

BASEBALL Mercury.

Issue 47

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BASEBALL Mercury.

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EAST MIDLANDS DIVISION by Ian Williams.

The East Midlands Area looks forward to a strengthening of the Division in 1988, with the addition of a team from Birmingham, based at the Fox Hollies Sports Complex. This will bring the East Midlands up to an eight-team Division.

The outstanding club in the area, Nottingham Southglade Hornets, proved in 1987 their ability to compete in national competition against English and foreign-based teams by reaching the finals of the Knock-out Cup and the British Champions play-off.

During the winter the Hornets gained three quality players from close rivals Nottingham Pirates. With such depth of squad the East Midlands Champions of the last three years look set to have their most successful season ever in 1988 and, with the promise of European competition in Belgium, it promises to be a glorious summer for Southglade Hornets.

Looking at the other teams, the Division has a number of developing clubs who show great promise and will, I hope, prove to make this a highly competitive league in a couple of years time.

The draw-back with local baseball occurs when a team establishes itself as the principal team - two things happen - firstly, the club, naturally, desires to maintain its position and will recruit the best players in an area. Secondly, the best players tend to sign for the leading club as this guarantees reaching the play-offs at the end of the season. This creates one exceptional team in an area, it does not create the close exciting competition that fosters strong and lasting development. This problem is highlighted in both Nottinghamshire and Humber -side.

It is very sad to think of the number of teams that have folded in Nottingham over the last ten years and a major factor must be that these teams could not see a way to compete with the established few.

The answer must be to make local baseball the drafting pools for the National League teams. By removing the quality players, the remaining teams would become evenly matched and the ability to compete would pass to every team. Of course, this would place the best players in the top flight of British Baseball, where they belong and, hopefully, where the public will see them.

U.K. LADIES SOFTBALL FEDERATION (FAST-PITCH)

Report on 1987 season provided by Norman Wells.

Many people, well known from Baseball circles have taken a keen interest in Softball, among whom number, Ted and Eady James (S.A.S.), Stan Williams (Blue Jays), John Bennett and Steve Rigby (Scorpions), N.G. Wells (Squaws), with courses in operation training female umpires, coaches and scorers! All this has ensured the tremendous success the Fast Pitch Federation enjoyed in 1987.

Eight teams, fully equipped with uniforms and tackle, fought out a very competitive and thrilling league schedule.

Although Skelmersdale Jets have dominated the scene for several

years, their task was much more difficult in 1987, as the four top teams struggled for supremacy right until the final stages. The Jets came through as champions with only one defeat, but had to fight all the way.

We held four One Day Tournaments, including the National Fast Pitch Cup. Three of the tournaments were open to all fast pitch teams in the U.K. Three teams from other areas entered one or another of these events, but in actual fact only one team showed up, this was Jim Curry's SLICKS ALL STARS who competed in the Lancashire Cup.

Unfortunately the weather took a decisive hand in deciding the issue of this event. The ladies fought their way to the final under atrocious conditions; in a continuous downpour and with the ground becoming a mud bath. With the Slicks and the Jets qualifying as finalists (the game everyone wanted to see), the umpires found it too difficult to proceed, with the rain unabated and the light failing.

The Executive decided that the final would be postponed, and would be completed immediately prior to the National Fast Pitch Cup, to be played the following week. However, the Slicks were unable to attend the following week, and so the Lancashire Cup has been shelved until a decider can be arranged between those two teams.

The following weekend the weather was indirect contrast for the National Fast Pitch Cup, which was won by the Jets in a great game versus Southport Athletics(S.A.S).

And so despite the tremendous challenge from all sides, the skelmers -cale Jets took all titles for 1987.

With interest growing, we hope to have at least ten teams operating in 1988.

The next issue of Baseball Mercury should appear in July. Subscription for four issues is £1. Subscriptions should be made payable to William Morgan. Items for publication are welcome.

EUROPEAN CUP - SOFTBALL.

