

Vermont Senior Baseball News

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

A hardball league for age 35 and over that plays a safe, fun, and competitive game of baseball in an atmosphere of good sportsmanship
Vol. 3, No. 1 March 2004 edited by Mike Wagner

Contents

League Expands From 16 to 19 Teams	P.1
First Annual Golf Tournament	P.1
Two Teams From League Play in 2003	
MSBL World Series in Arizona	P.2
History of the Champlain Whales	P.3
Tips On Wood Bat Care	P.4
A Royal Hello From South Africa	P.4
Interview: Rick Emery	P.5
Letters to the Editor	P.6
Bottom of the Lineup	P.6



Above, league officers, from left to right: Brian Stevens, Mike Wagner, Floyd Brown, Wayne Davis, Rocky Harlow. Photo by Wayne Perry.

League Expands From 16 to 19 Teams

At the annual league organizing meeting, held February 8, 2004, there were long discussions but very few changes. The big news was the addition of 4 new teams, as follows:

team name	manager	home field
Barre Brewers	John Grearson	Barre Town Field
Colchester Lakers	Bob Yarnell	Airport Park
Connecticut Valley Orioles	Jimmy Keith	Woodsville NH
St. Johnsbury Tigers	Gary Royer	St. Johnsbury Academy & Lyndon State College

Since the meeting we learned there will not be a Winooski team this year. We hope this is a one year absence only and that interested players will help get the team started again in 2005.

At the meeting, officers were elected for one year terms.

They are (team names in parentheses):

Chairman of the Board: Floyd Brown (Newport)

President: Mike Wagner (Newport)

Vice-President: Wayne Davis (Jericho)

Secretary: Rocky Harlow (Williston)

Treasurer: Brian Stevens (Burlington)

Base Runners Must Wear Helmets

There was one rule change, affecting all players (or at least those who manage to get on base). Runners will now be required to wear a helmet.

2 Game Experiment With Passed Ball Advance

The teams voted to play 2 games in July in which a runner would be permitted to advance on a passed ball or wild pitch. Following the experimental period, the teams will decide whether to start the 2005 season with that rule. Every team will play 2 games with the new rule.

Schedule Format Announced

For the purpose of scheduling the 19 teams will be divided into 4 geographical divisions, as follows:

Burlington Division: Burlington Cardinals - Champlain Whales - Colchester Lakers - Jericho Indians - Williston Armadillos
Capitol Division: Barre Brewers - Mad River Valley - Montpelier Monties - Morrisville Merchants - Northfield North Stars
Central Division: Chelsea - Connecticut Valley Orioles - Killington Summit Lodge Saints - South Royalton Royals
Northeast Kingdom Division: Caledonia Bucks - Danville Dragons - Lake Region Rangers - Newport Cubs - St. Johnsbury Tigers

The 16 game regular season starts Sunday, April 25, and continues through Sunday, August 29, with no games scheduled May 9 (Mothers Day) or July 4 (Independence Day). Due to the odd number of teams, every team has one bye week. The team standings will include all 19 teams together.

The team finishing in first place in the regular season standings receives a trophy. Following the regular season there are split playoffs; the top 8 teams in upper division playoffs leading to the league championship. The remaining teams play for the lower division championship.

Announcing Our First Annual Golf Tournament



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

Where? Basin Harbor Club, Vergennes

When? Saturday, September 18, 2004

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

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

Who's in charge? League Secretary Rocky Harlow of the Williston Armadillos

What should I do? Notify Rocky that you want to participate, and he will give you the details: phone 802-482-5220 email: hrockster@adelphia.net

ACT NOW! APRIL 16 CUTOFF DATE

Two Teams From League Play in 2003 MSBL World Series in Arizona

Following an initial appearance by one squad of 16 pioneers at the MSBL World Series tournament held in Phoenix, Arizona in October 2002, the league was represented by two teams at the event last fall.

One team was entered in the age 38 and over division and the other was entered in the age 48 and over division. Both teams were called the Vermont Catamounts, and both had winning records, with the younger guys making the playoffs.



Above, age 48 and over team MVP Maury Tinker batted .625 with 15 hits and 9 RBI in 6 games.

These were not all-star squads, but players from different teams who wanted to experience the thrill of playing on major league training fields against opponents from all across the country and beyond. In fact the age 48 and over Catamounts suffered one of their two losses at the hands of a team from the Caribbean island of St. Thomas, which went on to win the playoffs for the entire 35-team division.

The complete tournament consisted of over 350 teams and over 4000 players in different age and ability divisions, and has become the MSBL's showcase event. Each team plays 6 games in 4 days, followed by playoffs if eligible.

