

THE CODE OF SPORTSMANSHIP

I WILL:

KEEP THE RULES

KEEP FAITH WITH MY TEAMMATES

KEEP MY TEMPER

KEEP MYSELF FIT

KEEP A STOUT HEART IN DEFEAT

KEEP MY PRIDE UNDER IN VICTORY

KEEP A SOUND SOUL, A CLEAN MIND AND A HEALTHY BODY.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL

- 1. To inculcate in our American Youth a better understanding of the American way of life and promote 100% Americanism.**
- 2. To install in our Nation's Youth a sincere desire to develop within themselves a feeling of Citizenship, Sportsmanship, Loyalty and Team Spirit.**
- 3. To aid in the improvement and development of the physical fitness of our country's youth.**
- 4. To build for the Nation's future through our youth.**



AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL YOUR GUIDE TO FIELDING A TEAM AND PLAYING LEGION BASEBALL

MANY POSTS HAVE HAD A LOT OF QUESTIONS ABOUT GETTING INVOLVED IN AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL. I WILL TRY TO ANSWER MANY OF YOUR QUESTIONS AND DEVELOP A PARTIAL GUIDELINE OF HOW YOUR POST CAN GET STARTED IN THIS GREAT PROGRAM.

THE INFORMATION I AM ABOUT TO GIVE YOU DOES NOT OVERRIDE THE RULES AND IS NOT INTENDED TO DETERMINE WHAT YOU CAN OR CANNOT DO WITHIN THIS PROGRAM.

MANY OF THE POSTS HAVE THE IDEA OR HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT THIS PROGRAM IS JUST TOO EXPENSIVE. NOT MANY POSTS HAVE THE FUNDS AVAILABLE TO FUND ALL THE PROGRAMS THAT FALL UNDER THE FOUR PILLARS. THIS GUIDE MAY HELP GIVE YOU SOME IDEAS NOT ONLY ON STARTING A BASEBALL PROGRAM BUT HELPING TO FUND OTHER PROGRAMS.

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS A SIMPLE OUTLINE OF WHAT OTHER POSTS ARE DOING OR HAVE DONE IN ORDER TO HAVE AN AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL TEAM.

QUESTIONS THAT ARE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED ARE :

- 1. HOW DO WE GET STARTED ?**
- 2. WHAT DOES IT COST ?**

3. DO YOU HAVE TO KNOW A LOT ABOUT BASEBALL ?

4. HOW DO WE (A SMALL POST) RAISE FUNDS FOR THE PROGRAM ?

5. WHAT IF WE START AND FOLD IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SEASON ?

6. HOW DO WE FIND A COACH ? DOES HE HAVE TO BE A MEMBER OF THE POST ?

7. WHERE DO WE GET THE PLAYERS ?

8. WHAT HAPPENS IF A PLAYER GETS INJURED ?

I WILL TRY TO ANSWER ALL THESE QUESTIONS. I WILL ALSO SEND YOU A RULEBOOK AND QUESTIONS THAT I HAVEN'T ANSWERED WILL BE ANSWERED IN THE NATIONAL RULEBOOK AND I WILL HAVE CONTACT NUMBERS AND WEBSITES TO GET ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL.

FIRST OF ALL, YOU MUST READ THE AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL RULES AND REGULATIONS. I WILL TRY TO SUPPLY YOU WITH ANY MATERIAL YOU NEED OR REQUEST.

THERE ARE TWO RULE BOOKS. A NATIONAL RULE BOOK AND A DEPARTMENT OF TENNESSEE RULE BOOK. THESE RULE BOOKS WILL GIVE YOU AN OUTLINE OF THE RULES AND HOW TO RECRUIT PLAYERS FROM VARIOUS HIGH SCHOOL RECRUITING AREAS.

