

BASEBALL Mercury.

EDITOR -----
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NORTH WEST ASSOCIATION by N. Wells.

This season we have a six team baseball league, the teams are as follow - Skelmersdale Tigers, Liverpool Trojans, Liverpool Monarchs, Skelmersdale Buffaloes, Burtonwood Braves, Bromsgrove(Garringtons) Dodgers.

The two Skelmersdale teams, by agreement with the League Committee, operate as one club(Skelmersdale Baseball Club). We have made it possible for a controlled exchange of certain players between the two teams, in order to produce a six team league. Although this is very irregular, the arrangement will last only until the Buffaloes gain more experience and more players. We have made provision for the situation to be reviewed at any time - the alternative would have been the demise of the Buffaloes.

We have also been contacted by a Mr. Mike Ross of Horwich, Lancs., who has indicated every intention of forming a new team, apparently with some sponsorship. I was informed that this new team would play some friendly games this season.

Mr. Meadows, the son-in-law of Mr. John Bennett, is making a valiant attempt to introduce the game at Winsford, Cheshire. He has received some encouragement from the press in that locality. He stages baseball and softball instruction twice a week.

The Skelmersdale club had some difficulty in obtaining a ground this year, and were running into serious problems until the Skelmersdale Development Corporation rented them a piece of land at Pimbo Industrial Estate. This ground leaves a lot to be desired, there are no changing facilities whatsoever, and much work is required on the playing area; however, we must be thankful for small mercies.

At the time of writing the 1982 season is into its fourth week, and already every club has been beaten at least once. The results have been very close, and some results have been reversed in return games. This all points towards some nail-biting stuff later on.

We have also had some unfortunate set-backs; due to a dispute between our umpires the two James brothers, Eddy and Dave, have resigned. This came as a savage blow, we were just beginning to solve the umpiring problem, and our set-up was quite healthy for the first time in years. Now we have been thrust back to square one - and the James brothers were two of our better umpires.

On the international scene, five Trojans and five Tigers were selected for the Great Britain squad. In the Great Britain v. U.S.A.F. Alconbury Spartans game, five of the six infielders were drawn from the North West League; and the Trojans Brian Bretherton was the winning pitcher.

The Great Britain team looked quite useful. However, due to the heavy cost of travel and five nights stay at Antwerp for the North Europe Cup Tournament, it seems unlikely at this stage whether any North West players will be able to take part, ... roll on some sponsorship!!!

Liverpool Trojans have accepted an invitation to compete in the Crawley Tournament in July. This event is being sponsored by Phillips Petroleum.

The Burtonwood ground now boasts bleachers.

On the softball scene, the girls are holding their own, and display great enthusiasm. Last year's champions, Trojanettes, have changed their name to Blue Cats. They were recently well defeated by Skelmersdale Jets, the latter team consists of a netball team which decided to take up softball as their summer game, and they are looking very good.

Softball will stage a representative game at the West Lancashire Show on July 10th. The North West Baseball League has also been offered the facilities of a stall at the show.

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AMBITIOUS BELGIAN PROPOSAL.

At the gathering of the C.E.B.A. Technical Commission on 3rd. April in Paris, Belgium created a sensation by proposing that it should organise the Tournament for the Intercontinental Baseball Cup in 1983. Italy had proposed itself as the host for this tournament at the 1981 Annual Congress of AINBA at Edmonton, Canada; but some doubt has arisen regarding Italy being able to stage the tournament.

The Belgian Federation will celebrate its thirty-fifth anniversary in 1983; and Antwerp Baseball Club will celebrate its sixtieth anniversary. The Belgian Federation stated that the Belgian Olympic Committee was prepared to meet part of the cost of staging this tournament; and the Federation itself hoped to obtain some considerable sponsorship.

Countries expected to take part in the event are The Netherlands, Italy, South Korea, Japan, the U.S.A., Canada, Australia, and Cuba. The games would be played on the ground of the Antwerp baseball club, which would need to have seating for 4,000 to 5,000 spectators installed. It is not proposed to install lights at the field. Two games would be played each day.

Gaston Panaye, President of the Belgian Baseball and Softball Federation, plans to have the Belgian case all prepared for presentation at the AINBA Congress at Seoul, South Korea, on 2nd. and 3rd. September.

Belgium itself is not planning to take part in the tournament, but hopes that its national team will play against an international All-Star team immediately prior to the official opening of the Intercontinental Tournament.

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NETHERLANDS, SEVENTY YEARS OF BASEBALL.

This season the Netherlands Baseball and Softball Federation celebrates 70 years of baseball activity. J. Grase, a physical education teacher, introduced the game to The Netherlands in 1912. A couple of clubs were formed that first season, but progress was slow, and the standard of play very low.

