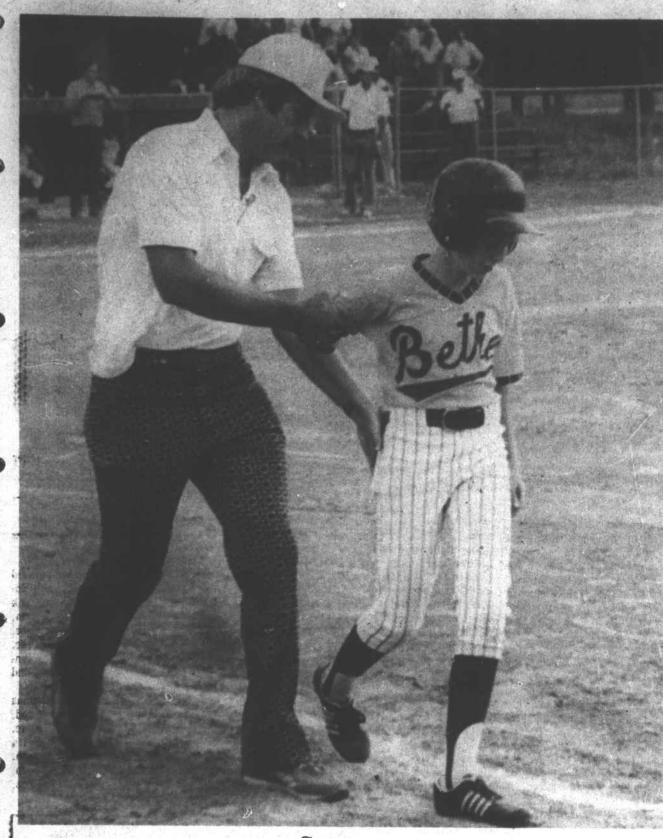
### **Big leagues to Bethel**

# Former pitching star coaching little league team



Despite the throws that soar game. "Do you want to over the first baseman's head, and the grounders that trickle between legs, a little leaguer dreams of one day becoming a big leaguer, just like so and so (insert your childhood hero).

Every kid has a baseball star he idolizes, and emulates as best he can.

The kids on the Bethel team, though, don't have to look far for a hero, not much further than the coach.

He's not a barber, or a farmer who played high school ball, or any other typical little league coach. He's Jimmy Hunter, genuine, bona-fide, certified major leaguer, and one of the best pitchers ever to have fired a baseball.

Hunter is coaching the Bethel team, along with Wayne Perry and Joe Meades, and with a coach like that, who needs bubble gum cards?

Predictably, Perry says the young players are somewhat in awe of their coach. "They know he's pitched in the big leagues and everything, and they try to do what he says, but sometimes they just can't," he said.

The Bethel squad is somewhat younger than most of the teams in the league, and their inexperience showed last Tuesday night as they took a pounding at the hands of Hertford, 14-3.

Hunter had some stern words for his young team in the dugout following the

practice tommorrow afternoon?" The kids were agreeable. "And I don't want any of this messing around and playing around like we had last time. If you do, you're going to run 10 laps."

game that he enjoys coaching that's it." the youngsters, even though he was less than eagar to take started.

manage," he said."

Bethel has been losing.

I forget and think he's 15 and

should be doing better than he

does," Hunter said.

equally

develop.

The sandy haired athlete concedes that parents of the players might expect a little more because of his past, but he says his impact is limited.

"They probably do (expect more)," he said, "but I can't hit the ball for 'em and I can't Surrounded by sport- throw the ball for 'em. There's swriters, Hunter said after the only so much I can do and

There is also the danger of on the job before the season riding the youngsters so hard that they get discouraged. "You can get on 'em so much that the start crying, or some He had already bought a new lawnmower, and made a of the older guys want to fight committment to keep the you," he said. outfield and the horse show

Hunter's competitive edge grounds mowed. "I thought if comes out when he's coaching I did that I wouldn't have to the youngsters. It's obvious that he wants to win.

