
Vermont Senior Baseball News

The newsletter of the Vermont Senior Baseball League Inc., founded 1984 by Floyd Brown

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edited by Mike Wagner

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So Long Old-Timers, And Other News From The Feb.9 League Meeting

At the annual league organizing meeting, held February 9, 2003, the teams decided to change the league's name, shedding the Old-Timers designation in favor of a simpler, more inclusive name: Vermont Senior Baseball League, Inc. The "Inc." at the end represents the league becoming a registered nonprofit corporation under Vermont law.

At the meeting, the officers were all reelected for one year terms. They are (team names in parentheses):

President: Floyd Brown (Newport)
Vice-President: Wayne Davis (Jericho)
Secretary: Mike Wagner (Newport)
Treasurer: Brian Stevens (Burlington)



Floyd Brown



Brian Stevens

Player dues increased by \$3: the teams voted to increase annual player dues from \$10 to \$13. This is needed to cover increased expenses for playoff games, meetings, and the newsletter. Rosters and dues should be sent to Brian Stevens.

Umpires: the job function of Umpire Coordinator was created, and will be fulfilled by Vice President Wayne Davis. His responsibility will be to create a master list of all umpires used in our games, to refine the umpire instructions for our games, and to help the teams with umpire assignments during the playoffs.



Wayne Davis

3 hour limit eliminated: the teams voted to abolish the 3 hour limit for games, noting that our baserunning rules lead to fewer pickoff attempts and keep the game moving along, so that there have been very few games which take longer than 3 hours.

New teams: Two new teams applied to join the league:

Team name	manager	home field
Williston	Dennis Johnson	Williston H.S.
Danville	Randall McGrath	Danville H.S.

Since the meeting we have learned that the Kingdom team will not be playing this year. That leaves us with 16 teams for the coming season. For the purpose of scheduling they will be divided into 3 geographical divisions, as follows:

Burlington Division: Burlington Cardinals - Champlain Whales - Jericho Indians - Williston - Winooski A's

Central Division: Chelsea - Killington Summit Lodge Saints - Mad River Valley - Montpelier Monties - Northfield North Stars - South Royalton Royals

Northeast Kingdom Division: Caledonia Bucks - Danville - Lake Region Rangers - Morrisville Merchants - Newport

Each team will play a total of 16 regular season games, with 8 against teams from their own geographical division and 8 against teams in other geographical divisions.

The regular season will start Sunday, April 27, and will continue through Sunday, August 17, with no games scheduled May 11 (Mothers Day). The team standings will be shown with all 16 teams together.

First place team to receive trophy: the team which finishes in first place in the regular season league standings will receive a trophy commemorating that feat.

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Announcing The League's First Annual Golf Tournament



What? 18 hole golf tournament, format: 4 player captain and crew scramble; lots of prizes

Where? Green Mountain National, Killington

When? Sat., May 17, 2003, 2 PM (shotgun start)

Cost? \$75 includes golf, cart, prizes, dinner

Why? A portion of the entry fee will be used to benefit the league's treasury

Who's in charge? Bill Bauer of Killington

What should I do? Notify Bill Bauer that you want to participate, and he will give you the details: phone 802-422-3535 email: summitlodg@aol.com

Volunteers are needed to help organize and run the event

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There's No Maple Syrup In Arizona, or, An Inside Look At The MSBL World Series

By John K. Martin Jr., Winooski A's



There's no maple syrup but they sure have the nicest baseball fields I have ever seen and played on! I think all the players that went to Arizona for the Men's Senior Baseball League (MSBL) World Series last October would say the same thing.

