

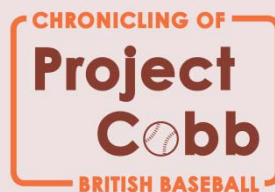
BASEBALL Mercury.

Issue 15

<http://www.gbbsa.org.uk/mercury.html>

April 1977

1976 World Championship	1
Baseball in Japan	2
Mattesons sponsorship	3
Pesäppalo players versus Swedes	3
European league	3
Pesäppalo	4
Miscellany	4



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BASEBALL

Mercury.

No. 15. APRIL 1977.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 1976.

The first world championship tournament organised by the present governing body of world amateur baseball, Asociacion Internacional de Beisbol Amateur (AINBA), was held in Colombia in December. AINBA was formed late in 1975 by a fusion between two rival bodies each of which claimed to be the international governing body, namely FIBA and FEMBA. In spite of this fusion which for all practical purposes was complete, FIBA still exists as a shadowy body, which has caused complications for AINBA in the latter body's attempt to gain recognition by the governing bodies of other sports. According to Mr. Carlos Garcia, Executive Vice President of AINBA, FIBA appears to have only two members Venezuela and Panama, and Panama is also a member of AINBA. Just why these two countries have maintained FIBA in its present attenuated form is anybody's guess.

Cuba, which fielded a weaker team than it has for many years, finished in a tie for first place with Puerto Rico, these two countries should then have played a best of three series in order to decide the championship. However, the Puerto Rico players had to get back to their jobs and were unable to stop over for the extra days, so Puerto Rico had to forfeit the title to Cuba. An unsatisfactory conclusion to a tournament of such importance.

The Netherlands, which suffered the biggest defeat of any team in the tournament, 27 - 1 at the hands of Cuba, was awarded "The Never Say Die Trophy". The Netherlands finished last and once again demonstrated the enormous gulf that exists between the top European countries, Italy and the Netherlands, and the countries of Central America, and South East Asia. The problems caused by this difference in playing standards is aggravated by the timing of world championship tournaments, which are usually held about two months after baseball has ended its season in Europe. So players have to be assembled and an attempt made to get them geared up to play in an even higher class of play than they are accustomed to, this would be an uphill task if it were tried during the European season, but after a lay-off of several weeks it seems an impossible venture. Results follow.

3rd. December. Taiwan - Puerto Rico 2 - 0.

4th. December. Mexico - Japan 6 - 10: Netherlands - Cuba 1 - 27.

5th. December. Puerto Rico - Nicaragua 5 - 3: Colombia - Netherlands 8 - 7:

South Korea - Dominican Republic 4 - 13: Cuba - Mexico 15 - 1.

6th. December. Netherlands - Mexico 4 - 9: Panama - Japan 0 - 4:

Dominican Republic - Cuba 13 - 12.

7th. December. Netherlands - Nicaragua 10 - 2: Puerto Rico - Panama 4 - 2:

Colombia - Dominican Republic 4 - 8: Mexico - Taiwan 3 - 4.

8th. December. Taiwan - Netherlands 10 - 3: Mexico - Colombia 5 - 6:

Cuba - Panama 7 - 3: Nicaragua - Japan 0 - 7: Puerto Rico - South Korea 3 - 1:

9th. December. Mexico - Panama 4 - 6: Taiwan - Dominican Republic 3 - 6:

Japan - South Korea 4 - 6:

10th. December. Panama - Taiwan 0 - 7: Colombia - South Korea 5 - 6:

Japan - Netherlands 11 - 3: Dominican Republic - Puerto Rico 13 - 16:

11th. December. Mexico - Nicaragua 1 - 10: Taiwan - Cuba 2 - 6:

Netherlands - Puerto Rico 3 - 18: Japan - Dominican Republic 14 - 3:

12th. December. South Korea - Nicaragua 3 - 6: Colombia - Taiwan 10 - 9:

Dominican Republic - Netherlands 7 - 3: Japan - Puerto Rico 3 - 4:

13th. December. South Korea - Cuba 2 - 13: Panama - Colombia 5 - 12:

