Preston Juniors that won the Northern Hockey League championship.

But life went on, as did the season.

"We have a better and healthier Senior club, and given a chance to 'iron out the kinks' we should finish the regular schedule at or near the top," said the summary in their program that summer. So expectations were high.

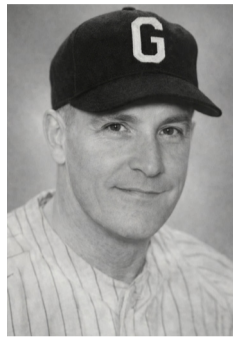
They fulfilled that promise to Galt fans by finishing second in the ICBL pennant race after a long regular season that began May 31 in London, and ended in mid-August on the road in Kitchener.

The Terriers entered the provincial playoffs determined to prove they belonged among the province's elite teams. Their first test came in the OBA semifinals against the Campbellville Merchants at Dickson Park.

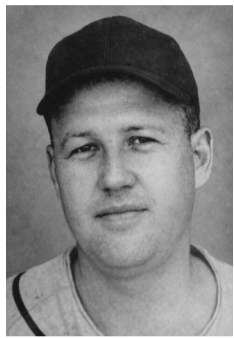
In front of a chilly October crowd, the Terriers produced a dramatic rally after trailing late in the game. They loaded the bases in the bottom of the eighth inning, and then third baseman Upper delivered the decisive blow, smashing a booming triple deep to centre field that cleared the bases and turned a narrow deficit into a commanding 4-2 lead. The



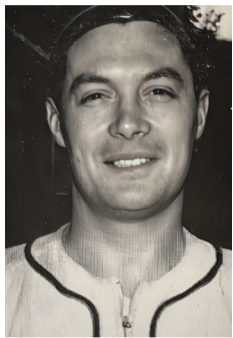
Len Gaudette



Wray Upper



Ross Paton



Eric Lomax



Ron Smith



Roger Dewaele



Ron Boomer



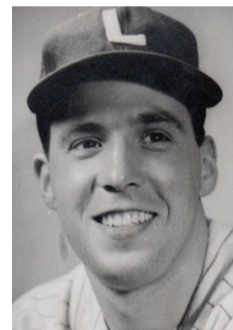
John Clark



Bob Russell



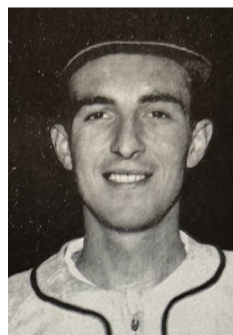
Dave Sheen



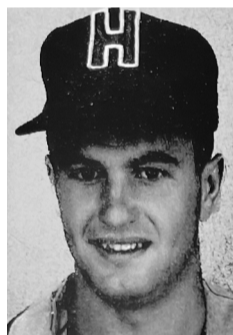
Bill Winegarten



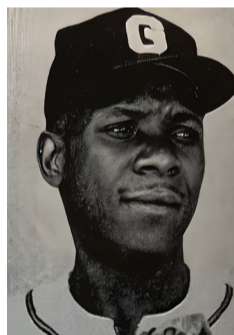
Dennis Erickson



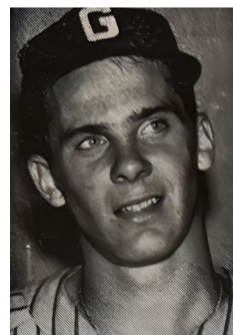
Nilo Giavedoni



Murray Oliver



Larry Cunningham



Pat Lutz



Fred Thompson



Bob Brain

To date, no team picture of the 1963 OBA Galt Terriers baseball team has been found. Missing from these assembled head and shoulder photographs are players Ken Lavis, Hank Todd, Jay Buckland and Denis Kelly.



clutch hit propelled the Terriers into the Ontario senior finals.

The championship series took the Terriers on the road to Belleville to face the Belleville Kennons. The deciding game, played October 6, 1963, unfolded in dramatic fashion. Galt entered the ninth inning trailing 3-2, but the Terriers refused to surrender. Ross Paton opened the rally with a pinch single, advanced on a sacrifice, and then Upper drew a walk to keep the inning alive. When

Cunningham lifted a short fly ball that appeared destined to end the game, Belleville fielders collided

beneath it, allowing Paton to score the tying run.

Moments later, Upper raced home with the go-ahead run, and Roger Dewaele added insurance with a towering home run over the centre-field fence. Pitcher Ken Lavis had already delivered a masterful performance on the mound, limiting Belleville to just three hits while striking out three batters. With John Clark closing the door in the ninth, the Terriers secured the victory and the Ontario Senior Championship. Their late-season heroics ensured that the baseball season in Galt ended not with fading summer memories, but with a provincial title.

Powered by timely hitting, strong pitching, and remarkable resilience, the 1963 Galt Terriers etched their names into the sporting history of the community. More than six decades later, their remarkable playoff run remains one of the proudest moments in the city's baseball tradition.