

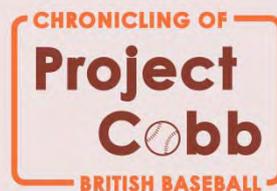
BASEBALL Mercury.

Issue 14

<http://www.gbbsa.org.uk/mercury.html>

December 1976

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BASEBALL

Mercury.

No. 14. DECEMBER 1976.

MERSEYSIDE LEAGUE 1976 by Norman Wells.

We have had another season with a mixture of success and disappointment. Bad news first, Otis Dynamos folded up after eight years of competition in our league. Dynamos had little success over those years, and had kept going against heavy odds for the last couple of seasons. However, if veteran Bill Sturgeon has his way, there is a chance that Dynamos will be revived next year.

Good news, almost immediately after the mid-season withdrawal of Otis Dynamos, a new club was formed by Stan Williams, Aintree Indians. Aintree stepped into the breach.

The weather again was very kind, but we still had the old problem of postponed games, for various reasons including belated holidays. The Merseyside American Baseball League championship was won by Liverpool Trojans who were undefeated in this competition. Other competitions were won as follows.

Lancashire Cup, NALGO Tigers: Artco Trophy, NALGO Tigers: Robertson One Day Tournament, Liverpool Trojans.

As our league champions Trojans qualified for the play-offs for the B.A.B.F. championship, which they eventually won by beating Kensington Spirit of '76 in the final 5 - 4.

Northern Major League, this was run not by the B.A.B.F., but by the people on Merseyside, who believed it important to revive the idea of inter-area baseball. We consider that it was fairly successful, most fixtures were completed, those that were not had no bearing on the final result. Final placings were, Champions - Burtonwood Mets, 16pts: 2nd. Liverpool Trojans, 12pts: 3rd. Hull Royals, 10pts: 4th. NALGO Tigers, 8pts: 5th. Nottingham Lions, 6pts: 6th. Bromsgrove Dodgers, 2pts.

The champion Burtonwood Mets were beaten only once, by NALGO Tigers. Pitcher, Kenny Williams, had a fine season, winning all his games for Burtonwood. NALGO Tigers were at one stage in a position to equal Burtonwood and force a play-off, but due to several key players either having to work, or preparing for the soccer season, NALGO were forced to concede vital points.

We hope to continue the Northern Major League next season, and again invite all clubs to participate. We would like to see Hull Aces and Clifton Cougars give serious consideration to joining.

Yet another success story, the Merseyside All-Star team "Giants", now looking resplendent in brand new kit, winning both the Kosta and the Orford Tournaments. We intended to compete in the Humberside Tournament, but unfortunately many players were unable to travel. Liverpool Trojans stepped into the breach and competed as a club entry.

The Merseyside League Individual Awards follow:- Player of the Year, Norman Wells, Jnr. - Trojans: Home Run King, Brian Bretherton - Trojans: Pitcher of the Year, Arthur Bolton - Trojans: Most Improved Player, Jimmy Kelly - Trojans: Rookie Award, Brian Bretherton - Trojans: Merit Award, Bob Hooper - Burtonwood. Bob Hooper did sterling work in both the line of umpiring, and fostering ladies softball.

Ladies Softball, we branched out into this new area of activity during 1976. The groundwork being done by Bob Hooper (Burtonwood) and John Bennett (Bootleggers). Eventually we had four ladies teams playing softball, terminating in a One Day Tournament at Burtonwood. This was excellently arranged by Bob Hooper & Co., the winners were Burtonwood Ladies.

As a result of the enthusiasm displayed by the ladies, we held a joint meeting with them, and it was agreed that we should combine, and that from our next A.G.M. the Merseyside League would be renamed "The Merseyside American Baseball and Softball Association". It was decided that the Softball would affiliate, and would abide by the Merseyside Constitution, but would run their own affairs, they hope to run a league and other competitions in 1977.

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BROMSGROVE REPORT by F.J. Causer.

The Midland baseball scene was highlighted by two events not connected with the league programme. These were the visit by the Belgian club, Spartans, at the start of the season; and the end of season international match, Great Britain versus U.S.A.F. Bases.

Spartans who were invited by Bromsgrove Dodgers played two games. The first game against the Dodgers was won by the Spartans, who proved too strong in the final innings for the home side, final score 7 - 3. The second game was England All-Stars versus Spartans. This proved to be a very good game with pitchers of both sides working well. England manager Bill Casey used all the pitchers he had available. Pete Darnell of Hull Aces started and went five innings, giving up five runs. Keith Marshall of Hull pitched three innings, and gave up two runs. With the All-Stars taking a one run lead in the eighth innings, it was important that Spartans were held scoreless in their final turn at bat. The task was given to Burtonwood pitcher Don Hems. After walking the first batter, Don settled down to strike out the next three batters. The All-Stars won 8 - 7.

The discipline and behaviour of the Spartans on and off the field was a credit to Belgian baseball. One of the memories that will stick with me will be the sight of Spartan's manager Van Nereaux, in the first base coaching box giving what seemed an unending flow of signals to his man at bat and to the third base coach.