14th. December. South Korea - Mexico 9 - 0: Nicaragua - Panama 17 - 6:

Japan - Taiwan 4 - 2: Puerto Rico - Colombia 7 - 0:

15th. December. Puerto Rico - Mexico 3 - 2; Nicaragua - Dominican Republic
 10 - 3; Cuba - Japan 4 - 0:
 16th. December. Dominican Republic - Mexico 6 - 7; Panama - Netherlands
 5 - 8; Colombia - Japan 4 - 9:
 17th. December. South Korea - Taiwan 4 - 0; Cuba - Nicaragua 0 - 5:
 18th. December. Panama - South Korea 3 - 2; Puerto Rico - Cuba 1 - 7:
 Colombia - Nicaragua 8 - 7:
 19th. December. Nicaragua - Taiwan 7 - 8; Netherlands - South Korea 1 - 5:
 Panama - Dominican Republic 6 - 5; Cuba - Colombia 7 - 5:

Final Standings.

	W.	L.	Pts.		W.	L.	Pts.
Cuba	8	2	16	South Korea	5	5	10
Puerto Rico	8	2	16	Colombia	5	5	10
Japan	7	3	14	Panama	3	7	6
Nicaragua	6	4	12	Mexico	2	8	4
Taiwan	5	5	10	Netherlands	1	9	2
Dominican Republic	5	5	10				

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JAPAN.

The 1976 Japan Series was won by Hankyu Braves who beat the Yomiuri Giants 4 games to 3. This was the second straight Japan Series victory for Hankyu, in 1975 they beat the Central League champions Hiroshima Carp by 4 games to 0, with 2 tie games.

The 1976 Series opened in Nishinomiya Stadium the home park of Hankyu, Hankyu took 3 straight games there. The Series then moved to Yomiuri's home park, Korakuen Stadium, Tokyo. There the Giants took three straight, raising the expectations of their fans to fever-pitch. In the sixth game Yomiuri trailed by 7 runs, but an explosive finish saw them overcome this huge deficit. Having seen this feat, Yomiuri fans felt certain that their favourites could not be stopped, but Hankyu managed to take the seventh game.

In beating Yomiuri, Hankyu achieved something which they had tried in vain to do in five previous Japan Series. The two clubs had met in the Series of '67, '68, '69, '71, and '72, and Hankyu had never been able to win more than two games against the powerful Tokyo club.

The 1976 Series was the third straight won by the Pacific League generally regarded as the underdog league. The 1974 Series having been won by Lotte Orions.

There has been published a scheme to build a domed stadium in Yokohama. Among the tenants projected for the stadium are Lotte Orions and Taiyo Whales, both of whom would play 65 games in the stadium.

Central League franchises with 1976 details, home parks, and history.
 1st. Yomiuri Giants, founded 1934. 29 pennants. Korakuen Stadium, Tokyo.
 76 wins - 45 losses - 9 ties. .628.

2nd. Hanshin Tigers, founded 1935. 6 pennants. Koshien Stadium, Osaka.
 72 wins - 45 losses - 13 ties. .615.

3rd. Hiroshima Toyo Carp, founded 1950. 1 pennant. Hiroshima Civic Stadium, Hiroshima. 61 wins - 58 losses - 11 ties. .513.

4th. Chunichi Dragons, founded 1936, 2 pennants. Nagoya Ball Park, Nagoya.
 54 wins - 66 losses - 10 ties. .450.

5th. Yakult Swallows, founded 1950. 0 pennants. Jingu Ball Park, Tokyo.
 52 wins - 68 losses - 10 ties. .433.

6th. Taiyo Whales, founded 1949. 1 pennant. Kawasaki Stadium, Kawasaki.
 45 wins - 78 losses - 7 ties. .366.

Pacific League franchises.

1st. Hankyu Braves, founded 1936. 7 pennants. Nishinomiya Stadium, Nishinomiya.
 79 wins - 45 losses - 6 ties. .637.

2nd. Nankai Hawks, founded 1938. 12 pennants. Osaka Stadium, Osaka.
 71 wins - 56 losses - 3 ties. .559.