But the man who wore a With elbows draped over the Yankee cap only last year now chain link fence that separates wears a green cap with a gold the dugout from the playing B. "Coach H." is inscribed on field, he intently watches the the bottom side of the brim. action, occasionally shouting Hunter agreed to accept the encouragement or instruction. job only if another fellow

would share responsibilities But he doesn't let winning get out of perspective. Every boy on the team gets a chance That fellow turned out to be to play Perry. "If we win, he's the

coach. If we lose, I'm the Hunter feels that organized coach," Perry joked. So far little league play is good for the kids, and helps develop better players on down the One frustrating aspect of line

coaching, to Hunter, is that sometimes he forgets how When he was a kid, there was no official little league in young the players are, and how long it takes for talent to the county, but that didn't keep him and his friends from playing ball, and a whole lot of "It's like with Todd. He's 10 years years old but sometimes

His sandlot team was called the Bear Swamp Bears. They on his face," he said, holding would get on their bikes on up his hands to demonstrate.

Text and photos

Mike McLaughlin

by

Sore seat

Major leaguer turned little league manager Jimmy Hunter helps player Tony Hughs to first base after he took a fast ball to the sitting place in a contest last week.

## Sports magazine writer in big league of another sort

Saturdays and ride to Winfall to play that neighborhood team, then on to Hertford to play another pickup team, and back to Bear Swamp to play, ball for the rest of the af-

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ternoon. The trouble with developing good young players today is that their parents don't have time for them, Hunter said.

Parents have to get behind their youngsters. "That's what it takes to make good ball players," he said. "Just turn 'em loose and

one or two might become good ballplayers.' Is Hunter considering moving on to bigger and better coaching jobs? No way, he

says. "I wouldn't have it. Nobody wants to listen. Everybody

knows too much," he said. Knowing too much can even be a problem in little league ball. The youngsters want to keep doing what has worked

before, even if it's wrong, "Like sliding into a bag, they might want to tag his

head instead of his feet," Hunter said. "You say something about it and they'll say, 'I got him out last time.'

> He said that coaching is taking more time than he thought it was going to, but it has its definite rewards.

> "Like Craig Smith," Hunter said. "I put him on base and he scored a run. He never smiles. But he came across the plate with a smile this big

Last Tuesday night's confrontation between the Bethel and Hertford little league teams could have been a national championship game for all the media fanfare.

There was a television crew from WBTV in Charlotte, a sports writer from the CHARLOTTE NEWS, a writer-photographer team from the VIRGINIAN PILOT. and most impressive of all, there was Doug Looney, writer for SPORTS ILLUSTRATED.

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A big budget weekly magazine that showcases some of the best writing and photography to be found anywhere, SPORTS ILLUSTRATED is perhaps the country's most respected sports publication.

Looney, like the others, was in town to profile the transition of Jimmy Hunter from major league pitching star, to former major league pitching star, to little league coach.

Only he had a little more time to do it, and to do it right.

Upon arrival Tuesday night, ney headed straight for the titile league ballpark. There he spent the evening alter-nately mingling with the rowd, sitting in the stands with Hunter's mother, watg the game, talking to

"I tend to kind of wander og in the press box. I've ever gotten one good story in a press box," he said.

"I talked to a lot of parents, too percent cer-

On Wednesday, Looney was on the streets of Hertford, in further pursuit of a technique that sort of circles the prey, gathering the impressions that others have of Jimmy sports for a year?" Hunter.

He talked to Mayor Bill Cox, brother Marvin Hunter, and close friend Charles Woodard, to mention a few. A tall man, dressed in Levis

and cowboy boots, Looney doesn't fit the image of the typical New York sports writer, if there is such a thing.

He appears extremely relaxed and very friendly. definitely in no hurry. He listens intently to comments on Hunter, occassionally jotting down notes, coaxing his speaker along with nods of approval and encouraging

words. Looney realizes the importance of getting people to

talk, and listening to what they have to say. What they tell him will, to a large degree, dictate the quality of his story.

And how others see Hunter will be just as important as how Hunter sees himself.