Great Britain versus U.S.A.F. Bases proved to be a well organised event, with the weather behaving itself, for by this time our sunny summer of '76 had departed. Thinking back over this game, my mind is not drawn to the good baseball that was played, such as the home run by Peter Darnell, or to the superb running catch by the American centre fielder to thwart what was undoubtedly another home run, or to the numerous other fine plays. No, unfortunately my mind goes out to the Churchill cum Harvey Smith gesture of the departing third baseman of U.S.A.F. Taken out of the game he "lost his cool", his gesture may have left the visiting dignitaries unmoved but it did not have that effect on Ed Welch the U.S.A.F. manager. This was a game of good and bad; good organisation, bad crowd attendance. Good and bad baseball from both sides. One thing did come out of it I thought, that given the right preparations and financial help British baseball is ready to take its place on the international scene.

In between these games we had the league programme and also the Orford Trophy. The latter was won by Merseyside which beat Humberside in the final. Back to the league - Nottingham Lions were the most successful of the Midland clubs performing well in the Major League. They also finished top of the Midland League, as well as winning the Nottingham Cup for the second year running.

On the whole not a very good season for the remainder of the Midland clubs, but there was one success as far as I was concerned. This was Clifton Cougars a great new young team with a real find in pitcher Paul Ristow, a sixteen year old with a great future. This is the lad who in the Orford Trophy came into the game with two down and bases loaded, and struck-out the batter. We all know what a tough situation that was for any relief pitcher, young or old. He finished on the losing side that day, Merseyside beating the Midlanders in the semi-final.

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NOTTINGHAM NEWS by Sheila Williams.

The Nottingham Baseball and Softball Association ran a Midland League this season which included three Nottingham teams, Nottingham Lions, Clifton Cougars, and Southglade Hornets. Also competing were Corby Red Sox and Bromsgrove Dodgers. Nottingham Lions became our league champions, not losing a game in this league all season, Clifton Cougars were runners-up. Lions also won our One day Tournament for the Nottingham Cup.

The highlight of the Nottingham season was the Gt. Britain v. U.S.A.F. game, which attracted a crowd of around 500 to the Harvey Hadden Stadium. Unfortunately the U.S.A.F. team was not particularly strong and the Gt. Britain team won easily 14 - 4. Peter Darnell (Hull Aces) pitched well for Gt. Britain and also hit a home

run in the 8th. inning which gave the crowd something to shout about. This game took place on 19th. September, when the weather was still being kind to us. The Gt. Britain team looked very smart and colourful in red, white, and blue uniforms, and we extend many thanks to the Merseyside League for their generosity in allowing our national team to use the "Giants" brand new uniforms.

This game created much interest in baseball here in Nottingham, and next season will see the start of a three team junior league - Clifton Cubs, Top Valley Tigers, and Southglade Eagles, with the possibility of a fourth team being formed by the commencement of the 1977 season.

At senior level we have the three existing teams and we are pleased to say there are two further teams in the process of being formed. A team has also started up this season in Sutton Coldfield.

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The next issue of Baseball Mercury should appear in April. The subscription for three issues is 30p. Subscriptions and any items for publication should be sent to:- William Morgan, 89 Sterndale Road, London, W14 OHX.

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SOUTHERN STANDINGS by Brian Holland.

Final standings of the Southern Baseball League.

	W.	L.	Pct.	GB.
Crawley-Giants	11	3	.786	-
Spirit of '76	11	3	.786	-
U.S. Navy	9	5	.643	2
Croydon Bluejays	8	6	.571	3
T.B.M. Raiders	8	6	.571	3
Golders Green Sox	5	9	.357	6
Sutton Braves	3	11	.214	8
Wokingham Monarchs	1	13	.071	10

Leading batter: Richard Soan, Crawley, .591. Leading pitcher: Jim Fuldner, Spirit of '76., ERA. 0.44. Home run leader, N. Vanstone, Crawley, 6.

The London Twilight League folded before completing its schedule, the position of the clubs at the time of folding was as follows. 1st. Kensington Spirit of '76: 2nd. Surrey Braves: 3rd. U.S. Navy: 4th. Essex Green Sox.

The Southern Baseball League competition format was changed this year. A One day Tournament was held at T.B.M. Ground at the end of the season. In the final game Spirit of '76 beat Sutton Braves 5 - 1. This tournament was marred by a number of serious injuries.

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B.A.B.F. CHAMPIONSHIP.

This championship was arranged so that the winners of the area leagues qualified. One semi-final was played at Nottingham where Kensington Spirit of '76 beat Nottingham Lions 7 - 0, behind Ken Shugg's three hit pitching. In the other semi-final Liverpool Trojans defeated Hull Royals, 15 - 10.

The final was played at Rosslyn Park rugby ground on Sunday, September 26th. This stadium had been the venue where the London Twilight League had operated, and the final was organised by Jeff Archer and Hank Ski. While the arrangements for the final were not perfect, the organisers must be congratulated on a number of points. The final received more publicity than any baseball game that had been staged in England for many years. The attendance of around 400 was almost certainly the largest paid attendance at any baseball game in London since 1966.

