



# Newsletter

June 2020

## Profile

### Mr. John Fila

Most of us know of the athletic exploits of Mr. John Fila, and there are many. As a legendary power hitter from the 50' through the 70's he became one of the most feared hitters to come to the plate.

Like most young boys in the late 60's, I would go to the old North Minto ball field, a place nestled among the old "mud dumps", every Sunday afternoon to watch the big boys play. And none were bigger than John, literally, he stood above most others in size, ability and enthusiasm.

When I saw John play for the first time, he was in his prime, and as a boy playing minor ball, John made the game seem easy and fun. He appeared to enjoy every moment of the day, interacting with his team mates, fans, opponents, and even the umpires.

On top of possessing great power, John had a knack for reaching a higher level of determination and concentration when the game was on the line and more often than not he came through in the clutch.

Pitchers became intimidated when he was in the on deck circle and would find ways to pitch around him.

One of the better comments about John was ***"most players get into scoring position when they get to second base, well, John is in scoring position when he gets to the plate"***.

In the beginning, it was not as easy as John made it look, John felt like an outsider in the sports world, coming from the Old Avon and needing to prove himself at every level of competition. And prove it he did, forcing himself into the lineup, with a grit, determination and power to drive the ball.

Over three decades, John more than proved his softball worth with selections to the New Brunswick representative at the National championships and playing a large part in several Provincial and Maritime championships with both Minto and Fredericton.

John was inducted into the Minto Sports wall of Fame for playing a large roll in Minto Winning 5 Championships in seven years between 1957 -74.

In talking with John some of his proudest memories are:

- Playing senior ball at the age of 16, no easy feat in those days, alongside legends such as Danny “Ironman” Clark, Armand Caterini, and many others.
- Being the Top Hitter during the 1967 senior play downs with an unheralded .600 average.
- Being chosen by his peers to represent New Brunswick at the Canada Summer games in 1969.
- Playing senior ball in Moncton for 5 years alongside such noted stars a Dave Fraser and the Barley Brothers.
- Playing in the National Championships with the St. John Alpines in 1975.
- Making so many friends along the way.

The list does go on and John speaks of them with clarity as if they were yesterday.

Senior "A"

1967

# Fila's Catch Sparks Miners; Briggs Tosses 3-Hitter

Excitement in this city and the town of Minis has reached another peak this morning, and a lot of the blame can go to a man named John Fila.

It was not mainly because Fila batted in the cleanup position for the Minis Miners against Fredericton General Dairies last night in Minis, but mainly because of his solid play while patrolling leftfield for the mining town crew.

Miners won 6-4 last night to give the best 4 of 7 New Brunswick Senior "A" Baseball

seemed to inspire the Miners to victory.

Miners veteran pitcher Don Wheeler were brooding along on a light pitching duel last night until the sixth inning when the Miners suddenly came to life on the bottom of the sixth inning for four runs and the margin of victory. Dairies tried to fight back with single runs in the seventh and ninth but fell two runs short.

Hear, pitching his second time in as many days and making his fourth appearance in the series, went the route to get the pitching win allowing just eight hits. Wheeler was tagged with the loss.

Armand (Cat) Catalini, Moe Vanderborne, and Doug Farrell led the Miners to victory last night with two hits each. While Fila started the sixth inning rally with a sharp double and later scored.

### HOMERS

Dag Seymour and Ryan had a pair of hits for the losers. One of Ryan's hits was a home run over the left field fence over Fila's head and far out of reach.

On Saturday, young Briggs was in complete command as he stretched his string of scoreless innings in the series to 11 in hurling his three-hitter. The left-handed pitcher who never is in trouble as he gained his second pitching win in the series.

Briggs will put his string of scoreless innings on the line tonight in the fifth game. Hear, who also lost the game Saturday, is expected to start for Miners again. If he doesn't start, either Wayne Nightingale or Andy Anderson will get the call. In getting the win Saturday, Briggs helped his own cause a great deal by driving in one run with a single in the fifth and scoring another in the seventh when George (Dirt) Thomas landed a single. Dairies also put another run in the seventh and had one in the sixth.