Just about a year and a half ago I remember being at the first Championship Game between the Vermont Old Timers and the Green Mountain MSBL in Montpelier. I was talking to Mike Wagner about the MSBL World Series in Arizona and he told me he had hooked up with a team from California and was going to play. I said to Mike that it would be great to have a team from Vermont to go to Arizona to play. That was all it took. Mike started the next spring by putting a letter on our website asking for players to sign up for the World Series in Arizona. At the end of 2002 regular season, we had 16 players ready to go! Mike got us into a tournament in Albany NY and some practices and scrimmage games, too. Yeah, that was a lot of fun (except for that high inside pitch, Jeff!). But the best was yet to come.

On October 26 I went to the Burlington airport and met a few players and off to Arizona we went. We took a shuttle bus from there to the Marriott hotel. Many of the players were already there hanging out in the lounge. Mike picked out a first class hotel for us with great rates. Every morning there was coffee to drink as soon as we woke up. By 7:00 AM there was a huge table of fresh cut fruit, bagels, pastries, juice, coffee and tea. They even had a special night when they served ball players all the buffalo wings and veggies we could eat! (That was their mistake.) All for **free!**

On Sunday we all went to the Tempe Diablo Stadium where they had an expo with many dealers of baseball equipment that you could buy ~ bats, gloves, videos, apparel, pitching machines (ask me about the Wheeler Dealer I've got set up in my basement!) ~ you name it! Later there was a **free** barbecue dinner but, not before our practice! The next day was our first game. I'm not sure who was the most excited. Some of us walked up to the field without our equipment... others sat in the dugout

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speechless. I did both! The green of the grass, the blue of the sky... oh, what a high. The team we played was from Calgary. They were some nice guys, good sports, and some real ball players, eh? Three hours later the game was over and we had our first game under our belt. Yes, a loss, but, a good game.

Below, John Martin unleashes a powerful swing against the Calgary Cardinals at the MSBL World Series



After two more losses, we were searching for our first win. Wednesday we had a single game against Rogue Valley, Oregon. We played in a big stadium, Hohokam Field, where the San Francisco Giants play their spring training games. This was the nicest park I have ever played in, with hundreds of seats, billboards and, yes, an announcer. As you walked to the plate, your number and name was announced on the loud speaker. The announcer even had a sense of humor! In the 7th inning he asked the crowd to guess the attendance, which was about 15.

Everyone was very loose and joking around. I think we could almost smell a victory with a great pitching performance from Ray Foley. We had our first win! The next day we split a double header. Kim Duggento pitched a great game even though he

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Below, Ray Foley (left) and Kim Duggento (right)



wrecked his shoulder the day before sliding into third base. I know he had a good night's rest the night before, snoring soundly for a solid eight hours, just like every other night.

Some other highlights of the series that are worth mentioning... the pitching of Jeff Emerson... we started him against the toughest team we played. He pitched a gem and played solid defense at 3b in all the other games. A natural ball player. I think if Jeff had pitched any other game, we would have won it. Neil Stanzione pitched a great game keeping us in it and he stayed cool and also kept his composure throughout his outing, which was a feat in its own. For every one who thinks Neil is a big scary guy (like I did), he's not. He's a really nice guy and a lot of fun to have on your team. Thanks, Neil!

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Below, Neil Stanzione pitching against the Boise Hawks. Catching is Jay Holzinger, with Craig Armstrong also visible in center field



The strangest thing that happened was a fly ball to center field that flew over Mo Tinker's head! He picked it on one bounce with his back to home plate and the umpire called it an out. It was the 3rd out of the inning and everyone started back to the dugout except Mo and I. I was in left field and saw the bounce and Mo obviously knew it bounced. We started to walk in and then trot and then run. We sure weren't going to fight the call. After all, have you ever won an argument with an umpire?

I went to Arizona to play 6 games of baseball and got so much more. I got to know 16 great guys. We had a chance to talk about our league and our teams, things we need to consider for the future of our league. Things like good sportsmanship on our teams and how wonderful it would be to play games without players throwing helmets and bats, whining to the umpires about calls or giving them *the look*. After all, it's all for fun and there is a good chance none of us will make it to the Major Leagues. We did some sight seeing ~ some of us went to the Grand Canyon while others drove to the mountains. I even heard rumors that some of the guys crossed the border into Mexico!