3rd. Lotte Orions, founded 1949. 4 pennants. Sendai Ball Park, Sendai.
 63 wins - 56 losses - 11 ties. .529.

4th. Kintetsu Buffaloes, founded 1949. 0 pennants. Morinomiya Stadium, Osaka.
 57 wins - 66 losses - 7 ties. .463.

5th. Nippon Ham Fighters, founded 1945. 1 pennant. Korakuen Stadium, Tokyo.
 52 wins - 67 losses - 11 ties. .437.

6th. Crown Lighter Lions, founded 1950, 5 pennants. Heiwadai Stadium, Fukuoka. 46 wins - 76 losses - 10 ties. .377.

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B.A.B.F.

During the winter the B.A.B.F. was approached by Messrs. Aquarius Ltd., a firm of public relations consultants, on behalf of a client, Mattesons Meats. The clients wished to link-up in a joint promotional venture with baseball in order to publicise one of their products, "Yankees" Hot Dogs.

After discussions with Aquarius it was agreed that a league competition featuring an All Star team from each of the B.A.B.F. four affiliated areas would operate during 1977. Each area will play a home and an away game against each other area, giving each team six games. The games will take place on six Sundays spread over about three months. Mattesons are awarding a number of trophies, a Man of the Match Award for each game; and a set of trophies to the team winning the league. Each area will be supplied free of charge with 3,000 programmes, plus posters and banners advertising the games. Aquarius will publicise the competition through the press and radio.

While baseball is not getting a direct injection of cash, it is hoped that the exposure that the game should receive this summer will act as an inducement for other businesses to link-up in either promotional ventures or straightforward sponsorship.

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The next issue of Baseball Mercury should appear in August. The subscription for three issues is 30p. Subscriptions and any items for publication should be sent to :- William Morgan, 89 Sterndale Road, Hammersmith, London, W14 0HX.

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FINNS VISIT STOCKHOLM.

Last year, on Saturday, September 18th. an unusual baseball game was played at Skarpnacks Baseball Field in Stockholm. Unusual, because one of the teams was composed of players drawn from Divisions II and III of the pesapallo league at Turku, Finland. Pesapallo is a Finnish game created by fusing some elements drawn from the American game with other elements from traditional Finnish games.

A team representing Stockholm was selected from three clubs, Alby, Skarpnacks, and Ormkarr. The Swedes had little doubt that they would win as the visitors would have to adapt to very different rules. Nevertheless great speculation took place prior to the game as to how the Finns would perform. There is no pitcher in the Finnish game, the ball being served vertically to the batter by a fielder standing a few feet away. Also the Finnish bat, and ball are a little smaller and lighter than the American.

The Finns had problems caused by their unfamiliarity with the rules. However they played a reasonable game, and in base-running and base-stealing were much superior to the Swedes. Stockholm won 14 - 4.

Prior to the 1952 Olympic games at Helsinki, four Swedes, members of the Solna club were invited to spend two weeks at a camp in Finland where twenty-four of the best pesapallo players were training to play an exhibition of that sport at the Olympics. The Swedes introduced the Finns to baseball, and a Finnish team played baseball versus the U.S.A. losing 11 - 0. After this defeat the Finns travelled to Sweden where they beat Sweden 9 - 4.

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ARCHER'S VISION.

Jeff Archer, founder and manager of Kensington Spirit of '76, and organiser of last season's ill-fated London Twilight Baseball League, has come up with a fresh approach to promoting baseball in London. He has been in touch with the promoters of the projected European League. This league hoped to commence operations this summer with teams drawn from West Germany, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, and England. The first four countries will have European League competition this season, but England will not. However, Jeff Archer has persuaded a number of the clubs participating, plus some visiting American teams, plus top British clubs to play a series of games in London.

Most of these games will be played on Saturday afternoons. As a result of bitter experiences at the Rosslyn Park Rugby Stadium last season, Jeff decided to seek another venue, and has secured the use of the Wasps Rugby Ground at Wembley. The accommodation is about on a par with Rosslyn Park, with the exception that Wasps have no floodlighting system. Wasps' officials have discussed the various problems that Jeff had to face last season and have given assurances that no such difficulties will be made by them.