FIRST LET ME EXPLAIN THE PLAYER RECRUITING PLAN "B" PLAN B BASE SCHOOL RECRUITING ALLOWS BOTH SENIOR AND JUNIOR LEGION BASEBALL TEAMS TO SELECT PLAYERS WHO ATTEND NEARBY HIGH SCHOOLS. HIGH SCHOOLS ARE COMBINED TO FORM A RECRUITING AREA. A PLAYER, WHOSE PARENT'S

DOMICILE IS NEAREST A BASE SCHOOL, IS ELIGIBLE TO TRY OUT AND PLAY FOR THE TEAM IF THE PLAYER MEETS ALL OTHER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND THE COMBINED ENROLLMENT OF THE RECRUITING AREA (COMBINATION OF SCHOOLS) DOES NOT EXCEED 5,000 STUDENTS IN THE 10TH, 11TH AND 12TH GRADE. THIS RULE IS EXPLAINED IN DETAIL ON PAGE 10, RULE 4 IN THE NATIONAL RULE BOOK.

THE PROGRAM HAS TWO AGE DIVISIONS. THE SENIOR DIVISION FOR 2012 WAS OPEN TO PLAYERS BORN ON OR AFTER JANUARY 1, 1993. THE JUNIORS DATE WAS JANUARY 1 1995. THE DIVISIONS ARE A 19 AND UNDER AND 17 AND UNDER.

ALL TEAMS THAT REGISTER TO PLAY AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL MUST PURCHASE ACCIDENT AND LIABILITY INSURANCE FROM S.A. VAN DYK COST OF THE ACCIDENT INSURANCE IS \$160 FOR THE SENIORS AND \$140 FOR THE JUNIORS FOR SEASONAL COVERAGE. LIABILITY INSURANCE IS \$145 FOR SENIORS AND \$100 FOR JUNIORS. COMPLETE INFORMATION ON THE INSURANCE IS ON THE INSIDE COVER OF THE NATIONAL RULE BOOK. THE TEAM OR POST PAYS THIS EXPENSE BUT THEY WILL BE REIMBURSED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF TENNESSEE IF THE TEAMS COMPLETES ITS LEGION BASEBALL RESPONSIBILITY.

WHAT IS THE ESTIMATED COST TO FIELD A TEAM /

1. INSURANCE \$240 - \$305
2. NATIONAL REGISTRATION \$50
3. JERSEY (2) 20 @\$25 - \$1000
4. PANTS \$700
5. SOCKS AND BELTS \$200
6. 5 DOZEN GAME BALLS \$50 - \$60 DOZEN
7. 3 DOZEN PRACTICE BALLS \$32 DOZEN
8. UMPIRES \$40- \$60 A GAME EACH UMPIRE
9. CATCHERS EQUIPMENT \$350
10. HATS \$200

11 HELMETS \$30 APIECE

12. AMERICAN LEGION PATCHES \$1.50 EACH

IF YOUR TEAM WANTS TO PLAY IN TOURNAMENTS THE ENTRY FEE RUNS FROM \$200 - \$400 A TEAM PLUS A DOZEN BALLS . IF THE TEAM PLAYS WEEKEND TOURNAMENTS THEY WILL HAVE TO TRAVEL AND MAYBE MAKE SOME OVERNIGHT STAYS UNLESS THEY CAN PLAY LOCAL TOURNAMENTS
PLAYERS USUALLY HAVE THEIR OWN BATS

FUNDRAISING +

THERE WAS A TIME IN TENNESSEE WHEN EVERY POST COULD SPONSOR A BASEBALL TEAM THROUGH THERE OWN FUNDING. THAT WAS BACK WHEN WE HAD BINGO OR RAFFLES TO RAISE DISCRETIONARY FUNDS. DURING THAT PERIOD WE COULD DO MANY PROGRAMS WITHOUT HELP OF OUTSIDE SPONSORS. THOSE DAYS ARE LONG GONE. WE CAN STILL HAVE MANY PROGRAMS BUT WE HAVE TO WORK A LITTLE AND GET HELP FROM THE COMMUNITY. IN THE CASE OF BASEBALL WE MUST HAVE A COMBINED EFFORT. THE DEPARTMENT, THE POST, PLAYERS, PARENTS, COACHES AND THE COMMUNITY.