Seymour, Jeff Moor, and catcher Les Hull paced the Dairies with two hits each. While Vanderborne, Moe Konzia, and Greg Stone had the Minis hits.

Winner of the series which

has developed into one of the best ball battle here in ten years, will meet Moncton Esquimaux and if necessary third games in the provincial semi-finals. Esquires and the local Labor Day (Monday).



JOHN FILA  
Key Catch

quarter-final series at 2-2. The win set the stage for the key fifth game tonight at Queen Square. Game time is 6:00, with a crowd of over 1,000 expected to be on hand.

Dairies, thanks to the three-hit pitching of 13-year-old Peter Briggs, had taken the third game Saturday afternoon by a 4-0 count.

Fila pulled off numerous sensational catches for the Miners while patrolling the leftfield pocket, but he made the play of the game in the top of the sixth inning. With Butch Ryan of the plate to lead off the inning, Fila raced back to the left field fence, leaped high into the air and came down with the ball and taking a second home run away from Ryan. The catch

# Minto Come From Behind To Square Round; Fila Hero

MINIO — Leroy Washburn probably wishes he had another chance at picking up a grounder ball again, and John Fila was again in the right place at the right time. But the entire issue could probably be summed up in a word — "Happening".

Thanks to the almost unbelievable "happening" here last night, the road between Fredericton and Minto will probably be a well worn path tonight.

The hometown Minto Miners made the most of errors and circumstance in taking a come-from-behind 8-7 victory over Fredericton General Dairies. The win evened the best 4-of-7 quarter-final series in New Brunswick Senior "A" play-off at three-all. Settling the stage for tonight's seventh and deciding game — weather permitting. The game will be played at Queen Square at 8:30.

One almost had to be in attendance to believe what actually occurred in the ninth inning, argument-plagued game.

Here were Dairies needing just one more win to take the series holding, what appeared to be a healthy 7-4 lead going into the sixth inning, Dairies chances looked even better when you

By PETER MAHER  
Sports Editor

figure they had pounded out 12 hits off of two Minto pitchers—they finished with 18 and lost.

With Minto player-coach Donnie Brogan going to his bench on numerous occasions in hopes of getting his team rolling, the Miners pushed four runs across the plate in the sixth inning, knocking starting pitcher Peter Briggs out of the game, following up with one in the seventh inning, and settling the matter with two in the ninth.

Brogan was so free with his bench in the sixth, seventh, and eighth that when it came time to play the ninth he didn't have a regular pitcher and substitutes on the bench. Then veteran Cammie Fulton, who has on minor occasions been used as a pitcher, came in from rightfield to pitch the ninth.

**IN TROUBLE**

Fulton immediately got in trouble as Dairies attempted to pad their lead. Leroy Washburn started off with a double and Dag Seymour followed with a single, putting runners on first and second.

gerous situation indeed. But Fulton with nothing more on the ball than the cover got dangerous Butch Ryan to hit on the ground, and then got Bryan Watson on a pop up and Lee Hull grounded out.

With Fulton setting out of such a jam untouched his mates figured it was time to do something about it. Moe Vanderborre started off the bottom of the ninth with a single off Buddy Wheeler, who by this time had taken over as pitcher.

Then Fila, always tough in a clutch, lined a single to centerfield, it looked reasonably harmless, until Washburn let the ball slip through his glove and send it to the fence in the deepest part of centerfield. While Washburn raced for the ball Fila raced around the bases with Vanderborre ahead of him and Minto had completed their comeback.

For Fulton's part of the bargain he was the winning pitcher. Veteran Andy Anderson had been called on to start for Minto, when it was reported that Donnie Hear would not be on hand because of work. But Anderson lasted only four innings when Wayne Nightingale took over. Nightingale left the game in the bottom of the eighth inning for a pinch runner. Wheeler took the loss.

Dairies got a run in the first inning, and two in each the third, fourth, and fifth innings.

George (Dort) Timms was the hitting hero of the game, getting four hits in five trips to the plate. Jeff Munn and Seymour had three hits each, for Dairies. Fila had three hits for the winners.

