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the
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ballgame

PLAYING 'BASE BALL'
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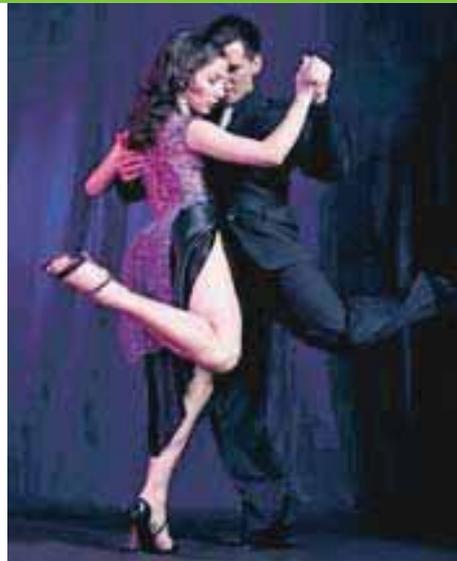
sciencefun

Use basic scientific methods to explore everyday items at **Brookhaven National Laboratory's Explore Day**, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. **Sunday**. The family-friendly event is free; photo identification required for ages 16 and older, 631-344-2651, www.bnl.gov.



happyfeet

A tango **dance party** from 7-11 p.m. **Sunday** at Mirelle's in **Westbury** (170 Post Ave.) includes performances by dancing pros. Admission is \$25 and includes dinner, 631-242-0686, argentinetangolovers.com.



bluesbenefit

Eight bands perform outdoors for the Blues on the Bay for Lupus benefit, noon-8 p.m. **Sunday** at the Long Island Maritime Museum in **West Sayville**. Admission is \$25 (\$20 advance online), \$10 under 15, 800-850-9000, lupusliqueens.org.



vintage 'base ball'

A throwback to the 1800s

BY ADAM WAGNER
adam.wagner@newsday.com

The Brooklyn Atlantics play baseball by the rules, but not the modern ones. Players snag line drives with their bare hands, pitchers hurl the ball underhand, and the umpire dons a tailcoat instead of a chest protector. But the game is still undoubtedly a predecessor to America's pastime.

This weekend, the Long Island-based Atlantics and several other vintage "base ball" teams from around the Northeast will face off at the two-day Old Time Base Ball Festival at Old Bethpage Village Restoration. The event, which began in 1980 and is said to be the longest-running of its kind, will give Long Islanders a chance to see some of the country's premier teams play in a suitably historic setting.

"Our main goal is to educate people that baseball is not exactly as you see it today and [show] where it came from and how it got there," says Tom Fesolowich, of Farmingdale, a tournament organizer who plays for another Long

Old Bethpage Village Restoration's Old Time Base Ball Festival

WHEN | WHERE 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, Old Bethpage Village Restoration, 1303 Round Swamp Rd. Games are scheduled to begin every two hours.
INFO 516-572-8400
ADMISSION \$10 (\$7 ages 5-12) includes grounds

Island vintage team, the New York Mutuels.

The old ballgame

The Atlantics play their home games at Atlantic Park



Catch this: Vinny Aurora, right, of the Atlantics tries to tag out an Elizabeth Resolutes runner at home.

in Smithtown, where they have an affiliation with the Smithtown Historical Society. Team members range in age from mid-20s to early 60s.

One of about 200 vintage base ball teams in the country, the Atlantics start their season in April and finish in November, playing mostly in New England but traveling as far as North Carolina. Many of the team's games are played at farmers markets or

town festivals, drawing the interest of passersby.

"They see us playing not pitching overhand, and they see the sign that says you're playing base ball, so they want to find out what that's all about," says Ed Elmore, a Freeport resident who co-founded the Atlantics in 1997 along with Jim Dragonetti and Al Dieckmann.

The team is named after the Brooklyn club that ended the

Cincinnati Red Stockings' two-year winning streak on June 14, 1870, in what some called "the finest game ever played."

The modern Atlantics may not be playing such high-stakes contests, but they do pay painstaking attention to detail, avoiding modern amenities such as prescription sunglasses when they play to maintain historical accuracy.

yourturn

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ON THE COVER

An illustration based on this photo of The Atlantics' Mike Tangel

On the field

Vintage base ball teams follow 19th century rule books — namely those from 1864 and 1884 — and the particulars can vary. For example, balls caught after one bounce on the field are considered outs if the team is playing by 1864 rules, but only foul ball hoppers count as outs when playing by 1884 rules.

“This is just really an old-style game where you had to hit line

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drives and you had to run like crazy,” says Frank Van Zant, 50, of Northport.

Other traditions have proved timeless.

Even in vintage games, players banter back and forth with the opposing team and shoot incredulous looks at the umpire. Out of respect for history, though, some of the terminology is altered to maintain authenticity, says Vinny Aurora, an Atlantic team member from Lynbrook. Outs are called “hands down.” Transgressions are punished not with fines, but by paying “two bits.”

“That’s what they called it back in the day,” says Aurora, 28.

At the tournament

Old Bethpage Village was the first venue in the country to showcase vintage base ball, with the first underhand pitch thrown in 1979 and the first tournament the following year, says village executive director Jim McKenna. Base ball stemmed from the Restoration’s Civil War encampments because the soldiers did not have enough to do — an old-time game is still played many summer weekends on the site. This weekend, spectators can see as many as three games happening at a time, and games happening simultaneously might be played by different sets of rules.

Fesolowich says, “A person can actually walk through in the space of an hour and see the evolution of the game.”

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