I KNOW EVERY BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY HAS REQUESTS ON A REGULAR BASIS FOR DONATIONS. THEY CANNOT SPONSOR TEAMS LIKE THEY COULD YEARS AGO ESPECIALLY WITH THE SLOW ECONOMY, BUT MANY WILL HELP. I HAVE BEEN DOING THIS FOR 40 YEARS AND I THINK I CAN GIVE YOU A FEW HELPFUL HINTS.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THIS PROGRAM.

1. SPONSORS- YOU CAN GET A LOCAL SPONSOR, OR PARTIAL SPONSOR, SUCH AS MCDONALDS , WALMART, A CIVIC ORGANIZATION, AN INDIVIDUAL OR A CORPORATION TO SPONSOR. IF YOU GET AN OUTSIDE SPONSOR GO TO THE AMERICAN LEGION

BASEBALL WEBSITE AND GO TO RESOURCES AND GET GUIDELINES FOR OUTSIDE SPONSORSHIP AND USE OF LOGO'S. ANY BUSINESS IS A PROSPECTIVE SPONSOR. DISCUSS WITH THEM THE COST OF FIELDING A TEAM . THEY MAY WANT TO SPONSOR AN INDIVIDUAL PLAYER OR JUST MAKE DONATION. MAKE THEM AWARE OF ALL THE OPTIONS. IF YOU OBTAIN A SPONSOR MAKE SURE YOU HAVE AN OPEN LINE OF COMMUNICATION. GIVE THEM A SCHEDULE, CALL AND GIVE UPDATES FROM TIME TO TIME, SEND E-MAIL AND LET THEM KNOW OF GAME RESULTS AND SPECIAL EVENTS THE TEAM MAY BE INVOLVED IN. COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY.

SUGGESTIONS FOR RAISING FUNDS

PLAYERS FEES- MANY TEAMS CHARGE EACH PLAYER A PLAYER FEE TO HELP OFFSET THE COST OF FIELDING A TEAM. THIS COULD DEPEND ON MANY THINGS. HOW MUCH WILL WE TRAVEL AND THE NUMBER OF TOURNAMENTS WE PLAY IN. TEAMS I HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH CHARGE FROM \$50 -\$1000 A PLAYER.

DO FUNDRAISERS DINNERS, BREAKFASTS, CAR WASHES, AUCTIONS OF DONATED ITEMS, FLEA MARKETS OR BAKE SALES. THERE ARE MANY FUNDRAISERS ONLINE.

AT THE BALLPARK CHARGE AN ADMISSION FEE TO HELP OFFSET THE COST OF UMPIRES. MOST TEAMS CHARGE \$3-\$5. IF YOU DON'T WANT TO CHARGE THE FAMILIES THAT HAVE ALREADY MADE A DONATION JUST GIVE THEM A SEASON PASS. MAKE SURE YOU CHECK WITH THE OWNER OF THE PARK OR FIELD AND MAKE SURE IT IS PERMISSIBLE TO CHARGE ADMISSION.

THE CONCESSION STAND IS AN EXCELLENT REVENUE SOURCE. HAVE A GOOD VARIETY AND SELECTION OF FOOD , DRINKS AND SNACKS TO SELL AT A REASONABLE PRICE. IF YOU GIVE A GOOD PRODUCT AT THE PARK YOUR FANS WILL EAT THERE INSTEAD

EATING BEFORE THEY COME. IF YOU DON'T HAVE THE USE OF A CONCESSION STAND JUST SET UP A TABLE AND A GRILL.

SELL SIGNS AND ADS. DO AN ANNUAL PROGRAM AND GET THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED.

HOLD YOUR OWN INVITATIONAL TOURNAMENT. START SMALL AND EXPAND EACH YEAR. THIS WILL TAKE SOMEONE THAT IS BASEBALL SAVVY AND IS FAMILIAR WITH AREA TEAMS OR CAN GO ON THE INTERNET AND FIND TEAMS.

SPONSORS

IF YOU HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP IN THE COMMUNITY THEY WILL HELP YOU HAVE A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM.

WHY ARE TEAMS SUCCESSFUL ?

