

BASEBALL Mercury.

Issue 12

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April 1976

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BASEBALL

Mercury.

No.12. APRIL 1976.

HUMBERSIDE by D. Megson.

Hull Royals won the 1975 Humberside League Championship, league standings follow. 1st. Hull Royals, with 5 wins and 0 losses, 10pts; 2nd. Hull Aces, won 2 and lost 2, 4pts; 3rd. Nottingham Lions, with 1 win and 4 losses, 2pts; 4th. Spinney Saints, who only played 2 games, both of which were defeats, 0 pts.

Top batter was W. Cornforth, B.A. .563. Top pitcher K. Marshall, ERA. 0.81.

Our other competition was the Yorkshire Cup, Hull Royals and Hull Aces tied for first place, each having 3 wins and 1 loss, and gaining 6 pts. Hull Nomads finished in third place with 0 pts. having lost all 4 games played.

Top batter was B. Marshall .632. Top pitcher P. Darnell, ERA. 3.46. There were no homeruns in either competition.

This year in our area we are planning to put all our efforts into getting baseball played at schoolboy level. In 1975 our coaching project got off to a late start, due to lack of equipment. However, one of the highlights of the 1975 season was to see a schools tournament take place. Six teams entered, with players ranging in age from 10 to 14. It did my heart good to see 80 to 100 boys, all throwing or batting baseballs about the field in the pre-tournament practice drills. Our aim this year is to widen our field of activity and get even more schools competing.

The teachers from some of these schools are planning to form a schools' league, this will be the first time that the ball game has been played in schools competitively, since 1939. If only I could get hold of some additional dedicated people willing to give up their time to coaching these youngsters, it would prove to be the salvation of the game in our area. Without a supply of players from the schools baseball is going to die. Unfortunately, when it comes to obtaining coaches, very few of the older players are prepared to put anything back into the game, from which they themselves have received so much enjoyment, by giving up their time to assisting the development of youthful talent.

Hull Royals are due to open their new ground this season. Our area will be the only one in the country to have two regulation diamonds. The Humber Bridge is due to open at the end of 1978, and in connection with the opening of the bridge there is to be a Festival of Sport lasting six months. All sports bodies in the area have been asked to put on special events. Baseball plans to stage two tournaments, one at international level, the other at club level.

The new Hull Royals ground is situated to the north of Hull, and we hope to have a visiting club from the continent for the inaugural celebrations.

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SOFTBALL RECORD.

The men's world softball championships were held at Lower Hutt, Wellington, New Zealand, in February of this year. During the series the United States and New Zealand set a record for world series competition when they battled for 20 innings, a new record. The game lasted over four hours, as a scoreless tie, until eventually Ty Stofflet, the American pitcher batted in the winning run. The game ending 1 - 0. Stofflet had pitched throughout the game, keeping New Zealand hitless. Stofflet pitched almost a perfect game, except for the 19th. innings, when he hit Bruce McLean on the elbow, giving him a walk. McLean was the only Kiwi to reach first.

Stofflet struck-out 32 of the 61 New Zealand batters. New Zealand pitcher, Kevin Herlihy, struck-out 20 of 74 batters. New Zealand used 15 players in the game, almost its entire squad.

Later in the series both the U.S.A. and New Zealand were beaten 1 - 0 by Canada, who ended the series by retaining their world title.

South Africa sent a team to the series, which caused some countries to refuse to send teams. During the South African visit, while games were taking place at Papakura, Auckland, between South Africa, Counties and Waikato, a low flying Cessna aircraft made about 40 passes over the field bombarding players and spectators with flour bombs and leaflets as a protest against apartheid.

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NOTTINGHAM.

The Nottingham Baseball and Softball Association formed a baseball league in 1975, the league originally consisted of four teams, Nottingham Lions, Southglade Hornets, Spinney Saints, and Clifton Cougars. Unfortunately, the Saints dropped out as they found it difficult to get players. Nottingham Lions won the championship, but face stiffer competition in 1976 as Bromsgrove Dodgers and Corby Red Sox are joining the league.

During the year the N.B.S.A. gained two "Peewee" teams, a women's baseball team, and a softball team. The association was also able to form an umpires school, which was well attended, especially by new players.

Runners-up in the league were Clifton Cougars, who also finished runners-up in the British Amateur Baseball Federation Junior Tournament. At this tournament, a Cougars player, John Manners, was chosen Player of the Day.

Elected Officers of the Nottingham Baseball and Softball Association for this year:- President, Benny Benson. Chairman, Mike Harrold. Secretary, Alex Williams. Treasurer, John Burrows, who is also Senior Team Manager. Junior Team Manager, Alex Williams.

Simon J. Burrows, hon. secretary of Nottingham Lions, has moved recently. His new address is:- 362 Broxtowe Lane, Aspley, Nottingham. Telephone No. 293651.

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The next issue of Baseball Mercury should appear in August. The subscription for three issues is 30p. Subscriptions and any items which readers may wish to send for inclusion in future issues should be sent to:- William Morgan, 89 Sterndale Road, Hammersmith, London, W14 0HX.

