

BASEBALL

Mercury.

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SOUTHERN ENGLAND.

The most exciting venture to be launched in Southern England since World War II is the London Twilight Baseball League. This league has been formed by Jeff Archer, President of the Southern Baseball League. Jeff Archer and Hank Ski, an American resident in London, have hired Rosslyn Park Rugby Union Football Ground for a period of about ten weeks, and intend to stage games each Wednesday and Friday evening. Games will commence at 7.00 p.m., the last inning starting not later than 9.45 p.m. Rosslyn Park Ground has lights and this will be the first time that a league programme will be played on a lighted ground in England, although an occasional game has been played under lights, for instance National League All-Stars v. London Mormon Elders in 1966.

Four teams will take part in this league competition, the teams being composed of players from the existing eight Southern League Clubs, with possibly appearances by guest players from the world of entertainment and stars of other sports. The winning team for each game will receive 15% of the entire gross paid gate, the loser 10%. Admission will be £1, with half price charged for children, pensioners, and members of Rosslyn Park Rugby club.

Jeff Archer has had experience in operating Summer Leagues in the U.S. and the promotional material put out by the London Twilight League bears witness to this experience. Spectators will be able to watch batting practice from the restaurant at the park, while eating a pre-game dinner. Vendors will serve cokes, hot dogs, and hamburgers to patrons in their grandstand seats. Ticket outlets have been organised through any retailer who wishes to assist. There are schemes for purchasing books of tickets at discount prices, sponsorship of deprived children, and sponsorship of groups from hospitals and other institutions.

At the park itself voluntary labour from the ballplayers has been used to build a back-stop and dug-outs, clean-up the car park, and to erect a rigging system for hauling-up a jute net on a series of poles which run the length of one side of the ground. This net is designed to stop foul balls sailing into a main road which runs alongside.

Leaving this exciting prospect, a survey of the existing Southern Baseball League shows a much more attractive competition due to the formation of four new clubs during the past winter. The new clubs are well-uniformed, and the umpiring situation has improved, adding greatly to the enjoyment of games for players and spectators alike.

The Kosta Trophy Tournament played at Thames Board Mills Ground on May 30th. was won by Merseyside All-Stars who beat the South of England in the final 4 - 2.

The S.B.L. standings as at July 11th. A.M. were Crawley, Croydon, and Spirit of '76 in a three way tie for first place, each club having won 6 and lost 2 for .750. In fourth spot were T.B.M. Raiders at .556 with a 5 and 4 record. Fifth place saw a three way tie with Golders Green, Sutton, and the U.S. Navy all with a 3 and 5 log at .375. In last spot was Wokingham with .111 as a result of 1 win as against 8 defeats.

Of 33 contests, nine were won by a margin of two runs or less. Sutton would probably have a healthier record but for forfeits on occasion through weakened playing strength. Wokingham, newcomers to the league, have had some crushing defeats the low point being their defeat by U.S. Navy 50 - 0, this was followed by three Sundays when Wokingham had more than 30 runs a game scored by opposing teams.

NOTTINGHAM by S.M. Williams.

In a recent issue of the "Baseball Mercury" you included an item about Nottingham which was written by Simon Burrows. Some of his statements were not correct. The Junior Tournament which we run here in Nottingham does not involve the British Amateur Baseball Federation in any way. The correct name of this tournament is The Nottingham Lions Junior Challenge Trophy. Nottingham Lions donated the shield for which the tournament is played, and Lions also provide a shield each year for the "Player of the Day". The tournament is run by the Nottingham Baseball and Softball Association (Junior Section).

Having set the record straight, now for details of this year's tourney, held on June 20th, it was for players up to 16 years of age. This year there were, unfortunately, only three teams involved, two from Hull and one from Nottingham. Bromsgrove Juniors failed to turn up on the day although they had accepted our invitation to field a team. Nottingham Juniors were drawn against Hull "A", Hull "B" got a bye to the final.

Nottingham consisted mainly of players from Southglade Hornets with two players from Clifton Cougars, and they won their first game 19 - 15 in seven innings. However, they then had their backs against the wall having fielded their strongest team to win the first game, and not really having another pitcher on the squad, John Penwarden, who had pitched the first game changed positions with Tony Williams who had caught him. Both players, although not used to their new positions, rose to the occasion and did a terrific job.

The final provided a nail-biting finish: at the bottom of the seventh and final frame, Hull "B" went to bat with the score 14 - 10 in favour of Nottingham, who were obviously tiring. Hull scored two runs, to make it 14 - 12. At this point pitcher Tony Williams went for a fly ball and collided with short-stop Steve Frost. Williams injured his knee and had to leave the game. Penwarden now returned to the pitcher's mound, needing one out to end the game. Al Purser came on to catch, there was a dropped third strike and the inexperienced catcher failed to tag the batter. While the fielders tried to get the runner going to first, Green who had been at third, came home, score 14 - 13. Wold who had survived through the dropped third strike, then tried to steal second. The catcher made no mistake in throwing him out. At last, that third out. Phew, much too close for comfort. The whole Nottingham team had worked hard for their win, and Hull "B" had really given them a run for their money.

