

BASEBALL

Mercury.

No. 1. OCTOBER 1972.

DUTCH YOUTH VISIT.

On Saturday, September 23rd., a team drawn from the Roel de Mon programme arrived in Hull in order to play two games. They met Yorkshire on the Saturday, and England on the Sunday. The Roel de Mon grouping is the Dutch equivalent of Senior Babe Ruth League, and caters for youths in the age range 16 to 18 years.

"Jong Oranje" as the team is named beat Yorkshire 5 - 0, and England 5 - 1. The pitcher who gained the win over England, Win Remmorswaal, although only 18 years of age has already played for Netherlands B, and three others were tipped for promotion to Netherlands B next season. The three pointed out were pitcher Bertil Haage (Textown Tigers), 1st. base Paul Koch (O.V.V.O.), and 3rd. base/pitcher Ronald Janse (Neptunus).

The Roel de Mon programme has between 300 and 400 players, and the "Jong Oranje" practice on Tuesdays at either Amsterdam or Haarlem. This season they had 17 practice sessions, and 3 games prior to the Hull trip. They played Rayon Ost Senior All-Stars, a major league club O.V.V.O., and under the lights at Haarlem, the Netherlands B team.

In the Roel de Mon scheme the strongest team in each region of the Netherlands compete in a national league competition. So what with Roel de Mon, senior games and representative games most of the boys have played 40 to 50 games this season.

The other half of the battery for the game against England was Eric van Duinen (Celeritas), a boy of Indonesian parentage. The losing battery was pitcher Stan Windross (Stretford) and catcher Bill Casey (Bromsgrove).

As for the promotion and presentation of the England v. Jong Oranje game, or rather the apparent complete lack of promotion, the less said the better, but in the writer's opinion it amounted to an insult to the visitors. The trip must have cost the K.N.B.en S.B. from £300 to £400 and frankly it did nothing for English baseball.

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WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS.

The World Amateur Championships are taking place this year at Managua, Nicaragua, in November. Mr. Bruno Beneck, President of the European Amateur Baseball Confederation, has been very active in pushing the interests of European Baseball, with the following results.

At the assemblies of F.I.B.A. (one extra-ordinary and one ordinary) which are taking place at Managua from November 10th. to 15th., 1972, it is desired that a representative from each European nation affiliated to F.I.B.A., should be present. To help in this matter the Nicaraguan Amateur Baseball Federation has offered each European member country, one return air-ticket Luxembourg - Managua - Luxembourg free of charge. Each delegate will receive board and lodgings provided by F.I.B.A., starting one day before the date of Congress and lasting up to one day after the closing date. Delegates wishing to stay in Nicaragua after the above mentioned period, for the purpose of watching the World Championships, will receive board and lodging from the Championships Organising Committee. Mr. R. Panaye, Secretary of the European Confederation, will receive similar treatment.

It is also desired that European countries, other than Holland and Italy, should take some part in the actual playing of the Championships. Holland and Italy have been competing for a couple of seasons. The proposal is that European countries affiliated to F.I.B.A., can combine forces and enter a team under the designation the Rest of Europe. Such a team will have board and lodgings provided, plus 20 free return air tickets, Luxembourg - Managua - Luxembourg.

European countries in membership are Holland, Italy, Belgium, France, Germany, San Marino, and Spain. F.I.B.A., hopes that Great Britain, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, and South Africa will take steps to establish their membership, and they too will then receive tickets for their delegates.

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JAPAN.

At the time of writing the Yomiuri Giants appeared headed for another Central League pennant. Yomiuri's great slugger Sadaharu Oh had a 7 game home run steak ended on 21st. September, when the Hanshin Tigers beat Yomiuri 4 - 0.

On the 5th. November a visit commences from the All-Korean high schools team, a six game series is scheduled. This is in return for an earlier tour by an All-Japan high schools team in Korea.

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INSTANT BASEBALL

Rhodesia's only current All-Star player, Sonny Cloete, organised a type of baseball batter's competition a few years ago in Zambia. The competition proved most entertaining for players and onlookers. Sonny has arranged a similar festival in Rhodesia.

Only 3 batters take part in any one innings. A team of fielders with a neutral pitcher, that is from a club not taking part in the batting match, opposes 3 batters. The teams of batters take turns trying to score runs. A run scores 10 points, a home run scores an extra bonus of 5 points. Any runners left on base at the time that the third out is made, penalises the team concerned by 5 points each.

Batters go to the plate in rotation, as there are only three batters, the rules obviously have to be modified. They go like this, assuming the lead off man A gets on base, and has not scored after No. 3 batter, C, has had his turn at bat. A has to forfeit whatever advantage he has obtained by getting on base and return to the plate to bat in his turn, and so the batters rotate until the third out is made. The whole object of the game is to encourage hard hitting and daring base-running, and is most spectacular to watch. It is quite a physical strain on the batting teams, so reserve batters are allowed. (Editor:- Presumably they are substituted in the usual way). Each game has a time limit of 30 minutes, with a five minute interval between games.