The first real contact that Dutch clubs had with more experienced players, was during World War I. Canadian prisoners of war in Germany who managed to escape to the Netherlands were interned there, during this period several games were arranged between these Canadian internees and Dutch clubs. The games were very one-sided, the Canadians piling-up scores of 50 or more runs.

In the years immediately following World War I, a number of soccer clubs in the Amsterdam area were persuaded to adopt baseball as a summersport for their members. This was to keep players active, and engaged in a team sport. Earlier in the century, cricket, and athletics had been tried for this purpose. It had been discovered that soccer fields were not suitable for cricket, and also it was considered that there was not enough physical activity involved. Athletics gave sufficient physical activity, but was too individualistic.

So during the 1920's, the Dutch Baseball Federation publicised its game with the slogan: "Baseball, the ideal summer sport for footballers". These baseball sections played in the soccer strip of the parent clubs - a set of baseball equipment cost about 150 guilders. So the game was not a great financial strain on the soccer clubs which adopted baseball.

Progress was still far from rapid, the game spread from Amsterdam to the neighbouring city of Haarlem in the early 1920's, but until World War II the game was confined to those two cities.

Baseball was introduced to Rotterdam during World War II. The link with soccer lasted for a long time. In 1962, the late Jan Hartog informed me that more than 50% of baseball clubs at that time were connected with soccer clubs. Gradually these baseball sections of soccer clubs have lost ground to independent baseball clubs.

One of the factors in this evolution has been the gradual development of higher technical standards demanded by the Dutch Baseball Federation. As ground requirements have become increasingly more stringent, and the baseball season has tended to overlap with the soccer season, conflicts of interest have arisen.

The first recognised Dutch championship was in 1922, this was won by Quick (Amsterdam), a club founded before the First World War, and presently the oldest club in Europe playing the American game.

The complete list of Dutch baseball champion clubs is as follows.

Blauw-Wit(Amsterdam) ... 9 titles. 1923-31-32-37-38-43-44-45-46.
 Sparta(Rotterdam) ... 9 titles. 1963-64-66-67-69-71-72-73-74.
 OVVO(Amsterdam) ... 6 titles. 1949-50-51-52-53-55.
 Haarlem Nicols ... 6 titles. 1965-68-70-75-76-77.
 Sport Club Haarlem ... 5 titles. 1929-30-34-40-41.
 Schoten(Haarlem) ... 5 titles. 1947-56-57-60-61.
 Ajax(Amsterdam) 4 titles. 1924-28-42-48.
 Quick(Amsterdam) ... 3 titles. 1922-25-35.
 EHS(Haarlem) ... 3 titles. 1954-59-62
 AGHC(Amsterdam) ... 2 titles. 1926-27.
 Amstel Tijgers(Amsterdam) ... 2 titles. 1979-1980.
 VVGA(Amsterdam) 1 title. 1933
 HHC(Haarlem) 1 title. 1936.
 Seagulls(Amsterdam) 1 title. 1939. This was a team of Mormon missionaries.
 EDO. ... 1 title. 1958.
 Kinheim(Haarlem) 1 title. 1978.
 Neptunus(Rotterdam) ... 1 title. 1981

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CROYDON BLUEJAYS WIN DUTCH TOURNAMENT.

At Eindhoven, Holland, the Croydon Bluejays(who are affiliated with the Canadian Ex-Servicemen's organisation of the United Kingdom) executed baseball's power, speed, pitching and defence as they defeated three other teams in the 25th. annual Spring International Baseball Tournament over the Easter weekend.

Bobbie Simmons blasted the second pitch of the first game 375 feet over the left-centre field fence, as the Croydon Bluejays went on to defeat the tournament's 1981 winners, PSV Eindhoven, 5 - 3.

In the second game of the tournament, Terry Warner cooled the heels of the Crawley Giants(Southern England Baseball Association), by pitching the Bluejays to an 11 - 2 win.

In the deciding tournament final, Kevin Sylvester pitched an 11 - 0 shut-out, against the host team, DVS. Once again, Bobbie Simmons showed his awesome power as he slammed the ball 390 feet over the right-centre field fence.

Another talent displayed consistently throughout the tournament was that of Jeff Armstrong, as he collected three hits and three stolen bases in the final game. Overall Bluejay defensive playing on the field was superb as they performed flawlessly throughout the tournament.

Jayne Sylvester.

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GREAT BRITAIN v U.S.A.F. ALCONBURY

This first game in the 1982 British-American Series was played at Grimsby Town Football Club's ground on Sunday, May 30th.

It was the best performance from the Great Britain Squad for a long time, especially the hitting. Everybody who came to the plate got at least one hit. Included were home runs from Vince Warner and John Harrington.