Liverpool Trojans outstanding achievement prior to this season was to reach the final of the National Baseball League K.O. Cup in 1969, in which final they were beaten in extra innings by Watford Sun-Rockets.

Trojans having lost the toss batted first in the 1976 final. With the 2nd. pitch of the game Trojans got off to a fast start, as Brian Bretherton hit the ball out of the park for an opposite field homer. In the 4th. inning Trojans went further ahead 3 - 0, but in the bottom half of the frame Randy Cooper scored for Kensington to make it 3 - 1. In the 5th. Kensington combined two doubles to score another run, score 3 - 2. Kensington tied-up the game in the bottom of the 6th. when Alan Brown scored. In the 8th. it was despair for Trojans, but elation for Kensington who took a 4 - 3 lead. Trojans, now with their backs to the wall, came out fighting for the 9th. inning having had a pep talk on the bench.

Arthur Bolton singled, a thrown ball bounced off his helmet enabling him to get to 2nd. Norman Wells took two strikes, and then hit a glorious home run, clean out of the park. 5 - 4 for Trojans. Kensington threatened in the bottom of the 9th, but their rally was snuffed out, and Trojans emerged as champions.

The players of both clubs deserve all credit for having played such a thrilling game on a very heavy, muddy surface.

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EUROPEAN CUP WINNERS

1963. Barcelona Picadero, Spain.	1970. Ausonia Milano, Italy.
1964. Real Madrid Pirates, Spain.	1971. Glen Grant Nettuno, Italy.
1965. Simmenthal Nettuno, Italy.	1972. Glen Grant Nettuno, Italy.
1966. Haarlem Nicols, Netherlands.	1973. Fortitudo Amaro Montenegro Bologna, Italy.
1967. Real Madrid Pirates, Spain.	1974. Raak Nicols, Netherlands.
1968. Barcelona Picadero, Spain.	1975. Raak Nicols, Netherlands.
1969. Europhon Milano, Italy.	1976. Derbigum Rimini, Italy.

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MISCELLANY.

On the 13th. and 14th. of August, Italy played two games against Mexico at Rimini. Italy won the first game 5 - 2, and lost the second 4 - 1.

The European Cup tournament was played in Madrid on 25th. and 26th. September. Derbigum Rimini (Italy) were 1st. 2nd. was Luchtbal (Belgium), 3rd. Condepols Madrid (Spain), 4th. Paris University Club (France).

Among many clubs to visit the Netherlands during 1976 were Black Horses, a Czech club, and Chemie Praha, a Czech womens softball club. Czechoslovakia has 50 softball teams (ranking third in Europe) and six baseball teams. The Czechoslovak Softball and Baseball Federation's national coach, Miroslav Vojtisek, was in the party. Vojtisek became general secretary of the Czech Ice Hockey Federation on 1st. October. Asked whether the American origin of baseball was a barrier to furthering the game in his country, he replied that in his opinion it was not, and cited other North American games, ice hockey, basketball, and volleyball which had all achieved great popularity in Czechoslovakia. The great scarcity of equipment was the real barrier to fostering the game was his conclusion.

In connection with the shortage of equipment in Eastern Europe, a letter written in German was received earlier this year from Poland, by the B.A.B.F. This letter was asking for baseball equipment.

The Swedish championship was won by Bagarmossen. The Swedish Division 1 had 7 teams which played a league competition to decide which 4 clubs were to reach the play-offs. In group 1, Bagarmossen took three straight games from Skarpnack; while in group 2 Leksand lost to Ljusdal who took 3 out of the five games played. In the final Bagarmossen beat Ljusdal 3 games to 2, with scores of 2 - 6, 7 - 1, 4 - 11, 9 - 8, and 5 - 4.

With the introduction of softball into Sweden, the S.B.F. has decided to change its title to Swedish Baseball and Softball Federation.

In 1977 the S.B.S.F. is introducing a baseball tournament for a trophy named "The Midnight Sun Cup", the tournament will be staged on the Midsummer Holiday, and in 1977 will be played at Ljusdal where a new baseball field, the finest in Sweden, will be ready in time for this tournament. Plans call for Sweden's top three teams plus a team from another country to compete.

As a result of the Canadian government's attitude towards Taiwan prior to the Olympic Games, the International Softball Federation decided to withdraw its 1978 World Championships from Calgary which was to have been the host city. The I.S.F. has also resolved that unless South Africa alters its attitude on apartheid in softball, then that country will be expelled from the I.S.F.

While opening a new school at Camaguey, Fidel Castro the Cuban leader denounced the International Olympic Committee for not having included baseball in the Olympic programme of competition. Castro claimed that the yachting and equestrian events which are included can hardly be considered sports of "the people", whereas baseball in those countries where it is played, and above all in Cuba is decidedly a sport for the populace. When greeting the Cuban Olympic contingent returning from Montreal, Castro had claimed that if baseball had been included in the Olympics then Cuba would have added an additional gold medal to its total.