Program

6:00 PM – COCKTAILS

7:00 PM – DINNER

8:30 PM – PROGRAM

NOTE: Bar will be closed during speeches.

WES MONTGOMERY
Master of Ceremonies

AUBREY KOMANT
Fultonvale Fastball Club

TOM WILKINSON
Football

ERNIE WHITT
Toronto Blue Jays

MOE DRABOWSKY
Baseball

GLENN ANDERSON
Edmonton Oilers

HERB CAPOZZI
Soccer

WADDELL SMITH
Edmonton Eskimos

Fultonvale Fastball Club

4th ANNUAL

SPORTS CELEBRITY DINNER

Sherwood Sportsman Hall
130 Sioux Road

Feb. 18/84
Price - $30.00

Cocktails - 6:00
Dinner - 7:00

Sports

Wednesday, February 22, 1984
Sherwood Park, Alberta

Sherwood Park News

Blue Jays on the move

Whitt

Blue Jay and other stars crack up fastball dinner

At spring training last year, the pundits were saying the lowly Toronto Blue Jays might climb out of the basement in the American League east and pass Cleveland.

But the Blue Jays did more than that, posting their first winning season, and spending 54 days of the season in first place.

"We knew at training camp we had a hell of a team," said catcher Ernie Whitt, who was in Sherwood Park on Saturday to attend the Fultonvale Fastball Club's celebrity dinner. "I've been with the Blue Jays since they came into the league and there's been a definite change every year."

"The first five years were what I'd call negative years. Management's main concern was getting people to fill the stands. At that time they were saying give us ten years to become a contender."

Whitt said the team made strong use of building through its farm system which includes Syracuse in triple A ball, Knoxville in double A ball and two single A clubs in Florence S.C. and Kingston N.C. The club also has two rookie teams in Medicine Hat and in Bradington, Florida.

"There were a number of prospects in the minors and the club is prepared to pay big dollars for the free agents," said Whitt

Because of this, Whitt said, the players training in Dunedin last spring knew they had a good squad.

Toronto manager Bobby Cox also brought a positive attitude to the team, said Whitt. Cox provided the confidence the team needed to produce a winner.

Just recently the Blue Jays were on the verge of signing relief great Goose Gossage from the New York Yankees as a free agent.

"We almost had him signed," said Whitt. "We offered more than San Diego (where Gossage eventually signed), but Gossage is 33-years-old and was looking to round out his career. The weather in Toronto wouldn't be good for his arm and he felt his family would be more comfortable in California."

Whitt started playing baseball when he was a seven-year-old growing up in Michigan.

"I was fortunate," he said. "I was signed from Junior College, but it took a lot of hard work. It wasn't easy."

Whitt said that young players hoping to get a scholarship or play in the pros from this country should be prepared to work indoors during the winter.

"You always have to be throwing a ball or swinging a bat. I had to work indoors because the Michigan weather isn't that different. You have to be prepared to dedicate yourself to that sport and nothing else, if you're going to accomplish your goals.

"When you figure out that one out of every 2,000 players makes the major leagues, then you know the odds are against you. You have to be the right player in the right place at the right time."

Whitt, however, says he wouldn't ever change a thing.

"I love playing baseball," he said. "I'd like to stay in the game after my playing days are over. Perhaps I could manage down in the minor system. I came up through that system and I know what the players go through."

A large crowd turned out at the Sherwood Sportsman Saturday night to here Whitt and other head table guests speak about their careers and generally cut one another up.

Moe Drabowsky talked about his career in the major leagues.

"The first pitch I threw in the majors was against the Milwaukee Braves. It was a line shot down the middle. The last game I threw was against Milwaukee. Sal Bando hit a line shot down the middle. I figured if I hadn't improved in 17 years it was time to quit."

Wes Montgomery kept the crowd in hysterics by his bantering back and forth with friend Tom Wilkinson and the other guests.

Keynote speaker Herb Capozzi, of the Vancouver Whitecaps, kept them rolling in the aisles as he cracked one-liner after one-liner.

Following the speeches many stayed to watch a film showing the highlights of the 1983 Blue Jay season.

Clown Prince of ball still in there pitchin'

By GARY PROUSE

The wrinkles are a little deeper, the hair a little thinner and the waistline a little wider — but there's one thing about Moe Drabowsky that'll never change.

That mischievous grin.

He carried it through 17 seasons as a major league pitcher. He carried it yesterday as a 48-year-old salesman for a computer company, and he'll likely carry it until he gets that call from the great dugout in the sky.

Drabowsky, by his own admittance, was never more than a 'fringe' player — a right-handed reliever who bounced around with a lot of teams. But, in the same breath, he was one of the game's best remembered MVPs — MVP as in Most Valuable Prankster.

Jim Bouton, in his book *Ball Four*, recalls the time Drabowsky used the bullpen phone to make a long distance call to Hong Kong to order Chinese food for 25. Pick up or delivery? You figure it out.

And what about the time Drabowsky, playing for the Baltimore Orioles, called the opposing team's bullpen in an effort to cool Kansas City A's pitcher Jim Nash, who was on a two-hit shutout. Drabowsky got the bullpen coach, and in a hurried voice said one word — 'Krausse'. The coach, thinking it was his manager in the dugout, had ace reliever Lou Krausse up and throwing.

"Nash turned around, saw Krausse warming up and couldn't figure out why," recalled Drabowsky yesterday before last night's Fultonvale Fastball Club Sports man's Dinner where he was one of the guest speakers.

"To think that we could control their bullpen from our bullpen — we were laughing ourselves silly on our side of the fence."

Drabowsky could go on and on about what took place in 'the pen,' waiting for something unfortunate to happen to his club's starter so he could get a chance to make a living.

Drabowsky began his career in 1956 as a starter with the Chicago Cubs — drawing a salary of $6,000. However, in his third year with the club, he was throwing an 0-2 pitch to Bob Skinner of the Pirates and "I heard a pop in my arm." That pop turned out to be torn muscles in his elbow. Drabowsky came off the injury too quickly, and the next half dozen years found him on a pogo stick.

Headed for the minors as a 30-year-old, Drabowsky was ready to retire. But, in the winter of '65, he picked up a paper, and found that he'd been acquired by the Orioles. It added seven years to his career. "I was both surprised and elated — having a chance to survive," he recalls.

That turn of events also gave Drabowsky, best known for his off-field antics, a place in the World Series record books.

The big Pole relieved erratic Baltimore starter Dave McNally in the third inning of the first game of the '66 World Series. By the time it was all over, the Orioles had beaten the Dodgers and Don Drysdale 5-2, and Drabowsky had set two World Series records with his fastball and slider — most strikeouts by a relief pitcher (11) and most consecutive strikeouts (6).

"I didn't know I was striking out anyone, my concentration level was so high," Drabowsky said. "Every pitch went where I wanted it to go. I've got a video tape of it at home. I play it a lot." Drabowsky claims all 11 strikeouts that game came on swinging third strikes and nine of the 11 batters the right-hander faced were lefties.

—Photo by Paul Wodehouse

Moe Drabowski is a Hall of Fame style prankster.