

THE CANADA CUP CHALLENGE: BELGRADE BASEBALL

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In 1985, then Canadian Forces Attaché, Col. Reynolds, presented a silver cup trophy to the Canadian Club of the Canadian Embassy, Belgrade, as a result of a softball competition between Canadian and American diplomats. The Military Security Guards (MSG) are a part of that distinguished group and in fact were members of the original winning team. The US Embassy won the cup in 1986 and took it to the American Club for "safekeeping". And there it remained, collecting dust and tarnish, because no one thought to issue a challenge for it. However, in 1989, the Canadians decided that it was time to "bring the cup home".

Now the rules for this game were a little unusual for any "bush league" game, but the concept was meant as fair play for all concerned. Some of the more unique rules were: there could be 10 players on the field, but two of them must be women; only a woman could pitch lob-ball; the umpire could not allow a walk on balls, nor call a batter out on the third strike unless the batter swung at the ball; no lead-off or stealing of bases; and no bunting the ball. A team could recruit members from outside its embassy, but, not from the opponent's ranks. As an added incentive, the loser would have to buy the beer at the end of the game. Thus, the stage was set for the great event to be held at the dirt field beside the Red Star Stadium at 1100 hrs, 04 November 1989.

The weather was clear and warm for the game, although cloud cover was moving in and rain had been predicted. At 1030 hrs, the Canadian team and its gaggle of fans were hoisting a mammoth Canadian flag onto the fence, issuing small flags to spectators, blowing up Canada balloons that said "July 1st" (nobody noticed), pinning up banners and

warming up for the game. In the meantime, our US cousins were running around their compound trying to scare up sufficient players to field a team. Our psychological warfare was completed with the appearance of our Ambassador, His Excellency Mr. Terrence Bacon, who donned a Canadian Club sweatshirt, introduced himself around the field, and threw the first blistering lob-ball of the game, which was fumbled.

The game began slowly, with pitchers on both sides throwing sky balls or bowling the ball across and around the general area of home plate. The first inning was scoreless. The second inning saw more action, as both batters and pitchers got into the groove, and finished with the US leading by 7 to 2. The Canadians rallied in the 4th and closed the gap to have the scoreboard read US 8, Canada 7. At the bottom of the 6th, the score read Can 11, US 10, and the Yanks were held there until the close of the game, with the wild and wily Canucks adding two more runs in the 7th. The crowd went wild, but then that was expected of them, after all, they were our dependants and friends.

The beer at the American Club was cold and refreshing. The taste of victory is most sweet when celebrated by drinking champagne from a silver goblet with an awkward wooden base. The cup has come home to roost until the next challenge, which will probably be met with even more enthusiasm next year. The camaraderie created by this single event attested to the esprit de corps between members of this embassy and our American friends. Our thanks to Col. Reynolds for originating this challenge. We hope to keep the spirit going.