

BASEBALL Mercury.

Issue 17

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December 1977

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No. 17. DECEMBER 1977.

MERSEYSIDE REVIEW by Norman Wells.

All in all, not a bad season, with many new faces appearing in the baseball world.

The Merseyside League was won by the Liverpool Trojans who were undefeated in this league.

Our Minor League was won by Lucas Royals, a good effort this, in what turned out to be a very closely fought competition.

The Lancashire Cup Final was fought out between Liverpool Trojans and Skelmersdale Tigers, with Trojans taking the cup from Tigers, who were the holders.

Our other two tournaments, the "Artco", and the "Robertson" cups have had to be held over until next April, and will be played on Trojans' new shale diamond, which will be ready for next season. This will be sited at Fazakerley.

The Northern Major League ran into some difficulty, as so many Sundays had to be sacrificed to the Mattesons' "Yankees" League. However, the final standings were as follows.

	<u>Played.</u>	<u>Won.</u>	<u>Lost.</u>	<u>Points.</u>	<u>Run difference.</u>
Liverpool Trojans	8	7*	1	14	+49
Skelmersdale Tigers	6	3*	3	6	+ 2
Hull Aces	5	3	2	6	- 5
Hull Royals	8	2*	6	4	-15
Garringtons' Dodgers	7	2	5	4	-32

Asterisks indicate games won because conceded by opponents.

Games not played Hull Aces v. Skelmersdale Tigers, July 24; Skelmersdale Tigers v. Hull Aces, date ? ; and Hull Aces v. Garringtons' Dodgers, September 11.

The Mattesons' "Yankees" League was not altogether a success on Merseyside. The "Giants" beat all other contestants, but were in turn beaten by them.

Financially this league proved to be very expensive for our area. The necessary "paid" advertisements, which would have, we feel, brought good attendances was almost non-existent. Added to this lack of attendance, the cost of coach travel, hiring of grounds, and umpires fees, insurance etc, all but drained our resources. The whole project could hardly be described as a "sponsored" league, and left us with a lot to reflect upon.

With the departure of Bob Hooper and Mark Nadeau for the U.S.A., our problems regarding umpires will be renewed next season.

Our Annual Awards are as follows.

Player of the Year, Peter May (Lucas Royals). Pitching Award, Art Bolton (Liverpool Trojans). Home Run King, N.G. Wells (Liverpool Trojans). Most Improved Player, Steve Williams (Aintree Indians). Rookie Award, Alan Campbell (Liverpool Trojans). Merit Award, John Bennett (Southport Bootleggers).

Minor League. Outstanding Player, John Lawler (Southport Bootleggers). Pitching, Vic Wilkes (Trojans' Red Sox). Home Run, John Lawler (Southport Bootleggers).

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The next issue of Baseball Mercury should appear in April. The subscription for three issues is 30p. Subscriptions and items for publication should be sent to :- William Morgan, 89 Sterndale Road, Hammersmith, London, W.14.

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NOTTINGHAM 1977 by S.M. Williams.

Our Junior League was completed without a hitch. Southglades Eagles Baseball Club becoming the first Junior Champions. Southglade took the Mick Harrold Trophy, and chalked up the double by winning the Lol Whelan Trophy, beating Nottingham Lions' Juniors by 15 runs to 12 in the final.

The Midland League came to a successful conclusion - all scheduled games being played on the due dates - quite an achievement in itself. Nottingham Lions were the senior league champions, keeping their unbeaten record in this League. Final placings were as follows:-

<u>Team</u>	<u>Played</u>	<u>Won</u>	<u>Lost</u>	<u>Points</u>
Nottingham Lions	8	8	0	16
Corby Red Sox	8	6	2	12
Clifton Cougars	8	4	4	8
Southglade Hornets	8	2	6	4
Pressac Panthers	8	0	8	0

The Player of the Year Trophy was won by G. Ritchie of the Corby Red Sox Baseball Club.

Midland Mets were pleased to chalk up one win in the Mattessons Yankees Baseball League, beating Liverpool Giants by 9 runs to 3.

The Inter-City Tournament will be held in Nottingham again next year and we should see at least one new addition for this competition as John Bennett is working hard in the Liverpool area promoting junior ball: there is also the possibility of a team entering from Bromsgrove.

Our numbers continue to grow and we are hopeful of adding at least one new junior and one new senior team next season.

This our situation at present:-

Five senior teams - One private works ground: four clubs use public parks belonging to the local authorities and pay the appropriate hiring fee for each game and training session.

Four junior teams - Two of the teams use the same ground as their senior counterparts: one club is attached to a local school and uses the school playing field, and the remaining club uses a local park.

During 1977 we had 97 registered senior players, and 64 juniors.

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SOUTHERN REVIVAL by Bob Garrod.

