

# The Riverside Canucks of Baseball Fame

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Baseball. It's a common remembrance on the prairies. So often when I ask elders in our community "What did you do for fun when you were young?" In and amongst the protestant replies of "we didn't have *time* for fun," there is always one magic word: baseball. In the schoolyard, at church and end-of-school picnics, on the weekend, at family gatherings or merely in the backyard, games were played between friends and neighbors.

Many baseball games were played for the mere enjoyment of getting the community together. And that's how the Riverside Canucks got their start, to be sure. But whether they meant to or not, the formation of the team was to lead them down the road towards an induction into the Manitoba Hall of Fame.

The Riverside Canucks played for over 40 years at Riverside Park, on the banks of the Souris River north of Minto. However, they had their beginning playing about 2 miles south of that spot on Wes

Shaw's farm in the 1920s and 1930s. The team was made up of farm boys from around the region who got together for the main purpose of having fun. The team broke apart during WWII, as many boys and young men were away from the district.

By 1946 a group of local players came together once again and chose the ball diamond on Lisk Campbell's land at Riverside Park as their home grounds. Other than their many wins and other successes, the team would later gain renown for being a team for over 30 years without a town as its home base and for never once paying a player a salary.

The career of the Riverside Canucks took place in two parts: from 1946-1960, the team competed in tournaments, and it was during these weekends that the team rose to glory and had some of their most triumphant wins. Between 1946 and 1960 they played in some 723 games and came home with winnings from 483 of them. In total they won around \$14,000, which they always saved until the end of the season to be split

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equally among the players. In addition to playing on their home turf, they travelled up to 100 miles away, visiting ball diamonds all over the province and into Saskatchewan. And they sure liked to win! During the 1956-57 season, the team had a winning streak of 14 games. In 1958 they won 21 out of 22 consecutive games, which turned out to be merely a warm-up for the next year when they completed a 25-game winning streak!

The second chapter in the team's career lasted from 1961 – 1978 when they played with the Manitoba Senior Baseball League. The Riverside Canucks were left out of the playoffs only twice; they played in the final play-off game 7 times and won the championship four times: 1968, 1973, 1974, and 1978.

In 1976 the baseball diamond at Riverside Park was bought and the team moved to Boissevain, and later to Belmont. The Canucks celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary there in 1995, with a banquet and a neighbourly game of ball against their old rivals, the Brandon Cloverleaves. Many of the original members of the team were present.

In 1999 the Riverside Canucks were inducted into the Manitoba Baseball Hall of Fame to honour the teams longevity, spirit, and overall success. Over their 38-year career the team won 926 times out of 1480 games, with 17 tied games. (That's not losing 63% of the time!) Dick Campbell, a long-time player on the team was also inducted. He played 14 years as an outfielder and served as the scorekeeper for the MSBL for 30 years. He was the League's director at the time of his death in 1998.

Sources:  
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