FIRST YOU MUST HAVE A DEDICATED LEGIONNAIRE TO SERVE AS YOUR POST BASEBALL CHAIRMAN. A GOOD BASEBALL MAN WOULD BE AN ASSET, BUT NOT A NECESSITY. THE CHAIRMAN MUST BE HONEST, DEDICATED AND A GOOD ORGANIZER. THIS PROBABLY COULD BE ANYONE IN YOUR POST. THIS IS A HARD POSITION BUT VERY REWARDING. A GOOD CHAIRMAN WILL KEEP THE MEMBERSHIP INFORMED AND WILL ALSO SERVE AS THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PERSON FOR THE BASEBALL PROGRAM. YOU MUST HAVE SOMEONE THAT HAS COMPLETE OVERSIGHT OF THE PROGRAM INCLUDING THE FINANCES.

OBTAINING A COACH FOR YOUR TEAM: A HIGH SCHOOL COACH WOULD BE DESIRABLE, HE CAN RECRUIT THE PLAYERS. HE KNOWS THE PLAYERS AND THEIR CAPABILITIES AND WHICH PARENTS WILL HELP AND SUPPORT THE TEAM. HE IS USUALLY MORE DEDICATED AND CAN COACH HIS PLAYERS THROUGH THE SUMMER. IF THE HIGH SCHOOL COACH IS NOT AVAILABLE OR IF YOU TEAM

WANTS TO RECRUIT FROM MORE THAN ONE SCHOOL THEN YOU MAY HAVE TO FIND ANOTHER COACH. THERE ARE MANY KNOWLEDGEABLE COACHES IN EVERY COMMUNITY THAT HAVE COACHED FOR MANY YEARS. MANY TIMES A FATHER HAS A SON OR SONS THAT HE HAS COACHED FOR YEARS THAT WILL STEP IN AND CONTINUE TO COACH LEGION BASEBALL. THEY DO NOT HAVE TO BE AN AMERICAN LEGION MEMBER TO COACH THE TEAM, BUT THE TEAM MUST HAVE THE OVERSIGHT OF THE POST. ONCE YOU SELECT A COACH YOU MUST INFORM HIM THAT THIS IS NOT JUST BASEBALL BUT AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL. WE EXPECT HIM TO HOLD THE PROGRAM TO SAME HIGH STANDARDS THAT WERE ESTABLISHED IN 1926. THIS IS A TIME HONORED TRADITION AND WE WILL EXCEPT NOTHING LESS. ALSO EDUCATE HIM ABOUT THE AMERICAN LEGION , THE FOR PILLARS AND WHAT A VETERAN IS AND THEIR PLACE IN HISTORY. IF YOU START A TEAM AND IT DOESN'T WORK AS YOU EXPECTED DON'T GET FRUSTRATED IT TAKES TIME TO START A PROGRAM. IT IS HARD TO HAVE IMMEDIATE SUCCESS. IT MAY TAKE SEVERAL YEARS UNTIL YOU CAN ESTABLISH A GOOD RECRUITING BASE AND BE

SUCCESSFUL. *BE PATIENT*

IN ORDER FOR YOUR POST TO TO BECOME INVOLVED IN AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL THERE ARE SEVERAL SIMPLE REQUIREMENTS

1. A BASEBALL CHAIRMAN
2. A COACH
3. FUNDING
4. A LONG TERM PLAN FOR SUCCESS
5. HAVE GOOD COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE LOCAL MEDIA

EVERYTHING ELSE WILL AUTOMATICALLY FALL IN PLACE . AFTER YOU GET THE MOST IMPORTANT STEPS OF YOUR PROGRAM IN PLACE YOU ARE ON THE WAY. YOU AS MEMBERS , NEED TO ASSIST YOUR COACH IN FINDING TOURNAMENTS IN WHICH YOUR TEAM CAN PARTICIPATE. YOU CAN ASSIST IN FINDING AVAILABLE BALL FIELDS AND OTHER FACILITIES NEEDED BY THE TEAM.