It must have been a pleasing game for Great Britain manager Ron Marshall,

what with the North European Cup Tournament taking place in August.

With all the goodies to come, it was a dodgy start, however. Alconbury Spartans opened the game and were soon causing trouble. Their first batter, K. Kroetzer, hit the ball which bounced over the left field wall for a ground rule double. He was followed by R. Gonzales who did exactly the same thing, scoring the first run. The G.B. pitcher later walked two batters, these were followed by J. Polhill who hit yet another double, scoring two more runs. A wild pitch enabled Alconbury to score run number four.

The dust settled for a while after that first inning as G.B. concentrated on getting back into the game with the help of some steady pitching from their second man on the mound, Brian Bretherton.

They came back with a bang in the third when Barry Marshall led off with a double, and scored on Tony Breen's single. A double by John Harrington tied up the game when Norman Wells, Vince Warner, and Tony Breen crossed the plate on his hit.

This completely changed the picture of the game. For the British now got down to some serious hitting. Three more runs were scored for them after a single from Hughie King and triples from Wells and Warner. Polhill got the Spartans off the hook as he ended the inning by racing in from right field to make a fine shoestring catch.

In the outfield GrimsbyTown F.C. have a gleaming new stand with a high roof. This presented the ideal target for Vince Warner to reach with his three run homer, increasing the British lead in the fifth. A further three runs were scored in the fifth, taking the score to 13 - 4.

Harrington added his name to the home run list, when he cleared the roof of the stand. This was a solo job.

In the seventh, J. Little roused Alconbury from their slumbers when he joined the home run parade. Again a solo effort.

Then along came G. Leggett to hit another ball into the streets of Grimsby, but this time their was a team mate on base, K. Kroetzer.

Great Britain dotted the i's and crossed the t's in the bottom of the eighth when Alan Bloofield and Brian Bretherton obtained singles. Both scored on a basehit by Dennis King. The final score was Great Britain 16 - Alconbury 7.

The Americans left the ground scratching their heads in bewilderment. The British meanwhile were looking forward to the next game in this series, to be played at Lakenheath on June 20th.

After the game, Federation President, Don Smallwood thanked Grimsby Town Football Club on behalf of the B.A.B.S.F. for their help and support in staging this game.

Brian Holland

SOUTHERN ENGLAND BASEBALL ASSOCIATION.

League Standings June 8th.

Group A.

	W.	L.	%	GB.
LONDON WARRIORS	4	0	1.000	-
Croydon Bluejays	4	1	.800	$\frac{1}{2}$
Crawley Giants	3	1	.750	1
Essex Raiders	1	3	.250	3
Regents Park Eagles	1	3	.250	3
Sutton Braves	0	5	.000	$4\frac{1}{2}$

Group B(East).

Enfield Deerhead	2	0	1.000	-
Enfield Bobcats	1	1	.500	1
Rochester City Dodgers	1	1	.500	1
Shoreditch Eagles	1	1	.500	1
Enfield Spartans	0	2	.000	2

Group B(West).

	W.	L.	%	GB
Ashford Hawks	4	0	1000	-
Cobham Yankees	4	1	.800	$\frac{1}{2}$
Croydon Borough Pirates	3	2	.600	$1\frac{1}{2}$
Wokingham Monarchs	2	2	.500	2
Ashford Merlins	0	4	.000	4
Golders Green Sox	0	4	.000	4

Brian Holland

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INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY TOURNAMENT.

Paris University Club were victors in this tournament staged at Utrecht, Netherlands. PUC won 8 games and lost 2.

The tournament was contested by several of the best university teams of The Netherlands; it was also noteworthy in marking the first appearance on the international scene of Norwegian baseball. Oslo University played in the competition.

The PUC Women's softball team finished fourth in the softball section of the tournament, gaining 3 victories.

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BASEBALL PHILATELY.

The Italian Baseball & Softball Federation, with co-operation from the Italian Thematic Philately Centre has published an excellent book dealing with stamps and postmarks covering baseball and softball.

Stamps are illustrated and given catalogue numbers both in "Yvert & Tellier" and "Scott". The book contains 211 illustrations, two or three of which seem to me to be rather stretching the imagination to describe as depicting baseball. For example one stamp issued by Afghanistan which could be of a game such as "French cricket". On page 6 also an error occurs in the date of the inauguration of Yankee Stadium, which is given as 1903; when in fact it was opened in 1923.

Chapter 3 gives a brief history of baseball in Italy, details given below.

