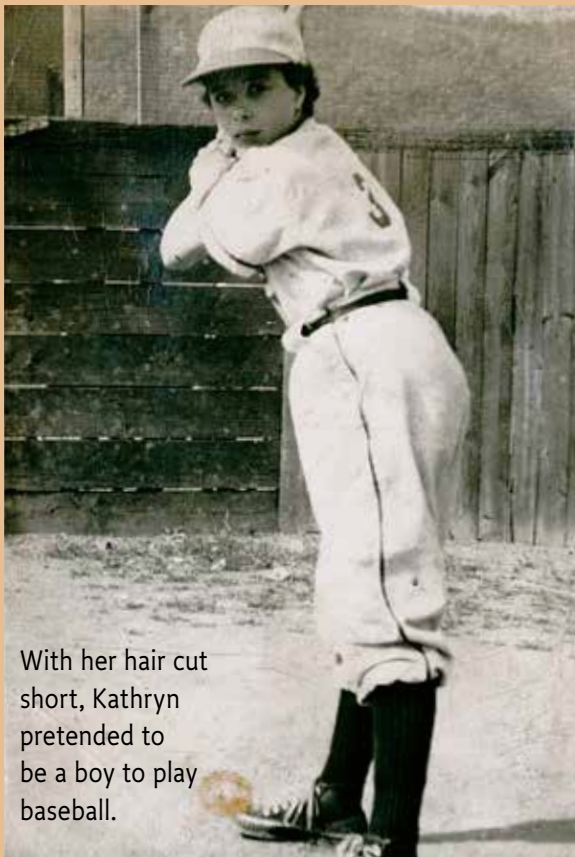




The GIRLS of SUMMER

by Heather Klassen

TWELVE-YEAR-OLD Kathryn Johnston wanted to try out for the local Little League baseball team along with her younger brother, but she had a problem. She knew she



With her hair cut short, Kathryn pretended to be a boy to play baseball.

played well. Her father practiced with her and told her so. But living in Corning, New York, in 1950, Kathryn had never heard of any other girl playing Little League baseball. Afraid that the team might not let a girl try out, Kathryn cut her hair short, tucked the rest under her cap, and used the nickname Tubby, after a character in her favorite comic strip, *Little Lulu*.

Disguised as a boy, Kathryn made the team. But after playing first base for two weeks, she decided to tell the coach that she was really a girl. Her coach replied, "Well, if you're good enough to make the team, you're good enough to stay on the team." Her teammates didn't care that she was a girl, either; Kathryn was one of their best players.

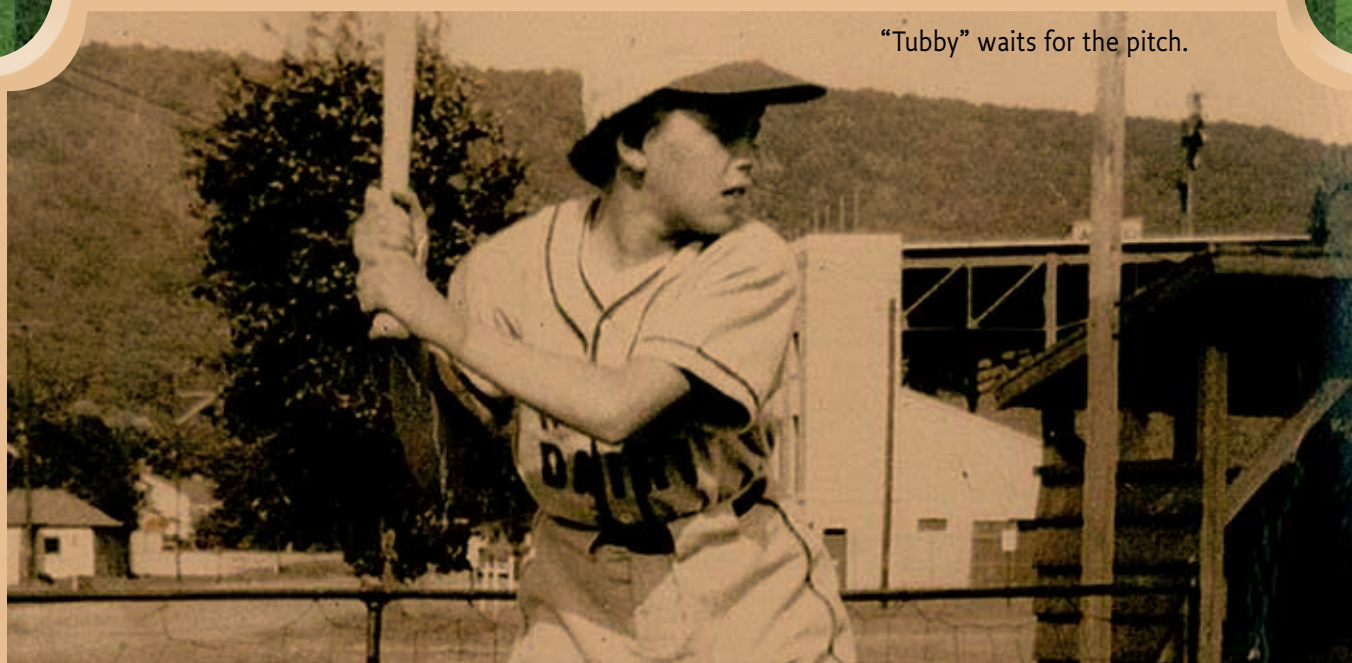
When word got out that a girl was playing baseball, many people came to watch her games. It was a novelty to see a girl play. Kathryn even made the local newspaper. But some people complained, insisting that a girl shouldn't be allowed to play on the team. Before Kathryn tried out, it had just been accepted that only boys would play Little League baseball. The Little League rulebook

THEY WON'T LET GIRLS
PLAY? THAT IS SO BOGUS!



