

BASEBALL Mercury.

Issue 48

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BASEBALL Mercury.

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NATIONAL SOFTBALL FEDERATION - North West Region.

Norman Wells

We had expected a ten team league this term, but in the end we settled for the same eight teams from last season.

Every team's main objective is to beat the Skelmersdale Jets, champions for so many years. All have failed to date, and Jets still reign supreme; leading the league undefeated, winning the first trophy of the season, the " Gordon Rimmer Shield ", also giving a good account of themselves in a pre-season tournament in Belgium.

Not daunted by other styles of softball, they entered a women's Slow Pitch event in Glasgow and won that too, beating an American team en route.

Park Hotel Squaws, runners up last year, and the only North West team to ever master the Jets, were expected to be Jets' main challenge. This has not materialised, and in fact, other teams such as Scorpions, Southport A's and Litherland Blue Jays, could be the real threat to the Jets this term.

With some very rapid development and the unification of all the separate governing bodies under one banner, " The National Softball Federation", the various styles of softball appear to be poised for really gigantic steps forward in the very near future.

These different types predominate in differing areas. Mixed Slow - mainly in the South East, Men's Fast - confined mainly to the Channel Islands, women's Slow - very strong in Scotland, women's Fast - the North West is strongest; Men's slow - appears to have teams and leagues scattered from the South West to the Midlands.

Many schools now include softball in their sports programmes, and the universities are being approached.

EAST MIDLANDS.

Sheila Williams.

The East Midlands Baseball League 1988 is taking shape as expected, Nottingham Southglade Hornets head the table, unbeaten, with little likelihood of there being any change to that situation. So, the interesting question is "Who will come second - Imperials, Astros, Pirates or Leicester Green Sox?". These four teams have had some close encounters and we wait to see who will be runners-up in 1988. Also fighting for positions are Birmingham Bears, Boston Red Sox and Mansfield Royals, making a very interesting eight-team league.

Our Junior League has three teams with Pirates and Braves (Imperials Juniors) vying for the honours. The other junior team, Kestrels are struggling for players at the present time but it is hoped they will manage to continue as the importance of junior baseball is borne out by the fact that the entire Hornets squad is now made up of players who came through the junior ranks and they form a force to be reckoned with at all levels. Proof that coaching through the juniors provides an excellent grounding for players in our sport.

Nottingham Knights have made a dreadful start in the Scottish Amicable National League, having lost three games in a row.

C.E.B.A. 1987.

	No. of Players	Champion Club.
Italy	14,025	Trevi Rimini
The Netherlands	12,810	Detach Pirates, Amsterdam
France	6,225	Paris Universite Club
Spain	4,389	Vilaecana
West Germany	2,050	Mannheim Tornados
Belgium	1,659	Royal Antwerp Nashua Eagles
Gt. Britain	1,180	Cobham Yankees
Sweden	702	Leksand
Tunisia	483	A.S.M. Bizerte
Yugoslavia	469	Gumclje Ljubljana
Malta	439	-
Czechoslovakia	430	T.J. Kovo.
Switzerland	375	Lions Zurich
Poland	347	Silesia Rybnik
Finland	200	Puumat
San Marino	164	-
Austria	104	Vienna Homerunners
Denmark	99	-

The next issue of Baseball Mercury should appear in November. The subscription for four issues is £1, and should be made payable to William Morgan. Items for publication are welcomed.

BRITISH BASEBALL FEDERATION - South.

This, the largest division of the B.B.F., has once again produced an excellent handbook, sponsored by the well known sporting goods store, Slick willies of Kensington.

Due to expansion in the number of teams it has been necessary to create an extra Third Division, Central. There are fourteen new senior teams; while the Youth League has four new teams. Leaders of the divisions in 1987 were - 1st. Enfield Spartans: 2nd. Waltham Abbey Arrows: 3rd. North. Hemel Red Sox: 3rd. South. ANC Reading Royals: Youth League. Red Hats Colts.

B.B.F. - North west RegionNorman Wells

We started the new year with a complete change of administration, and with a reconstructed constitution. We cut our Executive to four. Mr. Maude and Mr. Wells being elected, and Messrs. Foster and Dulson being re-elected.

Mr. Dulson, as Area Organiser, put in a great deal of effort to help produce two new teams from the Manchester area. Manchester Lions and Stretford A's. Together with a late applicant from Southport, the "Postal Pirates", and with Menwith Hill showing every sign of returning, these all compensated for the loss of Litherland Tornados who disbanded during the winter. Several of the former Tornados joined Skelmersdale Giants.

The Trojans moved back to Liverpool, and Tigers found themselves an enclosed stadium at Skelmersdale F.C. ground, White Moss Park. Tigers will share this venue with the Lancashire Red Sox of the Scottish Amicable National League.

Right up to our final Committee meeting, all seemed perfect. But it was not to be. First, Menwith withdrew, quickly followed by Postal Pirates, who failed to arrive at their first game.

Almost at the same time we received a late, late application from Preston, where Mr. Frank Counce had successfully moulded together a team which wished to join the North west League. They would be known as Preston Bobcats. A hurried assessment to decide whether they might be yet another non-starter, followed by an equally hurried acceptance

and alteration to our schedules, and we were off with an eight team league.

All three rookie teams have made every effort to meet our set standards of presentation, and despite the margin of playing efficiency between themselves and the established teams, they still stick to their game, and come back fighting after each heavy defeat.

At present Trojans lead the league by a slim margin, with the Braves, Tigers and Giants only half a game behind.