For those interested in playing on one of the league's teams in this year's MSBL World Series, here is some basic information:

- Dates: October 30 - November 7, 2004
- Location: in and around Phoenix, Arizona
- Cost: \$275, payable by July 15 (includes tournament entry fee, team dues, and uniform); plus hotel \$100 per night for 8 nights; plus rental car approximately \$125 for the week if shared; plus air fare estimated to be \$350 round trip per person.
- Age requirements: must turn 38 or 48 by Dec. 31, 2004
- Pitching age: everyone on the team is eligible to pitch
- Game rules: full baseball rules, with expanded lineup and free substitution of fielders. Metal bats are okay, up to -3.
- Where do I sign up? Contact Mike Wagner by phone at 802-334-7514 or email: mike@wagner-usa.net or by mail at PO Box 10, Newport VT 05855.

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

Armstrong Slugging Company

Made in Vermont

Wood Bat Models For 2004



Armstrong Slugging Company is having an Open House on April 4th from 1 to 4 pm. Come and try our bats at our batting cage. We have over 400 bats in stock in both Maple and Ash. Our prices are competitive, our selection is the best. Where else can you try before you buy? We are off route 15 in Underhill, call us at 802-899-5092 or email strongbats@pshift.com for directions or more information. Hope to see you here!

Craig Armstrong

History of the Champlain Whales

By Eddie Krasnow



As a former high school writing teacher, I know that the number one rule is to write about what you know. Anyone who has played on the Whales knows for sure I do not know statistics, baseball history, or intricate strategies.

Around 1985, my brother Gerry, now deceased Whales Hall of Fame shortstop, told me about an ad he saw in the paper for baseball players over 35 years of age. That was the second year of the league, and the advertisement was from a guy in Milton, Vermont. We joined, and the next year Bob Tiplady joined. He was my children's teacher in Charlotte and got wind of what we were up to.

That was the year of our triple play, Krasnow to Krasnow to Tiplady. Bases loaded, no out, and a sharp grounder hit to Gerry's left. Gerry scooped it up and decided to take it alone, touching second and firing a rocket to me at first. It hit square with plenty of time to spare when I heard in my good ear Tiplady (who was our catcher) boom out, HOME! I turned to see the guy at third half way down at full tilt. Without enough time to think and screw it up, I let it go towards Bob's torso. He two handed it and as the man from third slid he put on the perfect tag. Of course the ump was right there, since that particular ump never moved from his spot throughout the whole game. I have no clue what team we were playing.

My brother Michael joined with us in Milton, but soon we decided to start our own team, create our own style (more mellow), and travel a lot less for home games. That was in '90 or '91. Our first major recruit was the awesome and wily Phil Schelzo, originally from New York and a former Milton pitcher. They thought he was washed up, but his blistering 22 mph curve ball struck out or grounded out more players in the early Whales years than I could count.

When we first started out, a pitcher could only throw 3 innings, then it became 6, and now anyone with enough Advil can go the distance.

That reminds me of the game against Jericho in which the Whales used three pitchers under the age of 48 (maximum 6 innings allowed), while the amazing 60 year old Clint "I always want to keep on throwing" Erb went 13 innings for them over at the Mt Mansfield diamond before losing a heartbreaker, either 1-0 or 2-1 (sorry, I can't remember). Winning pitcher for the Whales was an unlikely hero following Tiplady's and Matton's awesome performance. With no other player over 45, Eddie "I pitched in Little League once" Krasnow (yes, me) went in to finish the job. Now you know why I still pitch occasionally.



Above, the 2000 Champlain Whales team. Standing, left to right: Norm Matton, Ernie Palatsis, Bob Tiplady, Ronn Winn, Phil Schelzo, Michael Krasnow, Marty Dion, Graeme Freeman, Mark Carbone, Doug Davis. Kneeling in front: Eddie Krasnow.

The Whales ended their debut season in the cellar, but by the end of the second season we were jelling and went to the championship game. Although never winning a league championship, the Whales have had maybe 50 different players join us, spawned 2 teams (Lewis Franco starting Montpelier and Ronn Winn starting Burlington), only forfeited 4 times, and felt like champions every time anyone connected with a ball, made a catch, or finished a play as sweet as any major leaguer.

The thought of the rides in the van to away games with Marty, Norm, Bob, Michael, Doug, Ernie and Tim, along with dugout antics from Mark, John, Bob, Bill, Harry and the dozens more over the years, keeps the winter full of promise. Remember the Whales Spring motto, "First game, first practice!!".

Below, Eddie was invited to join the Burlington Cardinals team for the 2003 state championship game. Here he shares some memories with Lewis Franco, who played for the Whales and went on to start the Montpelier Monties. Lewis sang the national anthem at the game.