I know everyone had a great time. I'd like to thank all the wives that came to Arizona for their support, cheering, record keeping and running to the store for food and drinks! We all appreciated it. Thank you.

We would like to have two teams next time to go to the Arizona MSBL World Series. One for the 38 - 47 age group and the other 48 and older. Sign up early so you're not left behind! (Editor's note: see P.6 for this year's post season MSBL tournament schedule) ♦

Below, the league's team at the 2002 MSBL World Series. Back row, left to right: Mo Tinker, Sal Spinoso, Monte Mason, Ken Bean, Neil Stanzione, John Martin, Kim Duggento, Jay Holzinger, Steve Dollmeyer. Front row, left to right: John Clark, Craig Armstrong, Mike Wagner, Mike Rowe, Johnny Kalinen, Ray Foley, Jeff Emerson



League meeting, continued from page 1

Playoff format: At the end of the regular season the top 8 teams in the standings will play in the upper division playoffs, leading to the league championship. The remaining teams will play in the lower division playoffs, leading to the lower division championship.

The postseason playoffs will start August 24. There will not be a break for Labor Day weekend, as there was in 2002. The playoffs will continue August 31, and the championship games will be played on September 7. That will be followed by the State Championship game a week later, with our league champion playing the champion of the Green Mountain MSBL.

Playoff changes: The following changes were made which affect the playoffs and championship:

- 1 - The minimum number of games in which a player must appear in order to qualify to play in the playoffs was increased from 3 to 4 games.
- 2 - The upper division and lower division championship games will be played at the home field of the higher seeded team, instead of being played at Montpelier, as was done in 2002.



Wood bats: Rocky Harlow of the South Royalton team presented the results of his extensive efforts to solicit proposals from bat distributors for reduced prices on bulk purchases. In addition, Tim Carter and Blake Thomsen of Chelsea brought in a dozen bats from Art Meigg's store. After much hefting of bats and discussion, it was determined that we would not meet the required minimum number for bulk purchase through the outside distributors. Many teams will get their bats from Art Meiggs, others from their local sporting goods store, and some will leave it to each player to provide their own bat.

The officers and team managers were unanimous in their appreciation for the effort expended by Rocky Harlow to bring valuable, specific information to the table to help deal with this issue.

Advisory Board appointed: the Advisory Board's function is to assist the President in resolving disputes. For 2003 the members of the board will be Mo Tinker (Lake Region), Eddie Krasnow (Champlain), and Erik Nielsen (Northfield).

Minimum age for pitchers stays the same: the teams defeated a proposal to lower the minimum age for pitchers; it remains 45. The player's birthday is the cutoff date.

No more than 4 young guys on each team: the teams voted to tighten the rule defining how many players age 35-39 a team can use. Previously the rule was no more than 4 such players **in a game** at one time. This was changed to require no more than 4 such players **on the team roster**. Just as with determining eligibility for pitching, the player's birthday is the cutoff date.

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Starting time remains the same: after discussing a proposal to have a later starting time, the teams voted to continue the 12:00 noon starting time. Note that teams can agree on other arrangements, but in the absence of an agreement, 12:00 noon is the default scheduled starting time for all games. This looks like a good spot to remind everyone that the home team has use of the field for practice from one hour prior to the game until one half hour prior to the game, and then the visitors have use of the field from one half hour prior to the game until game time. ♦

Age 18+ Country Mountain League Joins MABL

The Vermont Country Mountain League, which is for players age 18 and over and was founded in 1979, has become affiliated with the national Mens Adult Baseball League (MABL).

This makes the CML part of the same family as the Vermont Senior Baseball League, since MSBL and MABL are different branches of the same national organization.

The CML uses full rules, with stealing bases, etc., and allows metal bats up to -5 length minus weight differential. There is no upper age limit.

