

Sever takes swing in hope Bucket scores

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

Terry Sever is a baseball fan and a renaissance man. Sever, who runs a printing business in Farmington, serves as a city councilman in Farmington Hills and coaches youth baseball, has added inventing to his repertoire.

Sever is batting a thousand so far with an invention that should help developing baseball and softball players with hitting. He has a patent pending, and some enthusiastic users of his Batter's Bucket, a bucket containing a tubing that can adjust to various heights and accommodate practice and regular baseballs to allow hitters to improve their hand-eye coordination and timing when they step to the plate.

And the Bucket, which is disassembled into a plastic bucket weighing about 12 pounds, can be carried and costs \$49.99.

"For 10 years I've been coaching and traveling with teams and kids," said Sever, a former Oakland Community College shortstop in his playing days. "I started working on this about two years ago."

With his 13-year-old son Aaron demonstrating, Sever shows how the Bucket can be set at a high elevation to release the ball and allow the hitter a whopping seven-tenths of a second to see and hit the ball. Set it low and use the covered sleeve that doesn't allow the hitter to anticipate the ball, and you're giving the hitter less than a third of a second (1/3) to see a pitch — akin to a Roger Clemens fastball.

The advantage for hitters is that you can practice, using a Whiffle ball or foam ball, in a basement, garage or anywhere

else, without worry of breaking a window.

That gives them a year-round way to improve hitting skills. It can be used with two people, one rolling the balls down the chute, or with one, by using the circular chute.

"Usually at a practice, batting practice comes at the end," Sever said. "You get maybe 30 pitches, of which half are strikes. If you hit half of the strikes that's about eight hits."

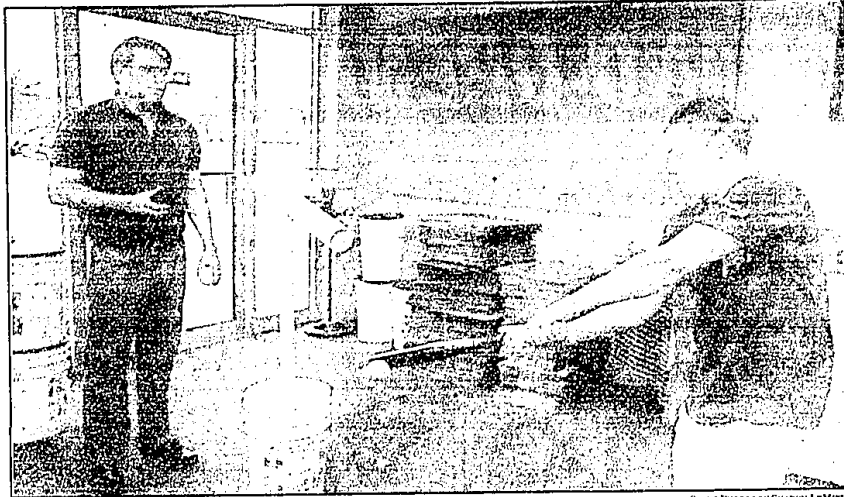
Sever has advertised the Bucket on ESPN. But his best marketing success so far has come from other coaches and teams, including teams in Ontario and Illinois.

"They get to see it work, which is hard to see on a 30-second commercial," he said.

Sever's son Aaron, who aspires to catch and pitch, has improved his stroke and now plays on the traveling team for South Farmington and Livonia. Daughter Jennifer, who attends Central Michigan University, also improved her skills.

"But I think my daughter Melissa (17) is most responsible for its success," he said. "She encouraged me to market this after I had been playing with the concept for about two years." Sever is trying to convince a sporting goods company to sell the Bucket. He orders materials and then makes them 100 at a time. With baseball season coming on, that may mean more sales.

"I expect to get my investment back within the next three years," he said. "But if I can get someone to sell it, like a large sporting goods chain, they could probably sell it for less. And that would mean not only that teams could afford to have one, but any kid who wanted one could afford to buy one."