Tips On Wood Bat Care

By Kevin Farley, Mad River Valley



Ted Williams, 1957
Associated Press photo

Ted Williams, who some consider to be the greatest hitter of all time, had firm and unwavering opinions on not only baseball, his favorite topic, but on many other topics he found interesting. He could get almost insufferable when anyone dared to offer a different opinion.

Ted's passion was just as strong when it came to the science of wooden bats. Although many professional baseball players will travel to the bat manufacturer to personally select their bats, Ted was particularly fussy. He would actually select the ash wood he wanted **before** the wood was turned into a bat. He then would go through hundreds of bats discarding most before selecting the bunch that would be used for the next season.

Once he selected them he would "bone" them to compact the grain and make the bat denser. A cow's leg bone after being boiled for a long time and then dried is the usual tool of choice. The curvature of the bone will slightly wrap around the curvature of the bat. If truth be told, a section of iron pipe would probably do just as good of a job. Hillerich & Bradsby Co., in a 1961 baseball guide, instructed, "Every so often, especially after your bat has gotten damp or wet, a good boning of the barrel is recommended. This means moving briskly up and down the barrel of the bat, and pressing at the same time, an object such as a large bone, that has a hard, smooth, rounded surface."

Ted would go berserk and usually let forth a string of obscenities if he saw a player leave his bat lying in the grass. Grass, like humans, consists of a high percentage of water. Excessive moisture is not good for the bat. However, a certain amount of "humidity" in the bat is good. The perfect humidity number is relatively small. The X bat company uses maple wood that they have kiln dried to a relative humidity of 6-8%. In their sales material they also mention their maple bats do not need handle wraps, but that getting the handle damp will raise the grain and add grip to the handle. Manny Ramirez and Sammy Sosa use X-bats, although sometimes Sosa does his own carpentry.

Hillerich & Bradsby also recommends that when the bat gets wet or when putting it away for the season to rub linseed oil or liquid wax into the bat.

When selecting a new bat look for an even grain without blemishes or crooked lines. Make sure the lines of grain are not too spread out. The more growth a tree has in a given year means more "pulp" and less density, which can be seen on a bat as more space between the grain lines. Blemishes in the grain or crooked grain lines add structural weaknesses. ♦

A Royal Hello From South Africa

Terry McManamy, who plays for the South Royalton Royals, is spending a year in South Africa as part of an exchange program. Terry, a Chemistry teacher at Randolph HS, has exchanged jobs for a year with a teacher from South Africa, Falaza Belayi. Terry recently sent this email greeting.

Hi Mike,

The seasons are changing here in the Southern Hemisphere from summer to fall but my New England blood is starting to boil with baseball fever. Here in South Africa, it is the beginning of cricket and rugby season. The former is weird, the latter, criminally insane.

Red Smith, the famous sports writer, said something like, "only people with dull minds think baseball is dull". After watching a few cricket "tests" on TV, even the shortened version of limited overs, I wonder what old Red would have to say about this game.

I got to try a few bowls (pitches) and took a few swings at a braai, (a South African barbecue). A lot of the skills are the same but the strategy is totally different from baseball.

I hope to introduce baseball to the high school where I'm teaching. I sent over some old equipment from Randolph, but the box with the catcher's gear and most of the balls got diverted to Durban. I will pick it up in April and be back in time to start fall training. Looks like we'll have to play in the winter here. No problem, as the coldest it will get is about 40, and that's at night. I hope it's that warm at noon on Opening Day in April for all you MSBL diehards.

Its great here, one of the best experiences I've ever had. Its a real honor to be selected for a Fulbright exchange and I hope I live up to the standards. But I really miss my kids, my scruffy old dog and the Sundays playing ball. Best of luck to you, except when you play the Royals!

Terry McManamy



Above, Terry's exchange partner Falaza Belayi and Terry in a photo taken soon after Falaza's arrival in Vermont in January and just before Terry's departure for South Africa.



Above, Terry found this sign "in the middle of nowhere in the high veldt of eastern South Africa. The countryside is worthy of the name."

Interview: Rick Emery



Rick Emery of the Morrisville team has played every position except catcher and pitcher, and he would pitch if the league rules permitted 40 year olds to take the mound. He lives in the town of Johnson with his wife Marla and their children Blake and Jillian.

Rick was the MVP of the league's age 38 and over team at the MSBL World Series tournament in Arizona last fall.

VSBN: Where did you play baseball before joining our league?

Rick: I played for my high school, Lamoille Union, and also American Legion ball through age 18, but after that I played a lot of softball.

VSBN: Your dad, Ed, is obviously a big baseball fan, since he goes to all your games and even umpired a game between South Royalton and Newport in 2003. What was his background in baseball -- was he a coach, or did he play as an adult?