YOU MUST REMEMBER THAT THE COACH IS THE COACH. HE MUST

ABIDE BY THE AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL RULES. AS LONG AS THE COACH COMPLIES BY THE RULES BACK HIM ALL THE WAY AND HELP HIM IN ANY WAY YOU CAN. LET HIM TAKE CARE OF THE PLAYERS, THE GAMES AND THE TEAM. **HE IS THE COACH .**

EVERY AMERICAN LEGION TEAM THAT PLAYS HELPS TO RAISE FUNDS TO PLAY. THEY PLAY AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL BECAUSE THE PROGRAM IS THE OLDEST AND MOST RESPECTED PROGRAM FOR THIS AGE PLAYERS. AT ONE TIME 65% OF ALL MAJOR LEAGUE PLAYERS AND 75% OF ALL COLLEGE PLAYERS PLAYED AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL. IF YOUR POST , PLAYERS PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY WORK TOGETHER YOU CAN HAVE A SUCCESSFUL TEAM AND SHARE THE COST.

THE SEASON USUALLY RUNS FROM THE LAST WEEK IN MAY UNTIL THE LAST WEEK IN JULY UNLESS THE TEAM WINS THE STATE AND THE 19 AND UNDER WINNER WILL PLAY INTO THE FIRST PART OF AUGUST. TEAMS CAN REGISTER AND PAY THEIR INSURANCE ON LINE AFTER THE 1ST OF JANUARY **UNTIL THE 15TH OF MAY.**

CALL ON YOUR BASEBALL CHAIRMAN AT ANYTIME. HE WILL HAPPY TO ASSIST YOU. DAVID ALEXANDER 615 448-8289 OR E-MAIL @ coachdga@aol.com THE DEPARTMENT BASEBALL COORDINATOR, ROBBIE WATSON CAN HELP YOU AND ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS CALL 615-391-5088 OR E-MAIL @ Tnleg1@bellsouth.net .

SO YES, YOU CAN HAVE AN AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL TEAM. I KNOW THERE ARE MANY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS . MOST OF THE ANSWERS ARE IN THE RULE BOOK OR JUST GO TO AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL AND GET THE RULES AND ALL THE ANSWERS ARE AT YOUR FINGERTIPS. FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE AMERICAN LEGION JUST GO TO WWW.LEGION.ORG AND FIND ANYTHING THAT THE AMERICAN LEGION DOES AND OUR PROGRAMS

THE ABOVE OUTLINE IS A SIMPLE WAY TO START AN AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL TEAM. BASEBALL IS AMERICA'S PASTIME. THROUGH AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL YOU WILL TEACH TODAY'S YOUTH TO BECOME TOMORROW'S LEADERS OF THIS GREAT COUNTRY.

YOU CAN HAVE A LEGION TEAM ! GET INVOLVED IN THIS GREAT PROGRAM AND GET A LEGION TEAM STARTED AT YOUR POST. THIS PROGRAM WILL NOT ONLY HELP THE YOUTH BUT IT CAN HELP YOUR IMAGE IN THE COMMUNITY.

IF YOU FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTIONS YOU CAN HAVE A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM AND HAVE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON THE YOUTH IN YOUR COMMUNITY. YOU CAN HELP TO CHANGE THE PERCEPTION AND IMAGE OF THE AMERICAN LEGION AND ALSO INCREASE MEMBERSHIP.

JUST REMEMBER THIS IS NOT AN OVERNIGHT PROJECT. IT WILL TAKE HARD WORK AND DEDICATION FROM MANY PEOPLE.

IF I CAN BE OF ANY FURTHER ASSISTANCE LET ME KNOW. IF I DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER I WILL GET THE ANSWER

DAVE ALEXANDER
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT BASEBALL CHAIRMAN



THE AMERICAN LEGION

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Your Voice

LEGION.ORG

“Congrats to the Outlaws. This was

History of American Legion Baseball

American Legion Baseball is a national institution, having thrived through a world war, several national tragedies, and times of great prosperity as well as great despair.

The league still stands behind the traditional values upon which it was founded in 1925. American Legion Baseball has taught hundreds of thousands of young Americans the importance of sportsmanship, good health and active citizenship. The program is also a promoter of equality, making teammates out of young athletes regardless of their income levels or social standings. American Legion Baseball has been, and continues to be, a stepping stone to manhood for millions of young men who have gone on to serve their country or community, raise families or play the sport at the highest level.