Since it uses some players who are still in college, the season schedule is geared to the school year. The league will start play on May 18, and play 11 weeks through July 27, then have a 2 week postseason tournament. During the regular season teams will play doubleheaders each Sunday, for a total of 22 games.

The CML ended the 2002 season with 4 teams, and was expected to add at least 2 more teams for 2003. But as of press time the new teams have not materialized. There is still time for potential players to sign up. They should contact the league President, John Gearson, at 802-476-5187, or by email at: gearson123@charter.net.

The league also has a web site and e-mail address:
 CML e-mail: cml@neknetwork.com
 CML web site: <http://cml.neknetwork.com> ♦

The next league meeting is the annual midseason meeting:

When: Sunday July 13, from 3:30 pm, following that day's games

Where: Evergreen Eddy's Wilderness Grill, in Williston, on Route 2A at Marshall Avenue, just north of exit 12 on I-89

Who should attend: at least one representative from each team, but all players are welcome

Interview: Sal Spinosa



In 2002 Sal Spinosa was a 55 year old rookie for the Mad River Valley team. He had 3 hits to lead the team in its upset playoff win over Killington, on the way to the league championship. Sal also played for the league's team at the MSBL World Series in Phoenix, Arizona. All of this was 38 years after his high school baseball days in Saugus, Mass. Sal played football in college, and was named New England Small College Defensive Back of the Year in 1967.

VSBN: Why did you wait until age 55 to take up baseball as a sideline?

Sal: I had been playing softball for over thirty years and intended to continue doing so as long as I could. One day last year a friend mentioned the existence of this league. After a few phone calls (mostly by my wife) I stumbled upon a team that was about to transplant itself into the Mad River Valley, where I live. Thanks to some shameful groveling for a chance to play, I got the proverbial nod. After thirty-eight years, I was going to step back into baseball.

VSBN: Did your first year as a player meet your expectations? Why or why not?

Sal: My first year was both nostalgic and eye-opening. Playing the game, whether at practice or in a real game, was more enjoyable than I could have imagined. When you ask to join an existing team it's a little like asking an established family to adopt you. Patience, perseverance and respect for what has preceded you are the keys. In the end, particularly if you are 55 years old, there may be a dearth of playing time. Of course, it doesn't help your cause if you mark an early season playing opportunity by suffering your first ever groin injury.

Clearly, the mind and soul are instinctively responding to a perceived green light while the body may be detecting yellow. In the end, great fun, good guys and, for me, the intriguing face-off between a genuine athletic endeavor and the rapidly crumbling, former athlete.

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Above, Sal Spinosa batting in the 2002 state championship game against Enosburg, last September

As a part of my re-inauguration to baseball, I opted to play in the MSBL World Series in Phoenix looking for a few more swings, a little more exposure and, of course, more torn groin muscles. I can report success on each front. This tournament is the real deal: beautiful major league fields, knowledgeable ump's, tough competition and a road trip like none other. But, at the top of the list, was the chance to meet and play with guys you had previously known only as competitors. I truly enjoyed the venue, the chance to play (even pitched an inning or two) and some of the guys I got to know. I encourage everyone to try this out if they can....it was a rare experience which I hope to repeat (if my damn groin gets better). The only improvement I might suggest is the assemblage of a team to play in the next older (48+) bracket where I suspect we would kick butt (hint for Mike).



Above, Sal holds the runner at first base during the MSBL World Series in Phoenix, last October

VSBN: In March 2001 you were elected to the town selectboard. What has that experience been like, and are you planning to seek re-election in 2003?

Sal: On the personal side, Debi and I, along with Ryan and our rescued greyhound Knappy, live in and dearly love Waitsfield. I've been on the selectboard for two years and plan to run again in March 2003. I truly enjoy both the work and the responsibility of this post; it's my way of giving something back to this special place.