In the first tournament organised in Rhodesia 16 teams were to take part, having a total membership of 73 batters.

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TOP CROWDS.

The largest attendance at a baseball game in Europe is reputed to have been at an exhibition game played in the Olympic Stadium, during the Berlin Olympics of 1936, when 80,000 persons were present.

In the U.K. the largest crowd to my knowledge was that which attended a charity game at Stamford Bridge ground, on July 4th. 1918. The teams concerned were U.S. Army and U.S. Navy, and the game was graced by the presence of King George V and Queen Mary, Queen Alexandra, Princess Victoria, Mr. and Mrs. Asquith, Mr. and Mrs. Winston S. Churchill, Prince Albert and the Duke of Connaught. A crowd of between 40,000 and 50,000 saw U.S. Navy behind the pitching of the great Herb Pennock defeat U.S. Army 2 - 1. Pennock later a mainstay of the Yankees was a Red Sox player at the time. Losing pitcher was Lafitte (Detroit Tigers), Chief Umpire, Arlie Latham (N.Y. Giants).

A number of charity games during World War II drew crowds of between 20,000 and 30,000 at Wembley Stadium and the White City.

At Stamford Bridge, on Thursday, February 26th. 1914, 25,000 people saw a game between the New York Giants and the Chicago White Sox. King George V was present, the U.S. Ambassador sat with him to explain points about the game. Chicago won an 11 innings game 5 - 4. Conditions were far from ideal for baseball but the crowd was impressed by the standard of the outfielding under such inclement conditions.

This game was well covered by the U.S. press, and the general verdict was that baseball was a better means of encouraging friendship between the U.K. and the U.S.A. than was diplomacy.

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CUBAN VICTORY.

The Haarlem Baseball Tournament took place from June 30th. to July 9th. Participants were Cuba, Grand Rapids Sullivans, Fairbanks Goldpanners, Italy, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, and the Netherlands.

The stronger teams were placed in Pool A, which resulted as follows. Cuba Pl. 5. 10 pts: Grand Rapids Pl. 5. 6 pts: Fairbanks Pl. 5. 2 pts: Nicaragua Pl. 5. 2 pts.

Pool B. Netherlands Antilles Pl. 6. 10 pts. Netherlands Pl. 6. 6 pts: Italy Pl. 6. 2 pts.

Individual Prizes. Pool A. Best Pitcher - Huelga (Cuba). Best Hitter - Montejo (Cuba). . 474. MVP - Isasi (Cuba). HR King - Selva (Nicaragua) 4.

Pool B. Best Pitcher - Briezen (Neth. Antilles). Best Hitter - Josefa (Neth. Antilles) .529. MVP - Felming (Neth. Antilles). HR King - Pieters (Neth. Antilles) 5. The Netherlands MVP; Nol Beenders won a trip to the World Series as his reward. the Best Coach - Bob Sullivan. Most Unlucky Player - Herradora (Nicaragua).

The Cuban team was actually their third string selection. Phillies' scout, Amaro, who was at Haarlem, had earlier seen Cuba's two stronger selections winning tournaments in Puerto Rico and Panama, also without losing a game. Amaro's opinion was that Cuba's stronger selections were equal in strength to AA professional teams.

Grand Rapids Sullivans, runners-up to Cuba, had won previous Haarlem Tournaments in 1962, '64, '68, and '69.

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N.B.A. CHALLENGE CUP.

Some years ago when I was spending quite a lot of time researching into British baseball history, I came across a copy of a souvenir programme of the Final Tie of the National Baseball Association Challenge Cup. The final was being played at White City Stadium, London, on Saturday, 12th. September 1936. The finalists were White City and Catford Saints.

The programme included an article by John Moores, Esq., President and Founder of the N.B.A. For non-British readers, I must explain that Mr. Moores was at the time, head of Littlewoods football pools, and a mail order magnate. He has since stepped down from Littlewoods, as he became Chairman of Everton F.C. one of England's leading soccer clubs, and the regulations of the F.A. obliged him to sever active connection with a gambling organisation.

"This programme commemorates the third Final for the N.B.A. Challenge Cup and when I received a wire from the Editor asking me if I could give him a brief history of the Cup and how it came to be in England, it brought back memories of the tremendous strides the N.B.A. have made during the past three years.

Imagine the progress! Only two years ago a Liverpool Amateur Club's name was inscribed on the cup as winners, out of 18 entries, while today the final is being fought out by two of the leading London Clubs, out of an entry of 53. However, to go back to your Editor's request, the history of the Cup.

The National Cup was actually presented to us by the National Baseball League of America, the leading body in that country, by Mr. Heidler, the President, who has since retired, although he is still doing good work for Baseball in America.

