

EVERLASTING JOY

JAMES CLARK



## Pro soccer a unique experience

I've been a soccer coach, referee and fan for the past 20 years. I've even laced up my cleats and played a few games during that time, with mostly forgettable results.

Saturday night marked a first for me when it comes to soccer. It was the first time I've seen a professional soccer game in person as I was in attendance for Nashville Soccer Club's 3-0 win over Atlanta United at First Tennessee Park.

The most memorable part of the experience was the rock-concert atmosphere. I'm not sure if pro soccer fans live a repressed life and soccer games are their only outlet for expression, or if they are really that enthusiastic about this new Nashville team. Whatever the reason, some fans go absolutely bonkers.

It starts hours before the game at restaurants surrounding First Tennessee Park, which is the relatively new stadium where the Nashville Sounds play baseball. The restaurants are loud and off the wall with fans jumping up and leading chants while folks are enjoying their entrees. The chants are pro wrestling in nature with the basic purpose to give people a chance to yell.

One group of diehard fans wears long scarfs and yellow shirts. Many of them sit together in a section behind one of the goals, waving flags and pounding drums during the game.

I was reading a story in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* which says fan clubs are an integral part of pro soccer. In Atlanta, where a pro soccer game drew more than 70,000 fans over the weekend, there are four official supporter clubs which follow the team.

The clubs give fans a chance at fellowship before, during and after the games. Just as important, they encourage people to cheer like crazy. Heavy alcohol consumption appears to be involved.

My favorite spot was Von Elrod's, a large restaurant located directly across from the main stadium entrance. Von Elrod's has an extremely large patio which serves as a prime viewing spot to watch the enthusiasm unfold as fans promenade into the stadium.

Whether by design or not, the soccer game itself seems like an afterthought. But there was a game and for the few people who seemed concerned with that trivial aspect of the night, Nashville was dominant in winning 3-0.

Nashville has certainly become one of the "it" cities in all America and professional soccer is yet another bonus. Nashville Soccer Club will play the rest of this season at the Sounds stadium, although it does have a prime time game this Saturday at Nissan Stadium.

Looking forward, a \$250 million stadium will be constructed for the team at Nashville Fairgrounds with seating capacity in the 27,500 range. If you're looking to experience the thrills of pro soccer, Nashville plays through mid-October with seats starting at \$25 and standing room only admission at \$15.



Noah Martin blasts a triple to the fence on this hit before homering in his next bat for McBride and Son. The team captured a 23-3 win over Mud Sluggers in Midway on Monday night.

## Runs come in bunches at Midway

BY JAMES CLARK  
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(McMinnville, Tennessee)



Dillon Hale of Dreams of the Field Taxidermy tags Garrett Ashburn of Bell and Sons Nursery as he tries to make it to home plate Monday night. Dreams of the Field pulled away for a 29-13 victory.

On the week of July 4, it's fitting there were offensive fireworks Monday night at Midway during boys Senior League softball action.

There were a total of 135 runs scored in three games, an average of 45 runs per game. The offensive showcase reached its peak in the final game of the night when league-leading and undefeated Havoc pounded out a 40-27 victory over Jeff's Towing.

The night began with McBride and Sons capturing a 23-3 win over Mud Sluggers.

McBride and Sons showed explosive offense from top to bottom of its lineup. Noah Martin blasted a triple to the fence, then hit a home run over the fence on his next bat.

Trevor Womack showed his power by hammering a shot to the fence. He turned the hit into an inside-the-park home run, running through a mud

puddle near shortstop in the process.

Leading the McBride and Sons offense were Alden Lawrence, Martin, Bryson Elrod, Seth Padin, Womack and Alex Ovarez with three runs each. Jordan Sandlin scored twice and Alex Jones, Brandon Wright and Austin McBride each scored once.

Mud Sluggers got its scoring from Rheagan Woodlee, Shawn Stumbo and Austin Boyd, who each scored one run.

Game two of the night was highly competitive until the midway point with Dreams of the Field Taxidermy pulling away from Bell and Sons Nursery for a 29-13 win.

Holding a 10-7 lead, Dreams of the Field got separation in the top of the fifth with a two-out rally. Colby Taylor blasted a shot off the fence then came around to score on a Gabe Farless hit. Farless then showed his blazing speed to score on an Ian McBride hit.

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## Local coaches calling out city umpires

Umpiring is a thankless job, but somebody has to do it.

The men and women behind the plate have become a focal point, especially for coaches participating in the McMinnville Youth Baseball and Softball leagues at the Civic Center. On a nightly basis, their decisions are debated, disagreed with, and outright accused of being poor. And coaches made their voices heard when polled in a survey about officiating.

Asked on a basis of 1-10 to rate umpiring, with 1 being bad and 10 being excellent, 22 coaches came to an average of 4.6 for umpiring in the MYBS this season.

A common complaint for the below average score was coaches questioning if the officials knew the rules.

"I've seen it worse, but there are still times when coaches are coaching the umpires on the rules," said Ryan Smith, who coached Triple C Nursery in the

boys 6-8 league. "Good umpiring would solve a lot of problems in the leagues."

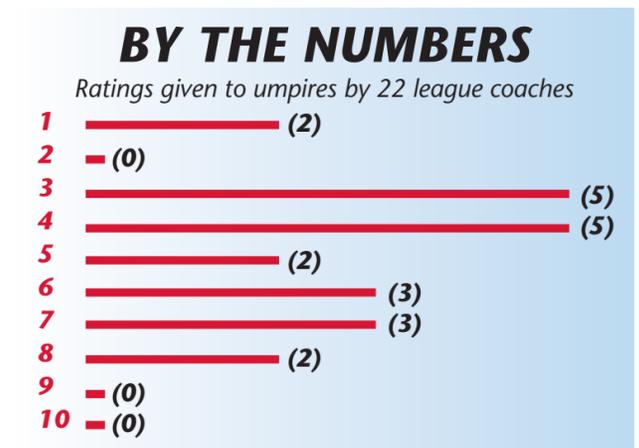
Caleb Graves, who helped with Edward Jones Leann Cordell in the boys 6-8 league, saw gradual improvement as the year progressed.

"Some don't know the rules. It was really bad at the start, but it got a little better," said Graves, who also mentioned he would take the challenge of umpiring when his kids aren't playing anymore.

Parks and Recreation athletic director Terry Beard believes his umpiring crew was prepared when the season began, thanks to training days and other techniques to improve knowledge of the game.

Officials in the BPA and Game 7 Baseball organizations did two clinics for umpires and scorekeepers, which Beard said focused on the "getting educated on the what, the why and the how."

Umpires were also given cop-



ies of the rules, along with hand-outs discussing hand signals and proper field positioning. Beard also encouraged his hires to watch YouTube instructional videos and videos posted on the city website for further training.

It may never erase all human error, but Beard felt confident in their training.

"As far as I know, we've given them more training this year than in the last several years," said Beard.

That doesn't mean there

weren't more things to teach as the season progressed.

"There's always room for improvement. I'm continually trying to evaluate umpires," said Beard. "I won't correct them in the middle of the game, but I'll discuss with them after the game and correct it. It could be something positional, or maybe situational. We want them to not make the same mistakes."

Continued on 3B

**July 21st**

**1ST ANNUAL TREE CITY INVITATIONAL**

**Ages: U8 - Adult (Coed 3v3)**

**Team Registration Fee: \$100 | Deadline to Register: June 30**

**Late Registration: July 1-10 (\$120)**

**Register online at [mcminnvilleyouthsoccer.com](http://mcminnvilleyouthsoccer.com)**

**or at the Civic Center**

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