

# Vintage Base Ball makes stop in Greenville

By Scott Keeper

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Arlene Marcley is hoping for the strikers to do plenty of damage with the willows Saturday when local cranks are treated to a vintage base ball match between the Shoeless Joes and the Georgia Peaches.

Fans attending the 11 a.m. doubleheader – appropriately set for Greenville's Shoeless Joe Jackson Memorial Ball Park – might be well served by brushing up on their late 19th century baseball vernacular.

To wit: "Strikers" are batters. "Willows" are bats. "Cranks" are spectators.

"Ballists" are players, "huzzah" means hooray, and a game is known as a match.

"It's going to be interesting because most people have never experienced anything like this," said Marcley, curator and presi-

dent of Greenville's Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and one of the primary organizers of the games. "The games are to show how baseball was played early on. It'll be different terminology, different rules."

Marcley befriended folks from the Ty Cobb Museum, which is located about 75 miles from Greenville in Royston, Ga., and soon learned about the phenomenon of vintage base ball and its blossoming popularity.

There is a Vintage Base Ball Association, vintage ball clubs, and companies that produce vintage baseball equipment. A team representing the Ty Cobb Museum has been playing the game for years under the name Georgia Peaches, so when Marcley suggested a match against the Shoeless Joes from the Greenville museum, there was no hes-

itation.

"They loved the idea," Marcley said. "We've been planning it for about a year."

Although the Shoeless Joes' core group of players will be from Greenville, Marcley said she got requests from several states, and players from Kentucky, Illinois, Ohio, Florida and North Carolina will be on hand to represent the local team as well. Player ages range from 11 to the "upper 50s," Marcley said.

"It's people who are avid Shoeless Joe buffs or old-fashioned baseball enthusiasts," Marcley said. "We're just serious about having fun."

The amenities will fit the mood. Players will wear replica wool ball caps of the era and vests that pull over their team T-shirts. There will be no cleats or gloves permitted. Pitchers, stationed just 45 feet from

home plate, will offer underhand tosses, which may bounce once before being hit.

And how's this for nostalgia? Shoeless Joe's great-great-niece will suit up for the local team while Ty Cobb's granddaughter will throw out the first pitch on the field where Shoeless Joe got his start in baseball in 1901.

There also will be only one umpire, or "referee," and he'll be positioned on the infield – with a chair for sitting if he so desires.

When a player crosses home plate, he or she must proceed immediately to a cast-iron bell, which is then rung by the "tally keeper."

Handlebar mustaches are optional.

"We haven't gotten that far yet," said Marcley, who hopes to make the vintage matches an annual event. "But who knows what the future might bring?"

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