Tigers and Trojans have reached the third round of the National K.O. Cup, both play away, Tigers versus Blackadders at Newcastle and Trojans off to Edinburgh to play Cobras. With both these teams still alive in the Lancashire Cup, and the National League teams in direct conflict, we expect a very heavy schedule.

Problems seem unavoidable, as the National League Merseyside Mariners have arranged some of their fixtures on Sundays, and in direct conflict to our North West Division games. As many of the National League players also play for teams competing in area leagues, this conflict puts such players in a very difficult position.

It seems to me that with a little bit of foresight and sensible planning such conflicts could have been avoided. Otherwise, the present conflicting dates means that the National League is a direct threat to the Area leagues, and in no way promoting the game of baseball.

This season we welcomed back Eddy James onto the Umpires register, and a first class Scorer, Norman Houghton, returned to the game.

Efforts too, are being made to entice two ex-umpires from the Manchester area back into the game, these are the brothers Booth. For the first time in many years our Umpires and Scorers sections are looking very healthy.

On a less happy note, the same cannot be said for our youth section. The envisaged programme appears to have ground to a halt. The organisers of the old Pony League have failed to hang on to the ground won over the past few years. They failed to recruit players at the lower end of the age range to replace players who were passing out at the upper end. Also there is an almost total lack of persons prepared to coach and organise baseball for boys. This is a problem which our Executive will have to tackle with the utmost urgency.

To finish on a happier note, we now have Associations for Umpires and Scorers at Regional level.

ITALY

With the world Championships being staged in Italy this summer, and Olympic baseball at Barcelona in 1992, the Italian Federation expects a baseball boom in their country.

They have secured a sum of about 15 million U.S. dollars to improve their main baseball stadiums for the world Championships. To raise the image of the game before this series, all stadiums in the premier division have to have lighting installations suitable for T.V.

League games are all played under lights on the evenings of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. A team having a home game on Wednesday plays the visiting team away on Thursday and Friday evening. RAI, the state T.V. network plans to show one of the previous weeks league games in a recorded version each Monday evening.

CZECH VISIT TO U.S.S.R.

The Czech national baseball team made an exciting trip to the Soviet Union last year.

Games were played in Tbilisi (Georgia), this is the city in which Mr. Ramaz Goglidze, President of the USSR Baseball and Softball Federation, lives. The Czech party was most satisfied with the reception

they experienced.

The Czechs were surprised at the standard of play of the Soviet clubs, considering the recent introduction of the game there. The Soviet players made up for their lack of experience by their fine athletic condition. The Czech coach, Miro Vojticek, says they are well conditioned athletes, large, fast, strong and well conditioned.

The first game was won by the Soviets, but three other games were won by the Czechs: 5 - 26, 3 - 14 and 17 - 19. The Soviet players are eager to play the game better and the next few years should see rapid progress rapidly; greatly helped by first class coaches from Cuba and the U.S.A.

While in Tbilisi the Czech staged coaching clinics for clubs from Tbilisi, Kiev and Tallin (Estonia). It is planned to have Soviet teams visiting Czechoslovakia.

The above information drawn from C.E.B.A. 1987 Review.

EUROPEAN CUP 1988- A POOL.

Staged at Parma (Italy) - 21 to 26 June. Participants - Parma Angels, European Cupholders, Ronson Rimini (Italian champions), Paris Universite Club, Leksand (Sw.), Viladecans, (Barcelona), Detach Pirates (Amsterdam). Results. Day 1. Viladecans - PUC 9- 7 : Ronson Rimini - Leksand

12 - 4: world Vision Parma - Detach Pirates 3 - 0.

Day 2. PUC - Leksand 1 - 8: Parma - Viladecans 11 - 4:
Ronson Rimini - Detach Pirates 5 - 0:

Day 3. Viladecans - Rimini 5 - 4: Leksand - Pirates 2 - 10:
PUC - Parma 0 - 25:

Day 4. Pirates - Viladecans 12 - 5; Rimini - PUC 11 - 1:
Parma - Leksand - won by Parma.

Day 5. Viladecans - Leksand 6 - 2: Pirates - PUC 17 - 0:
Parma - Rimini 4 - 3.

Classification 1 Parma; 2. Rimini; 3. Pirates; 4. Viladecans;

5. Leksand; 6. PUC. I am puzzled as to why Rimini were placed second in this preliminary series, as Rimini, Pirates and Viladecans had all won 3 and lost 2, for a .600.

The final was played between Parma and Rimini and was won by Parma 6 - 4. Thus 1988 European Club Champions WORLD VISION PARMA ANGELS; the club had previously won the title in 1977, '78, '80, '81, '83, '84, '86, '87.

MISCELLANY.

In the Italian Series "A", the Northern Division is led by Parma with 27 wins and 3 losses. The Southern Division is led by Bologna with 24 wins and 6 defeats.

In the Premier Division of the Dutch Championship after the first 11 playing dates, leaders were Detach Pirates with a 9 and 3 record, followed by Opel Nicols at 8 and 3.

WELSH BASEBALL UNION.

The 1988 international versus England which should have been played at the Civil Service Sports ground, Newport, has had to be moved to Roath Park, Cardiff, as the Newport ground was greatly damaged by vandals.

Looking through a publication named "Around the Bases", I select a few items. Ladies' baseball is strong in numbers of players, but is hurting from a lack of persons willing to run clubs; result many players turn their backs on the game, but still about 30 teams are active.

Schools baseball, badly hit from 1983 to 1985 by teachers' industrial action, has come back with at least 70 teams in action.