WHAT? WE'LL SEE
ABOUT THAT.

“Tubby” waits for the pitch.



referred only to “boys.” But there was no specific rule saying girls couldn’t play, and Kathryn played for the entire season.

The following year Little League officials in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, made a new rule: “Girls are not eligible under any conditions.” There was no proof that they made the change because of Kathryn, but unofficially people called the new restriction the “Tubby rule.”

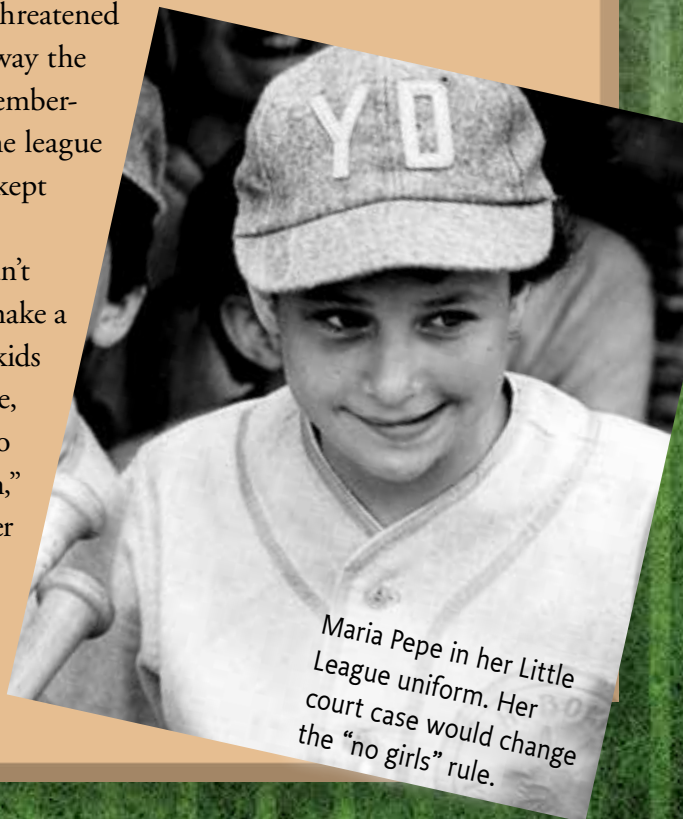
Little League officials never explained the reasons behind the “no girls” rule. But many people agreed with it, feeling that girls were weaker than boys and more likely to get hurt while playing baseball. Some people weren’t comfortable with boys and girls playing sports together. And others just didn’t like changing the tradition of all-boy teams.

Twenty-one years later, in 1972, twelve-year-old Maria Pepe loved to play baseball, just like Kathryn. Maria often played ball with her friends in Hoboken, New Jersey. But when these friends, all boys, decided to try

out for the local Little League team, Maria figured she’d only be allowed to watch. The coach, who knew that Maria had talent, encouraged her to try out anyway. She did and made the team as a pitcher.

Maria pitched only three games before another coach complained. Little League officials threatened to take away the team’s membership in the league if Maria kept playing.

“I didn’t want to make a hundred kids mad at me, so I had to step down,” Maria later recalled. But after



Maria Pepe in her Little League uniform. Her court case would change the “no girls” rule.



COME ON, WE'RE GOING TO MARCH ON THE CAPITOL.



YEAH, BUT DON'T TELL ANYBUGGY.

UMMM, WE'RE SWORN TO NONVIOLENCE, RIGHT?



Maria had to leave the team, but she was allowed to keep her cap.

the New York Yankees honored Maria and her family with a special day at Yankee Stadium, her story became well known, and the National Organization of Women (NOW), a group which fights for equal rights for women and girls, decided to help.


NOW filed a civil rights lawsuit on Maria's behalf claiming sexual discrimination, which basically meant that it wasn't fair that girls couldn't play Little League baseball because of their gender. In November 1973, the court ruled in Maria's favor, and in early 1974 all Little League teams in New Jersey were ordered to allow girls to play.

Even though many boys had no problem sharing the field with girls, the ruling upset supporters of all-boy teams. Maria, and other girls who tried to sign up, were sometimes accused of "ruining" Little League baseball. As the 1974 season began, most of the nearly two thousand teams in New Jersey stopped playing rather than let girls try out. More than eight hundred boys, parents, and coaches traveled to the capitol in Trenton, New Jersey, with petitions, trying to get the ruling reversed.

Some teams, including teams in Hoboken, where Maria lived, decided to quit the league in order to allow girls to play while the court case continued. These teams rejoined the league after

Little League officials finally gave in and dropped the "no girls" rule in June 1974, giving girls worldwide the chance to play.

When Maria heard that her case had finally been won, she had mixed feelings. After all, since the case had dragged on for so long, she had aged out of Little League. She told her father, "You know, Dad, that's great, but now I'm too old to play." Her father encouraged Maria to think about all the girls who would be able to play in the future because she had challenged the rule.

Among the thousands of future female Little Leaguers would be Mo'ne Davis, who in 2014 became the first girl to earn a win and to pitch a shutout in the Little League World Series. Today, boys and girls share the field, playing the game they love together, thanks in part to Kathryn and Maria, two girls of summer who just wanted the chance to play ball. 



Mo'ne Davis became a star pitcher for her Little League team.

GIRLS CAN PLAY NOW, WE WON! YOU'RE UP, LADYBUG!



I'M BUSY RIGHT NOW. GOT TO GET THE TRUE STORY OF MY, I MEAN OUR, HISTORIC STRUGGLE ON PAPER, SO HISTORY WILL GET IT RIGHT, AND MY NAME WILL BE SPELLED CORRECTLY.