The main game each Saturday will be preceded by a curtain-raiser featuring boys' baseball teams. Jeff has about four boys' teams that he has formed and coached during the past months.

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PESAPALLO.

Pesapallo ranks among the top six sports played in Finland. Outside of Finland it is usually referred to as "Finnish baseball", possibly because the Finnish name resembles baseball; the literal translation is "nestball". There are about 6,000 clubs with some 70,000 registered players. In addition it is played as a recreational sport in Finnish schools by both boys and girls. So all told well over 100,000 Finns play the game, very impressive statistics for a nation of some four and a half million people.

The game is largely the creation of Professor Lauri Pihkala, who was a famous athlete in his youth. He was present at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics. At those Olympics an exhibition of baseball was staged by teams representing Sweden and the U.S.A. The Finns had already built-up a reputation as distance runners but were concerned to develop the sprinting abilities of their athletes. To this end they were seeking for some ball game which would help them. Lauri Pihkala was impressed by baseball, and considered that some elements of that game could be utilised to create a ball game which would stress sprinting. One element which he decided would be eliminated would be the duel between the pitcher and the batter, as he decided that in baseball batters struck-out too often, and no baserunning followed a strike-out.

He set to work experimenting with baseball rules combined with elements drawn from Finnish games and after ten years had more or less perfected his new game. The game was at first played and sustained by territorial army units in the small towns of Finland, and I understand was actively propagated by the Finnish athletic organisation. It has developed steadily, and I gather that more than 1,000,000 spectators a season have attended the games of the premier division of the Finnish League.

The field of play is rectangular, roughly 50 x 100 metres. The bases are set in a zig-zag fashion, the distances between them increasing progressively, 20m., 30m., 35m., and 45m., so that it becomes increasingly difficult to advance from one base to the next.

The batsman stands near a circular metal plate, "the striking plate". The server stands close to the batter and tosses the ball vertically into the air. The ball must rise at least 1 metre higher than the batsman's head. It must also be tossed so that if the batsman does not hit it, it will land on the striking plate. The batter need not hit the ball, as he is permitted to start running to first base as soon as the ball leaves the server's hand.. Two foul serves permits the batter and any base-runners to advance one base at no risk. A batter may receive three serves.

A batter is out if, when running between bases the fielded ball reaches a baseman before he does, or he can be tagged-out between bases. He can be out if he hits the ball over the boundary on his third hit. A ball caught on the fly does not put-out the hitter if he is able to reach a base before the fielded ball is returned to a baseman. However, if after such a play he reaches home, ~~no~~ score results; but he can bat again provided his team's inning is still in progress.

Teams change from batting to fielding when three batters have been put out, or if nine players have batted without scoring a single run. As in the American game, extra innings are played, if the game is tied at the end of nine innings; but the game ends at twelve innings even if the score is still tied. Nine players constitute a team, plus three substitutes. Free substitution is permitted as is the rule in such games as basketball.

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MISCELLANY.

On Tuesday, March 1st. the first multi-racial softball organisation in South African history was formed. It was named the South African Softball Union. Following its formation it announced that the first multi-racial championships were to be staged at the Delville Sports Ground, Germiston, on March 19-20th.

France's international record prior to World War II was a marked contrast to the situation of recent years. In 1929 at Barcelona in its first international game France beat Spain 10 - 6. Then in 1936 and 1937 followed two losses to the Netherlands at Paris and Amsterdam by scores of 9 - 5 and 14 - 4. In 1937 France played two games at Paris; losing 5 - 4 to Belgium, and beating the Netherlands by the same score. In 1938 France beat Belgium 9 - 8 at Paris and lost to Belgium at Antwerp by 8 - 4. In 1939 at Paris, Belgium was again beaten 9 - 8. It was not until 1949 that international games were resumed following the war. In that year Tunisia went to Paris and beat France 11 - 5. Rusty Furstenburg who was still playing with Croydon Bluejays last season played for France in that game. In 1951 at Paris, Tunisia beat France 21 - 13.