A vast improvement in 1977 augurs well for the future of Southern baseball. Consider these facts :

1. While the Southern Baseball League was reduced from the eight teams of 1976, to six; the overall standard of play levelled upwards. In particular there were several changes in the league leadership. Golders Green got away to a fast start, faltered, and were overtaken by Crawley. Crawley were over-hauled by Croydon who held the lead for some weeks. Then Golders Green came back with a late surge to win the title. Golders Green went on to win the British Club Championship.
2. Spirit of '76, joint S.B.L. Champions of 1976, having withdrawn from British competitions played a heavy schedule versus good class teams from France, Belgium, U.S. Services teams, and American High School teams. Most of these were played on an enclosed ground, Wasps R.F.C. field at Sudbury, Middlesex.
3. The S.B.L. team in the Mattessons Yankees League won their first four games against the All-Star teams of the other areas. Lost the next two, to end in a tie with Humberside All-Stars. A play-off game was arranged at Bromsgrove, which the South won, thus becoming the first champions of this "sponsored" league.
4. The Southern Youth Baseball League was formed. This was an independent league, and was largely inspired by Hank Chmielewski. Junior teams from two S.B.L. clubs entered this league which commenced operations in July. Teams in membership were Wokingham Dukes, Crawley Junior Giants, Slick Willies Royals, Enfield Chiefs, London Jets(Ashford), and Spelthorne Mogul Super-stars(Ashford).
5. In 1978, the S.B.L. expects to expand again with a club in Ashford. This projected club has a nursery of 37 youth players in two junior teams, the Jets and the Moguls.

The Southern Youth League will expand to 10 teams as Wokingham, Enfield, and Slick Willies(Wembley) will each add another team. Ashford may have a third junior team, but this squad will transfer to Isleworth if a suitable ground can be located in that area.

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CORRECTION.

In issue No. 15, of April 1977, details regarding the first World Champion-ship organised by A.I.N.B.A. were given. These were reproduced from a usually reliable source. Since that time, Carlos Garcia, Executive Vice President of A.I.N.B.A., has written expressing surprise that some of the results carried in the Mercury were incorrect. He supplied results and standings authenticated by A.I.N.B.A. Upon checking these against the source originally used it was found that the scores of six games differed, and a couple of results had been reversed. These errors had also effected the final standings given. The correct standings follow:- 1. Cuba: 2. Puerto Rico: 3. A two way tie between Nicaragua and Japan: 5. A three way tie, South Korea, Dominican Republic, and Taiwan. 8. Colombia: 9. Panama: 10. Mexico: 11. Netherlands.

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EUROPE'S TOP CLUB.

German Parma having won the European Cup by defeating Derbigum Rimini, repeated against the same club a week later to win the Italian Championship. This win, their second Italian title, was secured by defeating Derbigum twice in a three game series. Parma took the first game 8 - 2, lost the second 6 - 4, and won the decider 9 - 1. In addition to the European Cup and the Italian Championship, Parma teams won three youth titles. The Italian softball champions are Lloyd Adriatic (Rome).

In the Netherlands Tetramin Nicols won the Dutch championship for the third successive year. They also won the Netherlands Cup, beating Nikon HCAW in a 15 inning game 3 - 2. The women's softball champions are Nelissen DSS; while men's softball was won by Terrasvogels.

The Spanish title was won for the first time by Catalunya, the 1976 champion Johnson y Johnson finishing fourth.

In England Golders Green Sox won the championship beating Hull Aces 9 - 5.

Luchtbal won the Belgian title for the sixteenth time in eighteen years, their long run of successes only being broken in 1962 and 1970 in which years Bell Pioneers gained the championship.

Paris University Club gained the honours in France for the sixth time in the past eight seasons. They beat Nice University Club two games to one in the final. PUC won by scores of 8 - 7, and 4 - 0; their defeat being by 14 - 1.

Bagarmossens won the Swedish title for the second year in a row. This was the fourth time that Bagarmossens had finished as Sweden's top club.

For the third successive season Mannheim Tornados won the West German championship.

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B.A.B.F. CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL.

Hull Aces reached the final by beating Nottingham Lions, and Golders Green Sox defeated Liverpool Trojans. The final was played on Sunday, September 25 at Skelmersdale United F.C. ground.

With early morning rain threatening to spoil the event, everyone was cheered up, when eventually the sun broke through, and it shone most favourably on Green Sox.

Golders Green got away to a good start, - 5 runs in the first two frames, and although Aces pulled one back, they could not really settle because of the excellent pitching of Haruo Oda. By the half way mark Green Sox had stretched their lead to 9 - 1. Aces rallied somewhat after this point, Pete Darnell having success on the mound, but just as things looked more rosy for Aces, a bad tactical move at third base ended with Trevor Johnson being ordered out of the game by Chief Umpire Al. Foster.

