



George Greene

Boston Sports History Examiner

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Boston athletes step up to the plate for charity

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Too often the press focuses on the negative exploits of our professional athletes. I'm happy to report on an instance where some local Boston professional athletes stepped up to the plate for a worthy cause.

Circa 1982 Needham police officer Kevin Bolio organized a charity softball game for the benefit of the Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation. This disease is also known as brittle bone disease. The opposing teams were officers of the Needham, Mass. police department vs. the Ventura All-Stars. The game was played at Claxton field in Needham before a sizable crowd of onlookers. The Ventura All-Star team was made up of local sports heroes from several of Boston's professional teams. Among their players were Frank Malzone: former Boston Red Sox third baseman, Ken Hodge: former Boston Bruin, Hank Finkle: former Boston Celtic, Jim Nance: former Boston Patriot running back, and Bobby Orr: former Boston Bruin defense man and the greatest hockey player of all time.



Bobby Orr

One highlight of the game saw Bobby Orr hit a rope to right field that earned him a single. Mr. Orr, hobbled by numerous knee surgeries barely made it to first base and was replaced with a pinch runner. Sometimes charity does hurt. The other highlight was a ground ball off of the bat of Jim Nance deep into the hole at shortstop. The shortstop, officer Greene, neatly backhanded the ball and without looking wheeled and fired to first. Nance was called out by half a step. I really can't take any credit for a spectacular play because Mr. Nance had put on a few pounds since his playing days and may have lost a step or two in the meantime. I once saw Jim Nance in person playing for the then Boston Patriots at Fenway Park. In his defense, the thing I remember most about his running skills is that when he carried the ball and was finally tackled the park announcer would often say, "Jim Nance tackled by everybody."

At the conclusion of the game all of the athletes stayed to sign autographs and to have their pictures taken by all of the adoring fans. By far the most popular was Bobby Orr. To his credit Mr. Orr was the last athlete to leave the field. He stayed until every person who wanted his autograph got one.

The Ventura All-Stars triumphed over the local cops, but the real winner was the Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation.

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