Tony Williams was chosen "Player of the Day", having hit a home run as well as pitching and catching for his team.

This is an annual tournament and if any area would like to enter a team in 1977 they should contact Alec Williams, 61 Portree Drive, Rise Park, Nottingham. Tel: Nottm. 275518. The competition has been held for the past three years, Hull having won the first two.

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HUMBERSIDE by D. Megson.

On the 10th. July, 6 schoolboys teams held a one day tournament, a very heart-warming event for me, and the result of much hard work, getting coaches into schools who made regular weekly visits to teach not only the children, but also the teachers. During the coming winter, we intend to teach the school teachers the rules of the game. At winter's end they will be set an Intermediate Umpires paper to see how they have fared.

Hull Royals officially opened their new diamond at Orchard Park on June 6th. The sport is new to the area, and one result of this move is not only considerable spectator interest, but the attraction of young male residents who are turning up for training twice weekly, thus giving us more future players.

Aces are also concentrating on new young players, now that their older players are gradually leaving the team. The young players are being given match experience as quickly as possible.

Hull Nomads are still in operation, they seem to have administration problems, but they all enjoy playing. The coming team in Hull, is a team of youngsters 15 to 18 years old, developed by Barry Marshall, former Royals player. They are a sharp, slick, disciplined team who are prepared to train hard, play hard, and listen to the one voice that matters, that of their team manager Barry Marshall. If some of the adult teams had more of this discipline better baseball would be seen.

The boys' tournament already mentioned was contested by Longhill Sloggers, Cogan Dodgers, HJB Imps, Southcoates Swallows, Ings Vikings, and Eastmount Tigers. These teams were split into two divisions, and the two divisional winners met in the final. In the final Hull Junior Imps beat Southcoates Swallows 5 - 1. Mr. W. Jewitt, secretary of the Hull Junior Baseball Association, presented the "Eagles"

Little League Cup to the winning team. The award for "Player of the Tournament" went to A. Bache (Cogan Dodgers).

On July 17th. an All-Star Tournament was staged by the senior players. Teams representing Humberside, the Midlands, and what should have been Merseyside played. Merseyside accepted an invitation but failed to send a team, so Liverpool Trojans came as a stand-in. The pattern of play was three five inning games, and if, as did happen teams finished level on points, the winner would be decided on run average. Humberside won with a 3 run average, Midlands and Trojans had a 1 run average.

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The next issue of Baseball Mercury should appear in December. The subscription for three issues is 30p. Subscriptions and any items for publication should be sent to:- William Morgan, 89 Sterndale Road, London, W14 OHX.

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9th. HAARLEM FESTIVAL.

This tournament was played in the Pim Mulier Stadium, Haarlem, from Friday, June 25th. to Sunday, July 4th. Contestants were University of Arizona, Netherlands, South Korea, Grand Rapids Sullivans, and USAFE. Cuba should have taken part but on the Sunday prior to the tournament, the Cuban authorities appear to have discovered that they had not obtained the necessary visas, and announced by mid-week that they would not be coming to Haarlem. A hurried call for help went from the organisers to Bob Sullivan, sponsor and manager of the Grand Rapids club, and within twenty-four hours his club was flying to the tournament.

Once more this festival proved a great success, with attendance setting a new high. About 75,000 spectators attended the 20 game programme. Expenses were around 295,000 guilders, and receipts 325,000. A record number of tournament passes were sold, 1350. A game between South Korea and Arizona drew the largest crowd, with receipts of 20,000 guilders not counting the share apportioned to tournament passes.

Each team played each other twice. Final standings: 1. Arizona 7 - 1, 14pts. 2nd. South Korea 6 - 2, 12pts. 3rd. Grand Rapids 3 - 5, 6pts. Netherlands and USAFE tied for 4th. place each with 2 wins and 6 losses for 4pts.

Individual awards. Best pitcher, Dave Crutcher (Arizona), who pitched 3 complete games and won all 3. Best hitter, Dong-Kyun Yoon (South Korea), .394. MVP, Sun-Hee Lee (South Korea), he pitched one or more innings in every game played by his team, for a total of 28 innings; and faced 100 batters. Homerun king, Louis Jacobs (Netherlands) with 4. Most spectacular player, Mike Ferguson (Grand Rapids). Netherlands MVP, Ben Richardson. Sports-press prize, Bob Sullivan.

South Korea had a squad of 20, 12 of whom, had played in the team that won the Asian Championship in 1975.

On the Wednesday before the festival began, Netherlands played a U.S. base team in a warm-up game, beating Ramstein 6 - 0.

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SWEDEN.