A modest beginning

Community service has always been a core value of The American Legion. In 1925, this commitment was furthered to include a baseball program.

The league was first proposed at an American Legion state convention in Milbank, S.D., when Sioux Falls attorney and Department Commander Frank G. McCormick invited his close friend, Maj. John L. Griffith, to address the convention. Instead of a traditional speech, Griffith, who was also the collegiate commissioner of the Western Conference (now the Big Ten), spoke about the role athletics can play in the development of youth.

a nice ALWS, and watching the streamed video of the games was great." -

EWsports

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"The American Legion could well consider the advisability of assisting in the training of young Americans through our athletic games," Griffith said. Athletic competition teaches courage and respect for others, fostering their growth into active citizens, he explained.

The South Dakota convention agreed and passed a resolution urging the Legion to create an organized summer baseball league that started each June. National Commander James A. Drain backed the resolution, which passed that fall at the Legion's national convention in Omaha, Neb. It read:

"RESOLVED: That The American Legion ... inaugurate and conduct baseball leagues and tournaments for local championships, and that local champions determined by the competitions be given opportunity to compete in departmental, sectional and regional tournaments, and that a junior world series championship baseball series be conducted at each national convention ... "

The first program in the world to provide a national baseball tournament for teenagers, American Legion Baseball was born.

In 1926, posts in 15 states began to make Griffith's vision a reality. They organized and sponsored teams, drafted local schedules and conducted championship tourneys. Postseason tournaments at the state, sectional and regional levels culminated with a national championship. Only a few changes have been made to the format over the years. The tournament still has a similar setup: 64 teams play at eight regional sites, with eight teams going on to the World Series. The winning team receives a trip to Major League Baseball's World Series, a tradition dating back to 1926.

A little help from their friends

The first American Legion Baseball World Series was held in Philadelphia in 1926. Yonkers, N.Y, Post 321 beat a team from Pocatello, Idaho, capping off what appeared to be a successful first season.

The league, however, hit a few growing pains in its second year. In 1927, the Legion's national convention convened in Paris. With the organization's financial coffers stretched thin from the trip's expenses, the Legion couldn't fund a World Series. No champion was named and the future of American Legion Baseball looked bleak, as the inaugural season wound up costing more than originally planned.

But the Legion's Americanism director, Dan Sowers, worked to keep the league afloat. The tournament format needed \$50,000, and Sowers was determined to raise it. Early in 1928, he went to an executive meeting for professional baseball, hoping to reach a sympathetic ear. He found one in Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis, who pledged a \$50,000 annual donation from Major League Baseball. Legion Baseball resumed in 1928, and by 1929 participants were coming from every state and the District of Columbia.

Still, the program wasn't in the clear. Like other institutions, Legion Baseball fell on tough times during the Great Depression. In 1933, MLB's funds were sapped dry, and Legion Baseball was left without a sponsor. The annual \$50,000 donation was pulled, and it looked likely the national tournament would be abandoned indefinitely.

Again, Sowers set out to find a generous sponsor. Initially, he hounded big corporations, but he was concerned they'd treat to his fledgling baseball league as a public-relations arm. He turned to Frank Knox, a newspaper publisher and former department commander. Knox, who originally cautioned Sowers against using corporate sponsorship, contributed \$5,000 and gave Sowers letters of introduction to several other newspaper publishers. An additional \$28,500 was raised in donations from the Chicago Daily News, the Omaha World-Tribune, the San Francisco Chronicle, the Indianapolis News, the New Orleans Item-Tribune and the Atlanta Journal. Sowers received the final \$6,500 from his own boss, Col. Henry L. Doherty, president of Cities Services.

Legion Baseball soldiered on, even though some posts were still forced to run teams on shoestring budgets. MLB resumed its

COMMUNITY SERVICE

- American Legion Auxiliary
- Family Support Network
- Financial Assistance
- Financial Center
- Heroes to Hometowns
- Legion Riders
- Legiontown USA
- Legislative Action Center
- Media
- National Emergency Fund
- Sons of The American Legion
- Volunteering

funding in 1935, starting with a \$20,000 donation and gradually working back up to the original amount. Professional baseball now contributes \$40,000 yearly, or about 3 percent of the total budget.