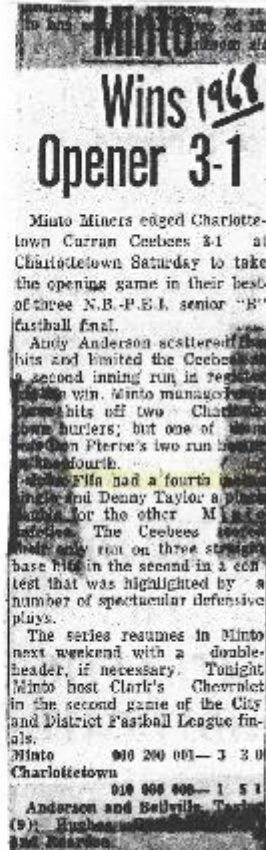
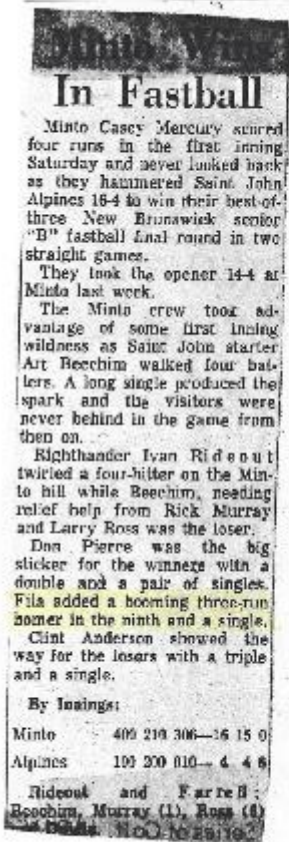
Hear is expected to be back on the mound for Minto tonight, while Dairies coach Al Chase will have to choose between the veteran Wheeler or the youngster Briggs. In the event of a rain the game will be rescheduled for Friday.

#### By Inning

Dairies	10R	230	9	1	2	4
Minto	10	19	8	1	1	2

Pitchers: Wheeler (M) and Hear (D).  
Anderson, Nightingale (M), Fulton (M) and Newville (D).  
Fulton (M) and Wheeler (M).





These are the memories that we all cherish, but as time passes we want to reflect on more than sporting accomplishments.

John Fila, the man, comes from humble beginnings, having grown up at the Avon area of Minto, and he grew up quickly, having to become the man of the family at a young age.

Success never came easy for John, but he has conquered both sport and life with his positive attitude. John met both, with a special determination, to go along with a firm hand shake and large belly laugh to be remembered.

In the early days, John walked to work every day for several miles to provide for a large family at home, never once complaining or losing sight of his goals. John's personality along with that determination to succeed allowed John to progress in the work world and over a 35 years career was able to help many a person find work and success for themselves, and only suggested that if they ever could they should pay it forward and help the next guy.

Today, John has his familiar big grin, belly laugh and a hand shake for everyone and will always reflect with pride on these accomplishments, but **more importantly**, he looks around and sees an accomplishment and legacy for Geraldine and himself of 2 sons, 3 granddaughters, and the latest apple of his eye a great granddaughter, and they all live nearby in New Brunswick.

John has instilled great values in family and countless friends that will last their lifetime.

And, although there is an open spot for John on the Minto Sports Wall of Fame, there is a Filled spot for John in the hearts of his family and many friends.

We are all very proud to call Big John Fila our Friend.

## **Did You hear the one About...**

We were playing the Flying Frenchmen from Shediac which wasn't an easy task at best. On this particular occasion it was getting chippy and a scuffle broke out between Rod Clark and a big 6'4" defenceman named Wick's. Although at a vertical disadvantage Rod beat him soundly, and as Wicks left the ice one of his teammates asked him, "How did you let him beat you, he only came up to your chin?. To which Wick's replied" ***Yeah, but he came up to it too often***".

## **Local Sponsors**

Now, more than ever we need to support our local businesses, as they endure the cost of the change which is happening. We go to them for support when we need balls, bats, uniforms, transportation, etc. and they come through with flying colors in our small community. With our support they can rebuild their revenue stream and as they always have come through for the sports community as they always have. Remember, even if it is a few pennies more, the community gains many dollars in return. These businesses return 90% of their income to this community and area through tax, wages, and of course sponsorships. I haven't yet seen a team called the Minto Walmart or Minto Costco. So, **Please** consider spending those extra pennies locally this time.