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NEW WORLD FEDERATION.

Yet another world federation of amateur baseball has been formed. At Mexico City on 4th. and 5th. of January representatives of many countries both those in F.I.B.A. and F.E.M.B.A. gathered to discuss a fusion between the two bodies. Federacion Mundial de Beisbol Aficionado was formed in 1973 when many countries hitherto members of Federacion Internacional de Beisbol Aficionado broke away and formed the new body. Since the breakaway there have been contacts between leading figures in each body with a view to a fusion.

The pressure has been greatest from the Central American countries, where their various national Olympic organisations have been dismayed by this lack of order in a major sport.

It was decided that a new body should be set-up, to be named Asociacion Internacional de Beisbol Aficionado (AINBA), with an initial membership of thirty-one countries. European countries which were founder members are West Germany, Belgium, Spain, The Netherlands, San Marino, Italy, and France. The new body, like F.I.B.A., has most of its top officers drawn from Central America and the Caribbean countries. The presidency is held by Manuel Gonzalez Guerra of Cuba. Other officers are, secretary Miguel Oropeza (Mexico), treasurer Alfredo Morales (Colombia). Carlos Garcia of Nicaragua, formerly President of FEMBA, is a vice-president of AINBA, and William Fehring (U.S.A.) and Rene Gonzalez (Panama) are members of the committee. European vice-president is Guus van der Heijden (The Netherlands).

The 1976 world championship will be held in September in Taiwan, and the 1978 world championships in Italy. The 1976 world youth championship will be held in November in Argentina. The 1977 Intercontinental Cup will be played in Nicaragua during August and September.

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SOUTH OF ENGLAND.

In 1975 the British Baseball League was won by Croydon Bluejays who won 7 and lost 1 for an .875 percentage. 2nd. were Southend Aces, won 6, lost 2, .750. 3rd. Crawley Giants with .375 as a result of 3 wins and 5 losses. A tie for 4th. place resulted when Sutton Braves and Thames Board Mills Raiders finished with identical won and lost records. Each winning 2 and losing 6, for a percentage of .250.

The Baseball Association of Great Britain's Cup competition was won by Croydon Bluejays who beat Sutton Braves 9 - 8 in an extra innings final game.

In December the B.A.G.B. held its A.G.M. at the Thames Board Mills clubhouse at Purfleet. A new slate of officers was elected, the new president is Jeff Archer, an American who made his entry into the English baseball scene in 1975. He is based in

London as a representative of Rawlings Sporting Goods Co. of St. Louis, and played for Crawley Giants in 1975. Art. Bloomfield (Sutton Braves) was elected secretary, and Rip Rowley (Crawley Giants) as treasurer. The new Executive was requested to overhaul the constitution of the B.A.G.B.

At a subsequent general meeting it was decided that the title Baseball Association of Great Britain should be dropped, the new president considering it inaccurate, as the organisation although claiming in theory to be controlling and promoting the sport of baseball in Great Britain, had in fact only operated in the South of England. The new title adopted by the member clubs is the Southern Baseball League.

As a result of Jeff Archer's promotional work during the close season things look rosier for baseball in the South of England. Two new teams have been formed The Spirit of '76, and United States Navy. The Spirit of '76 will be managed by Jeff Archer and sponsored by John Lewis, an American fashion retailer who sells Western and American sports type clothing in Kensington. The United States Navy team will be manned by administrative personnel at the U.S.N. offices in London. Both these teams will play at Ham Common, Richmond.

Another entrant to the league is Golders Green Sox, this club has been playing friendly games since its formation in 1973, but is now sufficiently solid to enter competitive baseball. At the time of writing Green Sox have not secured a home ground. Yet another new entrant is Wokingham Monarchs, organised by Geoff. Moffat, a former member of a club with the same name which played for a number of seasons at Wokingham, Bc ks. The former Wokingham club lasted from around 1950 to 1962.

A sad note though is the news that Southend Aces, founded in the late 1950s, have called it a day. Aces just could not raise enough players to enter a team in the league this season; George Simmons, Southend secretary, hopes that this will be just a one year suspension of activity. However judging by the history of British baseball clubs, once a club is unable to compete in a particular season it is almost inevitable that it vanishes from the scene for ever.

A new departure this season is the scrapping of the previous formats for the cup competition. The league competition will be completed by August 8th. with the 15th. being set aside for rained-out games to be played. The cup competition will be played as a double elimination tournament scheduled for two week-ends, August 29th. and September 5th.

The team winning the South of England League will take part in the semi-final of the club championship organised by the British Amateur Baseball Federation, this semi-final is to be played at Nottingham on 22nd. August. The final of the club championship will be played in London on 26th. September.

The Cuban Embassy team is expected to play some games this year, they were out practicing as early as 7th. February at the T.B.M. ground.