I make my living as Director of the Enforcement Division at the Agency of Natural Resources. We are a staff of attorneys and investigators who enforce Vermont's environmental laws. While we are very busy investigating environmental violations and initiating legal proceedings, when necessary, it is a comfort to sense that people really do care about the quality of this state's environment and appear to support our enforcement work as well as the efforts of the agency as a whole. Still, there's never a dull day in this business.

Finally, I recently completed teaching a course in environmental law at Middlebury College during their winter term. For me, this was a refreshing break from my normal routine...just what the doctor ordered as I reorient myself toward the startup of baseball season #2 (with or without an operational groin). ♦

Letters to the Editor

Send letters by email to baseball@neknetwork.com or by regular mail c/o Mike Wagner, P.O. Box 10, Newport, VT 05855. Every letter must be signed, but your name will not be printed if you so request.

To the Editor:

In a game last year we knocked out the other team's pitcher in the 5th inning, but he came back in relief in the 8th inning. Is that allowed?

Fred Merkle (not his real name)

Fred,

The rules permit a pitcher to come back and pitch again, but not in the same inning in which he was pitching when he was removed. The pitcher who comes out doesn't have to play another position in the field, he can sit on the bench in between those turns on the mound, but he has to stay in the batting lineup. ♦



Postseason tournament schedule

If you want to look ahead to the MSBL postseason tournaments, this will get you started. For 2003 the MSBL has added sections for wood bats only, which play on the Wednesday through Sunday before the regular tournament week.

World Series, Phoenix, Arizona

- Oct. 15 – 19 age 18+
- Oct. 20 – 25 age 28+
- Oct. 22 – 26 age 38+ wood bats only
- Oct. 22 – 26 age 48+ wood bats only
- Oct. 27 – Nov. 1 age 38+ regular tournament
- Oct. 27 – Nov. 1 age 48+ regular tournament
- Oct. 27 – Nov. 1 age 58+ wood bats only

Fall Classic, St. Petersburg, Florida

- Oct. 31 – Nov. 3 age 18+
- Nov. 3 – 8 age 28+
- Nov. 3 – 8 age 38+
- Nov. 3 – 8 age 48+

If you are interested in playing in any of these tournament sections, contact Mike Wagner at the address shown at the right or call 802-334-7514.

For last year's World Series each player from our league paid \$250 for the tournament fee and uniform, in addition to their own travel, lodging and food costs.

Bottom of the Lineup

By Mike Wagner, Editor



The 2003 season is shaping up to be an important one in the development of our baseball league due to continued expansion and important rules changes.

Once again the league added new teams, continuing a trend that started in 1999, and we will see 16 teams take the field this year.

We have prohibited metal bats, including the metal-wood hybrid bat, and will use wood only (I guess that means I'll have to get a new photo for this column). Although the main reason given by those who supported this change was to increase safety, some are also glad to return this part of the game to the way it was for the first hundred or more years of its existence.

We decided to recognize the first place team in the standings by awarding a trophy at season's end.

We are taking more control over the umpiring of our games, by creating a position of Umpire Coordinator, and Vice President Wayne Davis has assumed that responsibility.

We eliminated the 3 hour time limit on games.

Did I mention that we changed the league's name? If I'm pleased that at age 60 I don't have to be called an old-timer any more, I'm sure the 40 year olds are ecstatic about it.

Now that we have got all that business out of the way, what do you say we get out the snowplows, clear the fields, and play some ball! ♦

Vermont Senior Baseball News

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Vermont Senior Baseball League, Inc.

Chairman of the Board of Directors: Floyd Brown
 President: Floyd Brown
 Vice-President: Wayne Davis
 Secretary: Mike Wagner
 Treasurer: Brian Stevens

Visit our website at: baseball.neknetwork.com
 Send letters and articles c/o Mike Wagner, PO Box 10, Newport, VT 05855, or by email to: baseball@neknetwork.com

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