The Swedish Baseball Federation this season is celebrating the completion of 20 years of existence. The most important baseball event ever staged in Sweden was their part of the North European Cup competition, in which Sweden competed against Belgium and Netherlands "B".

A new departure is the formation of a women's softball league in Stockholm. Carol Lidfeldt, an American girl, from the Pittsburgh area, is playing a leading role as coach. Carol majored in physical education at college and plays many different sports.

Some key dates in the history of Swedish baseball.

1910. Vasteras club formed, later a club was formed in Stockholm, and another in Gothenburg.

1912. During the IV Olympiad, at Stockholm in 1912, a Swedish baseball team played their first international match, versus a team of Americans drawn from that country's competitors in the Olympics.

A long period followed during which the game probably died-out, and it appears to have been re-introduced in 1945. Towards the end of World War II, Sweden which was a neutral, decided to buy 50 P-51 Mustang aircraft, to re-equip its air force, These were flown to Sweden by American pilots, and American pilots had to instruct Swedes in handling these planes. During this contact, they also taught baseball to the Swedes.

Arising out of this interest, a club was formed in Stockholm in 1949.

1952 Solna club founded, Baseball and softball were also played in S.A.S., Esso, and Matteus Youth. Other clubs followed during the next few years.

1956. Formation of Swedish Baseball Federation.

1962. Sweden competed in the European Championship for the first time.

1963. Swedish baseball championship started. First winner, Solna B.C.

1965. First baseball field completed in Sweden.

1971. World's most northerly baseball club formed at Skelleftea.

1976. 24 senior teams in competition. League consists of a first division, and two second divisions, North, and South.

A successful mini-baseball programme for boys and girls from 9 to 15 years of age has been played this season.

The above information has been extracted from copies of Basebullen, the official magazine of the Swedish Baseball Federation. Also from that magazine one learns that a certain amount of baseball is being played in Norway, by students in the Oslo area. Also that softball is being played in Denmark at Aarhus. In Poland some baseball is being played around Katowice. Checking on a map one finds that Katowice is close to the town of Rybnik, which Polish official sources stated in the early 1960's was the headquarters of the Polish Baseball Union. The writer at one time wrote to that body, but never received a satisfactory reply to his enquiry.

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C.E.B.A. 1975.

	Players.		Umpires..	Scorers.	Clubs.	Fields..
	Senior	Junior				
Italy	6,372	21,699	403	114	373	79
Netherlands	7,907	5,264	380	14	250	250
Spain	556	2,169	63	17	165	14
Belgium	285	266	20	17	13	12
Sweden	287	114	10	15	18	8
England	250	60	5	3	28	23
France	137	152	8	-	9	8
West Germany	50	160	7	5	6	4
Czechoslovakia	126	-	12	10	5	4

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MISCELLANY.

Hosei University of Japan has been invited to make a tour of The People's Republic of China. Hosei planned to send a 22 man squad, which would be in China from 5th. to 20th. August, 1976, and would play 7 games in Shanghai, Peking and other cities. The games would be against Chinese city teams.

U.S. College All-Stars won their series versus Japan College All-Stars, this was the fourth consecutive year the U.S. had won this series.

In May, Belgium played in a tournament at Mannheim, West Germany. Results follow:- Belgium - Mannheim Tornados 3 - 7: Mannheim Tornados - Belgium 2 - 3: Ramstein Rams - Belgium 6 - 3. Mannheim Tornados was in effect a West German national team augmented by two American players.

The first baseball association formed in the British Isles was the Baseball Association of Great Britain and Ireland, formed in 1890, and financed it would seem by A.G. Spalding. This was replaced apparently late in 1891 by the National Baseball Association. The early cup competitions were won by the following clubs. 1890. Preston North End Amateurs who won two straight games versus Birmingham Amateurs. 1891. No competition. 1892. Middlesbrough 26 - St. Thomas's (Derby) 16. 1893. Thespians (London) 33 - Darlington St. Augustine's 6. 1894. Thespians 38 - Stockton 14. 1895. Derby 20 - Fuller's (London) 16. 1896. Wallsend-on-Tyne 16 - Remingtons (London) 10. 1897. Derby 30 - Middlesbrough 7. 1898. No competition. 1899. Derby 14 - Nottingham Forest 3. 1900. Nottingham Forest 17 - Derby 16.

Between 1902 and 1905 the game may have died-out. In 1906 the British Baseball Association was formed in the London area. The cup competitions of that body were won as follows. 1906. Tottenham Hotspur 16 - Nondescript 5. 1907. Clapton Orient 8 - Fulham 7. 1908. Tottenham Hotspur 6 - Leyton 5. 1909. Clapton Orient 6 - Leyton 4.

In 1890, again largely financed by A.G. Spalding, a professional league operated in England, The National League of Professional Baseball Clubs, this league was styled on the American pattern and had a very stormy passage in its one and only season. Derby, its best club, withdrew after clinching the championship. Derby's records were erased, and Birmingham Aston Villa wound-up as champions.