STAFF PHOTOS BY SIBELON LEMUEUX

Inventive Dad: Above, Aaron Sever takes his cuts as father Terry Sever, who invented the device, feeds in the balls. At left, extra tubes slow down the ball, allowing a batter to put in his own baseballs.



By the numbers — 6,000

Six thousand is a lucky number for John Curd and the Farmington area's 50th Anniversary of World War II Commemorative Committee.

The Farmington group is the 6,000th WWII commemorative committee established across the nation, it was announced recently by the United States Army Reserve.

"It's quite an honor for the community," said Curd, a retired Realtor and Navy veteran who goes by the name "Uncle Jack."

The commemorative committee, chaired by Glenn R. Feckler of Farmington Hills, donates and raises American flags and puts on programs to help the community remember the 60th anniversary of the war.

"Many historians have referred to World War II as the central event of the 20th century," said Master Sgt. Richard Jung, announcing the 6,000th status for Farmington.

Perhaps, even more importantly, the 60th anniversary offers Americans an opportunity to say, "A grateful nation remembers."

A commemorative flag and official certificate of designation as the 6,000th committee will be made by Jung at a USO-type party 5:30-9 p.m. Friday, May 19, at the Farmington Hills Activity Center, 28600 11 Mile Road, between Inkster and Middlebelt.

The party is open to the community — especially veterans of the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. Tickets, at \$10 per person, include live entertainment and hors d'oeuvres. For more information, call Curd at 478-4694.

Any Jeeps out there?

Speaking of World War II, the people who are organizing the annual Farmington Memorial Day Parade say they need war-era Jeeps and command cars to use in the May 29 parade.

This year's parade will be dedicated to World War II veterans who will be riding in the vintage vehicles. Anyone who can help with the project should call Ken Murray at 478-0170.

It's Safe Kids Day

National Safe Kids Day will be observed from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, May 6, at Borders Books and Music, 30995 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills, south of 14 Mile Road.

The Farmington Hills Fire Department will visit Borders to focus community attention on childhood injury prevention issues. Safe Kids Week, May 6-12, is a nationwide effort to educate parents and children ages 14 and under

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about preventable injuries. Kids of all ages will be able to sit on a fire engine or ambulance while asking questions of the firefighters. Several presentations, featuring Herbie the Fire Hydrant and Sparky the Fire Dog, will be made in the store amphitheater.

There will be free prizes for the kids and family checklists and brochures for adults.

The world's at stake

It's on to the world finals in Knoxville, Tenn. for the Odyssey of the Mind team from St. Fabian School in Farmington Hills. But first the grade-schoolers have to raise some money for expenses.

One fund-raiser for St. Fabian will be an aerobic workout by Fitness Factory instructor Sylvia Kambouris at 6 p.m. Friday, May 5, at the Piemontese Club, 389500 W. Nine Mile Road, between Halsted and Haggerty. Minimum donation is \$5 per person.

The St. Fabian team advanced to the world finals by winning the state championship in Division 1 at the Odyssey of the Mind competition April 8 at Central Michigan University.

Recycle phone books

Hang on to those old telephone directories. They can be recycled at Target, 30020 Grand River, Farmington Hills, throughout the month of May. Phone books will be accepted in the store lobby seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Memory Lane

From the May 5, 1955 edition of the Farmington Enterprise:

- Electronically timed speed checks were set up on Orchard Lake Road by the Farmington police.
- Pleasant weather over the weekend brought out sightseers and picnickers — and kept the local police busy with traffic problems and accidents.
- The Farmington Township health officer began proceedings to have an abandoned house at St. Francis and Byron streets removed as a health menace.
- Short item: "A man is rich according to what he can do without, not according to what he has."

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington 48335, faxed to 477-9722, or dropped off at the newspaper office. For the computer literate, the Internet E-mail address is: packyoeonline.com.

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Author to narrate slides of Farmington houses

Lee Peel, author of "Farmington: A Pictorial History," will narrate slides of Farmington houses which he gathered as he was writ-

ing his book at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 3, at the downtown branch of the Farmington Community Library, 23500 Liberty.

An autograph signing will follow and copies of his book will be available for purchase. Call the library at 474-7770 for reservations.