Played in Italy in November, ten teams competed, these were Vreeourg -Bloemendaal and Terrasvogels/Van Wooning(Netherlands), Lazio Roma (Italy), Luchtbal(Belgium), Leksand(Sweden), Slicks All Stars(G.B.), Sokol Praha(Czechoslovakia), Munkene(Denmark), Espoo(Finland) and Capelles(Guernsey).

The A Pool was headed by Terrasvogels, with Lazio Roma coming second. Bloemendaal won Pool B, Luchtbal being second. Crossover semi-finals were played, and the two Dutch clubs reached the final. The final series was won by Bloemendaal. Els Koks(Terrasvogels) was chosen as the best pitcher in Europe for the tenth time. The tournament MVP was Caroline Fris (Bloemendaal).

This was the Xth. European Softball Cup, all ten tournaments have been won by Dutch clubs, this being the second win for Bloemendaal.

- Final Standings - 1. BLOEMENDAAL. 2. Terrasvogels. 3. Lazio Roma. 4. Luchtbal. 5. Leksand. 6. Slicks All Stars. 7. Sokol Praha. 8. Munkene. 9. Espoo. 10. Capelles.

TAIWAN

A major baseball tournament was staged in Taiwan from 4th. to 13th. December. Participants were Japan, Stanford University(U.S.A), Taiwan A and B, South Korea, Puerto Rico, Queensland(Australia), Netherlands, Italy, Venezuela, and Mexico.

- Results for the European teams were - Netherlands - Italy 6 - 3:
Taiwan A - Italy 9 - 5: Netherlands - Queensland 20 - 12: Italy - Mexico 13 - 4: Italy - Queensland 7 - 4: South Korea - Netherlands 15 - 2:
South Korea - Italy 7 - 1: Taiwan A - Netherlands 11 - 0 : Mexico -Netherlands 2 - 0: Puerto Rico - Netherlands 5 - 4: Japan - Netherlands 12 - 2: Stanford U. - Netherlands 10 - 0:

Final Standings - 1 JAPAN. 2 South Korea. 3 Taiwan A. 4 Puerto Rico. 5 Stanford University. 6 Netherlands. 7 Taiwan B. 8. Venezuela. 9. Mexico. 10 Italy. 11 Queensland.

JAPAN

Professional baseball in Japan drew about 18 million spectators to its parks in 1987. Attendance has doubled over the last twenty years.

The Central League pennant winners for 1987 were Yomiuri Giants the first ever Japanese pro. team. The Pacific League title was won by Seibu Lions. The Giants are the aristocrats of Japanese baseball, while the Seibu franchise has had a chequered history until a few years ago. During the past five years the Lions have won four Pacific League titles and four Japan Series.

The Japan Series 1987 was won by 4 games to 2, total attendance at the six games was 20,027. The MVP of the Series was Kimiyasu Kudo who was also the MVP in 1986, thus becoming the third player to win two straight Japan Series MVP Awards.

Pacific League MVP was pitcher Osamu Higashio (Seibu Lions), in December he was reported to his club as having taken part in gambling at mahjong parties. Gambling is forbidden in Japan except for wagers on horse races, cycle racing, and speedboat races. The Lions were compelled to discipline Higashio by imposing a heavy fine and suspending him for six months.

Central League MVP was Kazuhiro Yamakura, catcher for the Yomiuri Giants, his season figures were BA .273 (highest ever for a Yomiuri catcher), 22 HR and 66 RBI.

On June 13th. 1987 a new world record for consecutive games played was set by Sachio Kinugasa (Hiroshima Toyo Carp), the iron man third baseman passed the mark of 2,150 games set by Lou Gehrig of the New York Yankees. Gehrig's mark had stood since 1939. Kinugasa played consecutive game number 2,151 on that day. At the end of the season he had raised the record to 2,215 games. Kinugasa was awarded the People's Medal by the Japanese government to celebrate the feat.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

The 1987 National League season was very mixed in so far as Nottingham Knights were concerned. In posting a .500 record the Knights won and lost with every team in the league, apparently a very inconsistent performance. However, when you consider that they never lost by more than four runs all year and gained some runaway wins, perhaps this team proved stronger than most were expecting.

