



Kids and Kubs and Gulfport Boomerang softball players line up for a tip of the hat before taking to the field. At left, Boomerang pitcher Albert Lembree, 78, concentrates on the plate before winding up for the pitch.

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Play ball! Sport helps them forget aches, pain

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To the Gulfport Boomerangs and the Kids and Kubs softball players, it's not whether you win or lose that matters, but the fact that you can still play the game.

Last Saturday, Hoyt field in Gulfport was graced with gutsy men 70 years old or older, who proved once again that they can still swing a bat and run the bases with all the energy of little leaguers.

The senior members of the Gulfport Boomerangs, aged 70 or older, played against St. Petersburg's famous Kids and Kubs, aged 75 or older, to raise money for the Gulfport Little League — ages 6 to 18.

The Boomerang players are 55 or older, but only the senior members played against the Kids and Kubs.

"Being able to play softball at 72 is a great feeling," said Ed Herminghaus, who has played for the Boomerangs for nine years. "This is the most wonderful thing that happened to any of us, all of us. This [field] is where we bring our aches and pains and just play ball. The

minute we step on the soil we forget our aches and pains and become boys again."

THE OUTCOME? Well, the glory comes in being able to play at all. And, as if it weren't enough of an accomplishment to be a member of one of these teams, both the Gulfport Boomerangs and the St. Petersburg Kids and Kubs have a few unusual stories to tell.

Seventy-six-year-old Kids and Kubs player Joe Gillard had a hip operation seven years ago. "Mine was worn out, so they gave me a new one," he said. But his doctor, Irwin Leinbach, said that the new one, a plastic replacement, would limit Gillard's activities and warned him not to play softball.

"I played anyway," Gillard said, adding that he made a believer of Dr. Leinbach. "I got the doc out here for one of the games, and he's been a loyal fan ever since."

Another active team member is 99-year-old Fred Broadwell who has played for the Kids and Kubs for 26 years. "I really like to play," he said. "It's good for your health. It keeps me active and it keeps the doctors away." One of the Gulfport Boomerangs' heroes is 89-year-old

David Jones, who came to the game even though he was recuperating from the flu. He led off with a hit and was "damn proud," he said.

HIS SPIRITED home team dugout sounded like Bucs fans on a good day. "Knock the hell out of it," Jones shouted to 75-year-old Jim Carrol at home plate. "Knock the cover off that thing!"

Carrol's fifth inning hit made an elderly outfielder jog more than he wanted to. It had been a fairly close game until that point. The Kids and Kubs had taken an early 4-0 lead, but the Boomerangs bounced back on their home turf to tie the score at 4-4.

It was the start of a Boomerang rally. The final scores was Boomerangs 22, Kids and Kubs 8.

For the youngsters in the stands, it was a lesson in how the game should be played — for fun.

"I think it's great that they can still do this and they can still have fun," said 15-year-old Allison Souza, who played in the Gulfport Little League last year. "It's amazing that they still can play."