## **Reflections**

I spent some time this week reflection on 60 years of softball history inductions onto the Minto Sports Wall of Fame. There are a total of 74 players, coaches, managers, and batboys in the group. I am amazed at the quality of talent and the instant memories that come flooding back as I read the names. Every name has a story to tell, some funny, some serious, and some unbelievable. These stories tell of teammates, heroes, legends, but mostly about relationships that are tied together forever. I put all these individuals on one page and by position to see who my all-stars would be but once I built a list there is no way to just pick one guy for each position for a variety of reasons but mostly due to generations of talent and how sport evolves over time.

For fun, if you get a few minutes, look at the list and reflect on these names and your memory of the athletes, smile and enjoy the trip down memory lane while we wait for sports to begin the next generation of stars.

**MEN'S SOFTBALL**

**MSWOF All Stars among Stars**

<b>Pitchers</b>			<b>Second Base</b>			<b>Outfield</b>		
1	Andy Anderson		1	Danny Belliveau		1	John Beers	
2	Marven Betts		2	Danny Bourgois		2	Richard Beers	
3	Peter Briggs		3	Brian Farrell		3	Bob Deap	
4	Bob Depres		4	Dennis Taylor		4	John Fila	
5	Myles Dufour		5	Gordon Mockler		5	Cam Fulton	
6	Cam Fulton		6	Ken Barton		6	Gary Fulton	
7	Gerald Fulton		7	Darryl Seymour		7	Al Livingston	
8	Harold Fulton		8			8	Gary Maston	
9	Lauchie Fulton		9			9	Don Pierce	
10	Gordon Hoyt		10			10	Armand Roy	
11	Gyula Kajari		<b>Third Base</b>			11	Omer Sloan	
12	Scott Maston		1	Murray Anderson		12	Frank Vandenborre	
13	Aulden Randall		2	Don Brogan		13	Moe Vandenborre	
14	Ivan Rideout		3	Mel MacKenzie		14	Marcel Vandenborre	
15			4	Scott Maston		15	Bill West	
			5	Moe Richard		16	Henry Fasquel	
			6	Boyd Ring		17		
			7			18		
			8			19		
			9			20		
			10			<b>Coaches</b>		
			<b>Bat Boy</b>			1	Don Brogan	
			1	Gary Richard		2	Welly Hoyt	
			2	Greg Sloan		3	Art MacDonald	
			<b>Short Stop</b>			4		
			1	Jeff Brogan		5		
			2	Lawrence Richard		<b>Managers</b>		
			3	Moe Richard		1	Brian Maston	
			4	Billy Seymour		2	Ronnie Paul	
			5	Dennis Taylor		3	Ted Thurrott	
			6	Stephen Thurrott		4	Bill Valentino	
			7	Billy James		5		
			8					
			<b>First Base</b>					
			1	Armand Caterini				
			2	Peter Dufour				
			3	Jimmy Lyons				
			4	Howard Corey				
			5	Gerry Murphy				
			6					
			7					
			8					

Blast from The Past..... Some pretty talented boys

OCTOBER 1978



Front Row: Tony Vautour, Joe Richard, Scott Maston, Danny Curren. Second Row: Todd Gaudet, Stephen Richardson, Andy Vautour (coach), Jackie Blackier and Kenny Ryan. Third Row: Rodrick Beers, Carl West, Danny Belliveau, Blaine McKennely and Tracy Gautier.

## Provincial and Maritime champs

The Minto Pee Wee Softball team downed Loggieville 20 to 6 and 18 to 5 in the best of 3 games played for the final in a tournament held at Minto, August 18 for the Provincial Championship.

This gained them rights to go to Prince Edward Island to play for the

Maritime Championship at which they also won the best of three games against P.E.I. The first game they lost 4-2 and then came back and won 9-5 and 13-9.

Outstanding Pitching by Joe Richard gave them their wins, also credit to coach Jackie Blackier.



