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# STL's top Brownie to celebrate four trailblazing women in pro baseball



JOE HOLLEMAN

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

**NO CRYING:** If there is one thing St. Louis Browns fan club president **Ed Wheatley** loves to do, it's talk about baseball.

This time, however, his chat will not be about our burg's long-gone lovable losers of the American League.

At 6 p.m. March 17 at the Warrenton Public Library, Wheatley will look at the careers of four STL women who played in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League.

The league operated for 12 seasons, 1943 to 1954, and was immortalized by the 1992 movie, "A League of Their Own."

One woman who played in the league is **Barbara Hoffmann**, 89, of Belleville, who played two years, 1951-52, for the South Bend Blue Sox.

"It was a whole lot of fun. We got to play a game we enjoyed, and we got paid for it," Hoffmann said.

Growing up on Raab Avenue on the west side of Belleville, Hoffmann graduated from Belleville Township High (before there were "East" and "West" schools).

After graduation, she played on local adult women's softball and basketball teams. One of her basketball teammates was a catcher for the Blue Sox and told her team about Hoffmann.

When she quit the Blue Sox after two seasons, Hoffmann stayed in Indiana for years. She moved back to Belleville in 2001.

"It was funny, because I'd never played any baseball before at all; only softball. It was strictly a case of 'learn as you go,'" she said.

The other women who played in a league of their own and will be discussed by Wheatley are:

**Emma Bergmann** of St. Louis, who played six seasons for four different teams and is a member of the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame. She died in 2015.

**Rita "Slats" Meyer**, a Florissant native, who played four years for the Peoria Red Wings in the 1940s. She died in 1995.

**Audrey "Kiss" Kissel** was born in St. Louis and died in 2017. She played one year, 1944, for the Minneapolis Millerettes.

**AND ... ACTION:** Cleveland rocks, and STL native **Michael Ambruster** is on a roll.

The former south St. Louis County man is the screenwriter for "End of Sentence," which has been included in the Cleveland International Film Festival.

The movie will be shown on April 3 and April 4. The festival opens March 25.

The best-known member of the cast is John Hawkes, of "Deadwood" and "Winter's Bone," in which he played the menacing Uncle Teardrop.

The film centers on Hawkes and his grown son as they take their long-strained relationship on a trip to Ireland to fulfill their dead wife's/mother's wish to have her ashes scattered across a remote lake.

One critic lauded Ambruster's word-work, saying "... the film's sensitive screenplay creates space for the two leads to deliver richly layered performances ..."

This year has started off strong for Ambruster, who won a Humanitas Award in January for his work on the film.

Ambruster's screenwriting credits include "Beautiful Boy," a 2010 film starring Michael Sheen and Maria Bello.

Ambruster is a 1985 Vianney High grad who did his under-



PROVIDED BY BARB HOFFMAN

Barbara "Barb" Hoffmann of Belleville played professional baseball with the South Bend Blue Sox in 1951-52.

graduate work at Washington University. From there, he went on to get master's degrees from Harvard University and UCLA.

His parents, **Bob and Ann Armbruster**, and three siblings still live in STL.



Hamm



Cedric the Entertainer

**HAMM TIME:** Soon, there could be a movie with not one, but two, favorite sons of STL.

Hollywood news sheets GeekTyrant reports that No. 1 celeb **Jon Hamm** is talking with renowned director Steven Soderbergh about filling a role in "Kill Switch," Soderbergh's latest project.

If a pact gets inked, Hamm will star alongside **Cedric the Entertainer** (aka Cedric Kyles), who is a Berkeley High graduate.

Others attached to the project are Kansas City native Don Cheadle and Sebastian Stan of "Captain America: The Winter Soldier."

The story is about a group of criminals "brought together under mysterious circumstances and have to work together to uncover what's really going on when their simple job goes completely sideways," the sheet reports.

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