Of course, there is little point in analysing a season of a mere ten games, but the National League is a growing league and I am sure we all look forward to a truly extensive season for this league in the near future.

A hurdle for the Knights in 1988 is the use of Wilford Sports Complex - a newly established venue, purpose built for baseball. There will be problems in establishing this ground and things are being put right for 1988. The League's non-support of this site is very short-sighted, Wilford exists specifically for baseball, it has a capacity for growth and for the development of spectator facilities, but most importantly, in a League designed for the best of British Baseball, Wilford has the space to set out a full sized baseball arena, something that can never be provided by a football ground or athletics stadium.

Ian Williams.

Welsn Baseball Union.

The W.B.U. nas a new president, Reg St. Clare to follow the late Ivor Beynon, Reg played first base for the old Temple Street Y.M.C.A. team and won six welsn caps.

The 1980 international will be played in Newport, and added interest will arise as England rather surprisingly beat Wales at Liverpool in 1987.

Competition winners 1987.

Premier Div.	Llanrumney Y.C.	County Div.	St. Peters
Division 1.	Bridgend Street	Division 2.	Grange Albion 'B'
Division 3.	Rumney RFC 'B'	Division 4.	Hendre
Division 5,	Llandaff North 'B'	Division 6.	Grange Catholics 'C'
Inter-Town	Cardiff	Inter-County	Gwent.
Watney Cup	machan RFC	B. Browne Cup	New Park Liberals
B. Evans Cup	Grange Albion 'B'	Silver Bowl	Llandaff North
Welsh Brewers Cup	Caerau	W.B.U. Cup	Llanrumney Y.C.
Ivor Beynon Memorial Cup	'B' International	Wales 'B'	

LADIES LEAGUE. winners 1987.

Premier Div.	Canton Athletic	Division 1.	Trelai
Division 2	St. Albans	Division 3	Star Sports
Div. 1 Cup	Trelai	Premier Div. Cup	Caerau
Div. 2 Cup	Penarth Seaside	Div. 3 Cup	Star Sports
M. Evans Cup	Penarth Seaside	Inter-Town Cup	Cardiff
S. Cornish Cup	St. Albans	E. Seager Cup	Caerau
Handicap Cup	Caerau		

MISCELLANY

The number eight spot in the Seoul Olympic Baseball Tournament was won by Canada. The Italy v. Canada game of the intercontinental Cup played in Cuoa during October was designated by the I.B.A. as the play-off game for this purpose. I have read that Cuba has withdrawn from the Olympics of 1988, so presumably the I.B.A. has had to nominate a country to bring the number back up to eight.

The 1980 Claxton Shield Tournament ended chaotically, this competition decides the Australian Inter-State Championship. The Manager of the Victoria team, John Galloway, refused to let his team play the second game of the final three game series versus Queensland. Victoria wanted the game to start at noon, after having agreed that it could start at 5 p.m. when permission to start at noon was refused, Victoria flew home. The Australian Baseball Federation awarded the Shield to Queensland.

1987 Italian Championship was won by Rimini who beat the defending champions Grosseto by four games to one in the best of seven final.

Belgian Baseball Champions 1987 - Royal Antwerp Masnua Eagles. The women's softball title was won by Lucntoal Bernina.

Netherlands. Baseball title in 1987 was won by Detach Pirates of Amsterdam. The club also gained another success when its reserve team Boekaniers won promotion to the First division of the national competition.

The Netherlands Men's Softball Championship was won for the fifth time by Kokolishi (The Hague), who beat Bloemendaal 10 - 3 in the final. Previous winners of this title include Terrasvogels (first ever champions in 1972), HCK, VIPS, ADC, Wassenaar, Bloemendaal, Phoenix and Hilversum

The 1987 Asian Championships were played in Tokyo, winners were Taiwan. Other participants were Japan, South Korea, Australia, Guam, People's Republic of China and India.