When I reached New York in 1933, I had no idea of returning to England to promote American Baseball in this country. A chance meeting with Mr. Heidler in a New York Hotel led to a discussion on Baseball. He had come to New York to see one of the big games which was being played on the following day and he asked me if I was interested in Baseball. I replied that I had never seen the game of American Baseball played and was persuaded by him to attend the game on the next day. This I did and there is no doubt that the game gripped me. I had seen the so-called game of Baseball, as played in England at that time, and considered that there was no comparison between the two games.

We returned to the hotel after the game and Mr. Heidler asked me what I thought about it, and when I spoke of my enthusiasm, said he could not understand why it was not played in England. I jokingly remarked that on my return I would put Baseball on the Map in this country. He said, so many Englishmen had told him this that he did not consider there was a man with brains and initiative enough in England even to attempt to put it over. This, I admit, rather led to an argument and in the end I assured him that I was determined, on my return, to promote the game here. I saw two or three more games in America which made me even more keen and after returning to England immediately set moving the Organisation which is now the National Baseball Association. Within three months we had formed two Leagues of Amateur Clubs in Liverpool comprised of 18 clubs and I proudly wrote to Mr. Heidler informing him of the start that had been made.

He was so amazed at the progress that he cabled offering us a trophy on behalf of the National League. As I had already arranged to give Trophies to the Leagues I asked him if he would put up a Challenge Cup that was to be played for in a "knock-out" competition between all clubs who were members of the N.B.A. and the trophy that you will see presented today is the one that was forwarded across the Pond to us from the National League. This Cup is now the leading Trophy in the Association, being open to all Amateur and Professional Clubs throughout England and it is as great an honour for a Baseball Club to win, as for our Association friends to win the well known Association Football Cup."

BASEBALL MERCURY.

Baseball Mercury will be published quarterly, appearing in October, January, April, and July. Persons wishing to ensure that they receive copies are requested to send 25p., to cover a years issues. In the case of club secretaries wishing to order additional supplies for their members, please add 15p., for each additional copy required. Copies ordered by club secretaries will be posted in bulk. Remittances should be sent to William T. Morgan, 89 Sterndale Road, Hammersmith, London, W14 OHX.

Baseball Mercury will be sent free to foreign baseball associations, and to a number of sports writers.

I hope to include in this news-sheet items similar to those which I published in Baseball Courier. Would British readers please lift their pens and let me have news and opinions about their leagues and clubs.

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ENGLISH AMATEUR BASEBALL FEDERATION.

The English Amateur Baseball Federation is proposed as a body which will reunite the clubs in various parts of England. The major split having been between the British Baseball League based in the South-East of England, and the National Baseball League (U.K.) based in the Midlands and North of England.

The initial meeting is expected to be held in London in the Month of October, later meetings have been tentatively planned to take place in Hull, and Liverpool. A constitution has been prepared by Peter Ash, secretary of the British Baseball League.

For the benefit of non-British readers I must explain that the history of baseball in England since World War II, is one of repeated fusions and fissions. We have had at least four national bodies in that time, each body starting to fall apart within a few years of its formation. The last split took place at the end of 1969, when the South-Eastern clubs then in membership of the National Baseball League withdrew. Later they organised as the British Baseball League.

If this succession of events seems strange, the whole history of baseball in Britain is stranger still. Probably in no other country in the world, has there been such a long series of controlling bodies. I list them as a matter of interest, with the dates during which I have fairly strong proof that they functioned. 1890-91, The Baseball Association of Great Britain and Ireland. 1892 - 1901, The National Baseball Association. 1906 - 1909, The British Baseball Association. 1934 - 1949, The National Baseball Association. 1949 - 1954? The Baseball Association Ltd. 1959 - 1963, The British Baseball Federation. 1964 - 1966 The British Baseball Association. 1966 to date the National Baseball League (U.K.).

The last point may need explanation. How is a body which only includes some of the clubs in British baseball to be considered a controlling body? In one sense it has been, in another it has not been. The sense in which it has been, is that the affiliation to the European Baseball Federation which it has held for some years, has been maintained even though clubs broke away, this meant that for purposes of international competition, i.e. European Championships, and European Cup, the National League has been able to carry on as it did before the split. However, for purposes of recognition by the Sports Council, the National League has not been considered a national controlling body. From the commonsense point of view also, a body with less than half the clubs in England in membership, cannot really be considered the national controlling body.

In the long succession of names of national baseball bodies given above, the reader will see gaps in the years given. This does not mean that baseball has only been played during the periods for which definite dates are given. Only that I do not know what the controlling set-up was for the blank spaces. I believe that baseball has been played continuously in England since 1890, with the possible exception of the period 1902 - 1905. A name which I have not included, because I have no firm evidence apart from press mentions of the name is the Anglo-American Baseball Association. This may have operated from before World War I until the mid-nineteen twenties.