"The others tend to be much better, in almost every case, than the subject himself," Looney said. "I always ask people, "Who else could tell me nething?"."

tend to kind of wander A graduate of the University and a lot. I never liked of Colorado's journalism school, Looney worked a sion of newspaper, and publishing-related jobs before landing his post at SPORTS ILLUSTRATED. His early

jobs were in news writing, and he got into sports somewhat

"I went to work for the NATIONAL OBSERVER in Washington," he said. "I wanted to cover politics, but they said, 'Would you write Looney apparently had the

knack for it. That year led into 10 years at SPORTS ILLUSTRATED, and he is now an associate writer, specializing in college football, but doing all kinds of stories.

Last year, he estimated that he wrote 25 stories in his travels around the country.

He says it's hard to think of a favorite. "My favorite story is the one I'm working on right now," said Looney. Soon after they are published, he loses intrest in them.

But he singles out an interview with former N.C. State football coach Lou Holtz (now at Arkansas) as one he

remembers fondly.

Writing for SPORTS ILLUSTRATED, isn't as glamorous as it might appear on the surface, Looney asserts.

"It's not easy. The job is somewhat misleading - the big games, the big events. You're dealing a lot of times with celebrities... But the magazine demands great

motivating factor.

Lot

'You can never think of ourself as indispensable at SPORTS ILLUSTRATED." ney said.

And the constant cross. " Getting to Athens is another country flights, the get a story at any cost philosophy, can be a grind at times

For instance, if Looney had Athens. He charters a small arrived in Hertford only to plane. find that Hunter was bound for

At 2 a.m. he is in Athens. a business meeting in Los Dooley has the players. He Angeles, he would be expected to board the plane and go with a.m. starts his story. He finishes precariously close to the 9 a.m. deadline, and There is also the chance that

phones in the story. he might pour his heart into a "Sorry Doug, didn't anyone story only to have it cancelled tell you? Kansas beat Oklahoma. We're using your space for that story."

It's times like that that make Looney scratch his head in wonderment when his friends ask him, "When are you going to get a job?"

Still, SPORTS **ILLUSTRATED** writers are compensated in regal fashion for the demands placed upon them. Writer salaries range from \$30,000 all the way up to out-of-sight.

It's hard to imagine how much Dan Jenkins, author of SEMI-TOUGH, makes for a year's work at the magazine. But the writer must pass a test of excellence, everytime he sits down to pen a story.

Looney goes into a sort of a trance, working for 12 hours at stretch, rearranging a paragraphs, starting over, getting everything just right. He doesn't even hear the phone ring.

When he finishes, his arms hang limp at his sides. He sometimes falls into bed exhausted.

Just tell me the players you want to talk to and I'll have Why does he push himself so hard? "That 12 hours, when I them waiting for you in Athens, Dooley says. actually sit down to write a story, that's when I earn my oney," he said.

Thousands of sports writers m. Looney finally gets a flight into Atlanta, but from dream of earning their money there, there is no flight into in similar style.



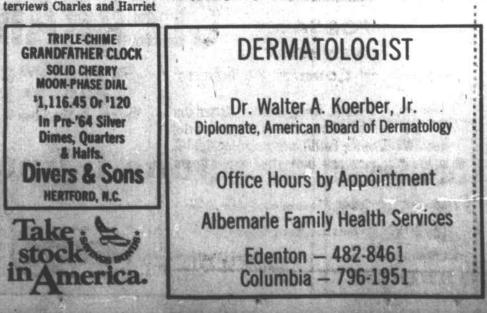
#### Between innings

does the interviews, and at 5 Hunter listens as one of his players seeks his advice between innings during last week's game.



#### Interviewing

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED Woodard at the Hertford Cafe information on Jimmy writer Doug Looney in- in hopes of getting some inside Hunter.



#### the Georgia head coach. No problem, said Dooley. You can ride the team plane back to Athens with us and get your story.

him.

at the last minute.

Georgia won.

Case in point: Looney was to

write a story on the Florida-

Georgia football game. Like

everyone else, he was sure

that Florida was going to win

so he spent the week sort of

living with the team,

preparing for a major story.

It was a mad struggle for

Looney to come up with

anything to write about. He

took his case to Vince Dooley,

Fine, but as the plane is about to take off, six members of the University of Georgia Board of Regents and their wives board, saying they want to fly back with the team.

The passenger load must be reduced by 12. The cull-count reaches 11, including assistant stories. Fear is a great coaches, and the Looney gets the tap on the shoulder. Got to go, Doug.