Twice in the last two innings Hull were "in" with a chance, but were smartly retired on each occasion by a double play. Incidentally, Hull had more hits than Golders Green, but they were less productive. Final score, Golders Green Sox 9 - Hull Aces 5.

A brief description of Golders Green Sox semi-final victory follows, this was also played on the Skelmersdale United ground.

This, as anticipated, developed into a closely fought duel, with both pitchers having fine games. There was no score until the 4th. inning, when N.G. Wells scored for Trojans, being batted home by Bob Kett's two bagger. At this stage Art Bolton had had six strike-outs, allowing two hits. Haruo Oda had struck-out seven and conceded four hits.

In the 5th. Green Sox tied the score, Wiley scoring on Christenen's single. There was no further scoring until the 8th. when Green Sox took the lead, Oda scored on a ground rule double by Wiley.

In the 9th. with Art Bolton tiring, Green Sox put the final seal on the game. Two ground rule triples culminated in driving in five runs. Trojans failed to register in the final stanza. Final score Green Sox 7 - Trojans 1.

A fine pitching display this game. Winning pitcher Haruo Oda struck-out 12 and allowed 5 hits, while not giving a single base on balls. Bolton had 15 strike-outs, and while being nailed for 15 hits, only walked one man, and that was intentional.

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BASEBALL IN DERBY.

Baseball was played at some time during the 1890's in many centres in the United Kingdom from London as far north as Aberdeen. The only centre of which even a faint memory survives in the populace at large is Derby, simply because the name The Baseball Ground has survived, being the home ground of Derby County F.C. It had been used for baseball for six seasons before Derby County moved in as tenants of Francis Ley, the ground's owner, and one of the most dedicated baseball enthusiasts to have lived in these islands.

Francis Ley had established a foundry in Derby in the 1870's, and was also a partner in a foundry in Cleveland, Ohio. It was while visiting his American partner that he became interested in baseball. He appears to have introduced the game on an unorganised basis to his Derby employees in 1889.

At the end of 1889, A.G. Spalding launched his movement to establish baseball in the British Isles. One of his projects was the establishment of a professional league, using the players and managements of professional soccer clubs. Actually only three clubs adopted this idea, Aston Villa, Preston North End, and Stoke; and their baseball affiliates appear to have been financed by A.G. Spalding. Mr Ley jumped at the chance to join this league, and converted Ley's Recreation Ground into a baseball park. He laid out a diamond, and built a number of stands. There was seating for well over 2,000 under cover, including a reserved stand holding 400, and a luxurious catcher's pavilion seating 200 on cushioned seats.

Derby had far the strongest club in the league, and the use of an American pitcher Jack Reidenbach, caused so much ill-feeling in the league, that Ley eventually withdrew Derby, having made sure that his club had clinched the pennant. Of course this ploy was not accepted by the management of the National League of Professional Baseball Clubs of Great Britain, and Derby's results were struck out of the league's records. This enabled Aston Villa to win the pennant with Preston North End close behind, and Stoke trailing far in the rear.

There was also a Derby Amateur club playing in 1890, but apart from this club having scheduled 10 games versus Nottingham baseball club, not a great deal has been discovered about Derby Amateurs.

In 1891 the game went into a tailspin in the centres where it had been played professionally in 1890. Derby did not play any games until mid-July, when they accepted a challenge from Preston North End. Derby visited Preston on Friday/Saturday, July 10/11. The locals won both games 31 - 7 on Friday before 700 spectators; 19 - 10 on Saturday watched by 1,000. On August 1st. Stoke visited Derby, and were beaten by 20 - 2. Preston came to Derby on August 7/8, again beating Derby by scores of 12 - 9, and 7 - 6. Preston still had the team which had played in the professional league the year before, while Derby had lost half of the 1890 team.

On 14/15 August, Edinburgh University, claimed to be Champions of Scotland played at Derby. Derby won both games 12 - 6, and 15 - 3.

The Baseball Association of Great Britain and Ireland set up in 1890, which was almost certainly financed by Spalding, seems to have ceased activity in 1891, and was replaced late in the summer of 1891 by the National Baseball Association. This was the controlling body until the game appears to have vanished around 1902.

The Derby scene was much brighter in 1892. The Derby club played a number of games versus Preston North End, Stoke, and Aston Villa. Two games in particular were of great interest, at least on Merseyside. There the National Rounders Association, had by adoption of some rules from the American game, so transformed its game, that it had changed its name to the English Baseball Association earlier in 1892. A challenge was issued by either the E.B.A. or by Derby, accounts differ, and a game was played at Liverpool with a return at Derby. Obviously the E.B.A. team was handicapped by playing under American rules and Derby won both games, 27 - 6 at Liverpool, and 18 - 10 at Derby.

In 1892 the game was firmly established in the area of Derby surrounding Ley's works. Competitions were arranged for 3 Senior clubs, and 13 Junior clubs. I hope to continue this history in a later number of the Mercury.