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BELGIUM IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The Little League section of the Belgian Baseball Federation sent a team on a tour of South Africa and Rhodesia at the end of 1975. The team was composed of 7 Belgian players, and 7 Americans who play Little League baseball in Belgium. Little League Belgium had to raise 300,000 Belg. Francs to pay their share of the expenses for the trip.

The team left Brussels on 18th. December, flying from Amsterdam to Johannesburg by KLM. Both in South Africa and Rhodesia the team played international matches, and also played versus provincial all-star teams. In South Africa games were played at Johannesburg, Pretoria, Vereeniging, Boksburg, and Durban; in Rhodesia; games were arranged at Salisbury and Bulawayo. In South Africa games were played on cricket and rugby fields. There were no pitcher's mounds, and around the pitcher's plate large rubber covers were placed, while the batters' boxes were protected by matting. In Rhodesia games were played on regulation diamonds.

Results in South Africa; Internationals, South Africa - Belgium 12 - 0, 16 - 0, 11 - 3, 7 - 3. Provincial matches, Vaal - Belgium 2 - 2; North Transvaal - Belgium 5 - 5, 18 - 7; East Transvaal - Belgium 1 - 18.

Rhodesia results; Internationals, Rhodesia - Belgium 15 - 3, 15 - 3, 7 - 1, Provincial matches, Mashonaland - Belgium 2 - 9; Matabeleland - Belgium 4 - 14.

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STATESIDE NEWS by Norman Sutherland.

After two votes by the American League club owners, Bill Veeck was allowed to take over the ownership of the Chicago White Sox. One of Veeck's first moves was to hire Paul Richards as manager, and to fire manager Chuck Tanner. Two days later Tanner was named manager of the Oakland Athletics, their 13th. pilot since 1961.

The American League voted to expand in 1977, and to bring Seattle into the League. A Seattle group obtained an American League franchise at the time of the A.L. expansion in 1969, but the Seattle Pilots had such a disastrous season in 1969, that the franchise was switched to Milwaukee for the opening of the 1970 season.

Ted Turner, owner of several local T.V. stations, bought the Atlanta Braves for 12 million dollars. The purchase price will be paid over the next 12 years. It is some 10 years since the Braves moved their franchise from Milwaukee, and after the interest generated in the first season they have steadily lost fans ever since. 1975 was their worst ever season in Atlanta with attendance down to 534,000 as against a break-even figure set at 1,000,000. The Braves have a number of problems; they have not been a winning club, and Atlanta Stadium is located in an area with a high crime rate which deters fans from attending games. Last year a sports writer was killed in the stadium parking lot after a game.

The on again, off again move of the Giants has kept writers busy since last season. The Giants were sold to a Toronto group in January for 13½ million dollars, the Giants were to be moved to the Canadian Exhibition Stadium, Toronto, which has a capacity of 40,000 for baseball. Later however, a San Francisco group fought the takeover in the law courts and forced the Canadian group to sell the club back to a San Francisco based group who will keep the club in that city. The Giants lost 1,700,000 dollars in 1974, and their 1975 losses were higher. Last year attendance at Candlestick Park was down to 522,000.

A court ruling on players' contracts has really upset the club owners. This ruling declared that a player would become a free agent if he were to play out the option year on his contract without signing a new contract with his club. The player could then offer his services to the highest bidder.

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MISCELLANY.

Baseball was introduced into Nicaragua in 1898 by Messrs. Adan Cardenas, Francisco Renazco, Constantino Lacayo, and Paulino Solorzano. This group formed the first two clubs called "El Juventud" and "Granada". The first club organised in Managua dates from 1905, and was called "Boer", during 1905 the clubs "Japon" and "America" were formed in Granada. The Nicaraguan Amateur Baseball Federation today has about 600 clubs and 12,000 players affiliated.

Although baseball has never made an impression in Germany the game was introduced there a long time ago. At the Martino-Katharineum Gymnasium (secondary grammar school) in Brunswick, two teachers, Konrad Koch, history and classical languages, and August Hermann, gymnastics, introduced rugby, cricket, and baseball between 1874 and 1876. By 1878 these sports had become so popular that they became a regular part of the school's programme on two afternoons each week.

The game appears to have been introduced into China by American missionaries, and by the Y.M.C.A. Following the revolution, which overthrew the Chinese Empire and instituted the Republic of China, baseball was featured in physical recreation programmes of some secondary schools and colleges. Just after the First World War the 1st. All-China National Sports Meet was held at Wuchang, and baseball was among the sports featured at this event.

France now has 12 clubs, 8 in the Paris region, and one each at Cannes, Strasbourg, Nice, and Marseilles. The most successful of the existing clubs is Paris University Club, which won the French Championship in 1965-1966-1970-1972-1973-1975, six titles in eleven seasons. Nice University Club won the title in 1971-1974, two titles; while Baseball Club de France were the champions in 1967. The French Federation operates national championships in the following categories:- Senior (Divisions 1 and 2), Junior (16 - 18 years), Cadets (13 - 15 years), and Minims (9 - 12 years). There are four national teams which play against other countries:- A, B, Under 23, and Junior.

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