Rick: Actually he never got a chance to play as a child or adult. He grew up as an only child on a dairy farm and there wasn't time and he went into the service after he finished school. He coached little league and Babe Ruth & was the team manager for the Lamoille County American Legion team that I played on. In this photo, that's my dad on the left, my grandfather Edgar, and me, in my last year of Babe Ruth league. Edgar used to play for the Waterville baseball team in the 1930's.



VSBN: What baseball team did you root for as a kid and who was your favorite player?

Rick: Red Sox then and now. My favorite player was Carl Yastrzemski.

VSBN: You took your whole family to Phoenix last fall when you played in the MSBL World Series. What activities were available for the kids and what did they do when you were playing the tournament games?

Rick: We went out a day early to see the Grand Canyon. It was an all day trip because we took the scenic route through Jerome and Sedona. It was a very busy baseball game schedule so there was limited time for activities. They were able to swim and do a little shopping. They attended all the baseball games with us.



Above, Rick, playing left field, almost made a spectacular diving catch on this ball during a game in 2003.

VSBN: Did you have any problems switching to wood bats?

Rick: No.

VSBN: What can our league do to make the game better?

Rick: Drop the pitching age to 40 and bring back stealing.



Above, Rick scored the winning run in the bottom of the ninth inning in a 2002 playoff game against Jericho. ♦

Letters to the Editor

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

To the Editor:

If we have 10 players present we need to bat all 10. But if we have more than 10 players, does the pitcher have to hit? Just curious if we can use a DH.

Gerry Thompson, South Royalton Royals

Dear Gerry:

In MSBL tournaments you can play in the field without being in the batting lineup. But our rules don't have that feature. Our rules require that you have to be in the batting lineup in order to play in the field, so the pitcher has to hit.

One way to cut down the at bats of a player is to have 2 players share one spot in the batting lineup, the A/B system. First time through the lineup, player A hits. Next time through, player B hits. Because both of them are in the batting lineup, both of them can play in the field.

To use this system you have to have at least 11 players, and you can do this for batting positions 9 and higher, not for positions 1 through 8. ♦

The next league meeting is the annual midseason meeting:

When: Sunday July 18, 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

Vermont Senior Baseball News

is published by:

Vermont Senior Baseball League, Inc.

Chairman of the Board of Directors: Floyd Brown

President: Mike Wagner **Vice-President:** Wayne Davis

Secretary: Rocky Harlow **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

Next issue: May 2004

Bottom of the Lineup

By Mike Wagner, Editor

In "Romeo and Juliet", Shakespeare wrote "What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet".

What I want to know is, what's in a number? Why are baseball players so attached to their uniform numbers? Ronn Winn of the Burlington Cardinals not only wears the #9 of Roger Maris, he has the name MARIS on the back of his shirt as well. Last summer and fall, while making the arrangements for the league's two teams to play in the MSBL World Series in Arizona, I had to get shirts made up for the players who were not on our team the year before. When it comes to issuing numbers you need a little luck if you are going to keep everyone happy. Two players wanted #10; fortunately one player was on the age 38+ team and one on the age 48+ team.

One guy on the younger team requested #33. The shirt was already made up in his size, as I had used it myself in the 2002 event (I was copying the famous Pittsburgh shortstop Honus Wagner). So I gave him my shirt and took one that had a number on it but hadn't been worn before, #19. When we played a couple of games at the San Diego Padres training fields, I was able to imagine myself as another #19 lefty batter who played there, Tony Gwynn. Tony had a little saying that encompassed his approach to batting: "See the ball, hit it hard".

My mantra was more like "See the ball, don't swing at it" (see photo). Using this plan, I led the team in walks with 5 in our 6 games.

We almost had three number 3s on the older team. At the 2002 event, Kim Duggento wore that number and he still had the shirt. It looked for a while like we would have a new player in 2003 who used #3 for his regular team and requested it for Arizona. But both Duggento and the second player had to back out due to injuries. That left #3 available for newcomer John Fitzgerald, who also wears it for his regular team, and we got a new #3 printed for him. I didn't ask any of those players what their motivation was for wanting #3, but if it has anything to do with Babe Ruth, then Fitzgerald appears to have a strong claim, as this photo attests.

The major league player most closely associated with #45 is Pedro Martinez (in the 1960s it was Bob Gibson). If a player in our league wears #45 for two consecutive years you know it's not because that's his age. Ray Foley was our #45, and after catching his complete game win over the Greenwood Ridge Dragons I can say he looked like Pedro to me, and to a lot of their batters.

Jeff Emerson already has a #9 shirt for the Catamounts 48+ team, but if Ronn Winn decides to sign up for Arizona



this year we can still give him a #9, to tell them apart his will have the name MARIS across the back. ◆