American Legion Baseball in the modern era

American Legion Baseball enjoys a reputation as one of the most successful and tradition-rich amateur athletic leagues. Today, the program registers over 5,400 teams in all 50 states, Canada and Puerto Rico. Almost 100,000 youths, ages 15 to 19, participate annually. Since its inception, the league has had 10 million players, and nearly 75 percent of current college players are program graduates.

Legion Baseball also has a reputation for serving the young people who play for it. In college scholarships, the league annually awards a total of \$51,000 - \$1,000 for a player selected from each department based upon leadership, character, scholarship and financial need. Recently, the Legion passed a resolution allowing corporate sponsorship, in the hope of creating more financial aid for college. Gatorade already funds \$10,000 in scholarships for the Legion Baseball Player of the Year and the eight regional players of the year.

In 1949, the national player of the year was first named through the arrangement of Robert Quinn, director of The National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Fittingly, winners receive a trip to the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y., making them the only amateur athletes invited to the exhibit. The award is now named after George W. Rulon, who served as program coordinator from 1961 to 1987.

Three other recognition awards were established in the 1970s: the Dr. Irvin L. "Click" Cowger RBI Award, the Rawlings Big Stick Award and the Bob Feller pitching awards. All recognize strong performances in the regional and national tournaments.

Over the years, plenty of other major corporations have joined Gatorade in sponsoring Legion Baseball. In the 1940s, Ford Motor Co. dealers supplied uniforms for local teams. Easton Sports

recently signed on as a sponsor, and Baseball Factory has agreed to scout Legion players with big-league aspirations.

A prestigious pedigree

Major League Baseball and American Legion Baseball don't have a formal partnership, but the two owe each other a tremendous debt of gratitude. MLB has sponsored Legion Baseball almost since its inception, and Legion Baseball has returned the favor, churning out major league prospects since the alumni base has been old enough to be scouted. The number of former Legion players who have gone on to the pros is far too large to chart. More than half of current major-leaguers played Legion Baseball. So did almost every working MLB manager, along with several former commissioners. In all, more than 50 program graduates are in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Naturally, Legion Baseball's alumni base includes some of the sport's most recognizable names. Yogi Berra played for Fred W. Stockholm Post 245 in St. Louis and was once quoted as saying it was the most fun he ever had. Ted Williams suited up for a post in San Diego. Frank Robinson led his Oakland, Calif., team to the only back-to-back national championships in program history. Current Yankees slugger Mark Teixeira played in the league's 1997 World Series. Babe Ruth was too old to join when Legion Baseball started, but he spent the final years of his life promoting the program as its director of operations. Other prominent players include Ryne Sandberg, Roy Campanella, Dusty Baker, Albert Pujols, Greg Maddux and Chipper Jones.

Of all the notable former players, Legion Baseball had perhaps the greatest impact on former Cleveland Indians great Bob Feller. A self-described shy farm kid from rural Iowa, Feller cut his teeth playing for Variety Post 313. He says the experience taught him as much about life as it did baseball. Legion Baseball gave him an outlet to be discovered as a pitcher, but also gave him a chance to form lifelong friendships, learn to deal with letdown in athletic competition, and become better prepared for the mental and emotional strain of fighting in a war.

The first Legion alumnus elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame, Feller wrote a column for The American Legion Magazine in June 1963, expressing his love and appreciation for the league after it honored him with a plaque in 1962.

"Truthfully, I feel I should have given a plaque to The American Legion rather than receiving one from it," Feller wrote. He penned the column free of charge and admitted that he never endorsed anything he didn't believe in during his career, even for large sums of money.

Yet baseball isn't the only area where former players have excelled. Legion Baseball graduates have gone on to prominence in other career fields. Former Vice President Dick Cheney played for Post 2 in Casper, Wyo. Famed journalist and author Tom Brokaw played Legion ball in South Dakota, and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack was on a team in Pennsylvania.

In short, Legion Baseball graduates are proud contributors throughout our society and often are the most successful people in their respective career fields.

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