The first appearance of baseball in Italy occurred in 1917, when through contact with United States servicemen, an attempt was made to introduce the game in Northern Italy. In 1919, a young student, Mario Ottino returned from the United States to Turin and interested some friends in baseball. Meanwhile in Rome, Guido Graziani with help from the I.M.C.A. organised the first game, this was in June 1920.

There was further interest displayed in baseball in 1929 and 1931 at Rome, on the initiative of the Farnese Physical Education Academy.

Then came World War II, with the presence of large numbers of U.S. servicemen. This really launched baseball in Italy. The first teams and leagues were formed. Softball was also being played (52 teams in Rome alone in 1947). This activity gave rise to the Italian Baseball League, the Italian Softball League, and to the Italian Baseball Federation (Federazione Italiana Palla Base).

On 27th. June 1948 the first official baseball game involving Italian teams, this was at Milan. In 1949, two championships were contested one by the League, the other by the Federation. Bruno Beneck proposed that these two bodies should be united, this was achieved in January 1950.

In 1949, Bruno Beneck had led the first Italian team which had played in another country, this was Florence which went to Spain to play Pirates (Barcelona). Baseball developed to such an extent that in 1957 it received official recognition by the Italian National Olympic Committee.

The regular championships in Series A commenced in 1950, winners in the first decade of this national championship were - 1950 Libertas Roma.

| | | | |
|------|---------------------------|------|------------------------|
| 1968 | Barcelona Picadero, Spain | 1977 | Germal Parma, Italy |
| 1969 | Europhon Milano, Italy | 1978 | Germal Parma, Italy |
| 1970 | Ausonia Milano, Italy | 1979 | Derbigum Rimini, Italy |
| 1971 | Glen Grant Nettuno, Italy | 1980 | Parmalat Parma, Italy |
| 1972 | Glen Grant Nettuno, Italy | 1981 | Parmalat Parma, Italy. |

1981 CHAMPIONSHIPS.

| <u>BELGIUM.</u> | | | | <u>ITALY.</u> | | | | | |
|------------------------|----|----|----|---------------------|----------------------|----|----|----|-------|
| BERCHEM STARS | 28 | 24 | 4 | .857 | PARMALAT PARMA | 40 | 34 | 6 | .850 |
| Luchtbal Antwerp | 28 | 23 | 5 | .821 | Papa Barzetti | 40 | 25 | 15 | .625 |
| Borgerhout | 28 | 17 | 11 | .607 | - Rimini | | | | |
| Antwerp Eagles | 28 | 16 | 12 | .571 | Glen Grant Nettuno | 40 | 23 | 17 | .575 |
| G.M. Giants | 28 | 14 | 14 | .500 | Rio Grande | | | | |
| Bell Pioneers | 28 | 7 | 21 | .250 | - Grosseto | 40 | 22 | 18 | .550 |
| Brasschaat | 28 | 6 | 22 | .214 | Fortitudo Delmonte | 40 | 21 | 19 | .525 |
| Deurne Spartans | 28 | 5 | 23 | .179 | Scavolini Pesaro | 40 | 17 | 23 | .425 |
| | | | | | Juventus '48 | 43 | 11 | 32 | .256 |
| | | | | | Black Panthers | 43 | 10 | 33 | .233 |
| <u>YUGOSLAVIA.</u> | | | | <u>POLAND.</u> | | | | | |
| NADA SPLIT | 6 | 5 | 1 | .833 | SC SILESIA RYBNIK | 8 | 8 | 0 | 1.000 |
| Gunclje Ljubljana | 6 | 4 | 2 | .667 | SC Gornik Boguszo. | 8 | 4 | 4 | .500 |
| Jezica Ljubljana | 6 | 3 | 3 | .500 | SC Roj Zory-Roj | 8 | 0 | 8 | .000 |
| Zajcki Ljubljana | 6 | 0 | 6 | .000 | | | | | |
| <u>SPAIN.</u> | | | | <u>DENMARK.</u> | | | | | |
| PIRATAS MADRID | 4 | 4 | 0 | 1.000 | MUNKENE GENTOFTE | 14 | 12 | 2 | .857 |
| Irabia Pamplona | 4 | 2 | 2 | .500 | Comets Hoersholm | 12 | 9 | 3 | .750 |
| Gava Barcelona | 4 | 2 | 2 | .500 | The Bats, Lyng | 11 | 4 | 7 | .363 |
| Iturrigori Bilbao | 4 | 1 | 3 | .250 | Woodpeckers Slagelse | 9 | 2 | 7 | .222 |
| Democraticas Zaragoza | 4 | 1 | 3 | .250 | | | | | |
| <u>FINLAND.</u> | | | | <u>NETHERLANDS.</u> | | | | | |
| HAWKS, HELSINKI | 8 | 7 | 1 | .875 | NEPTUNUS ROTTERDAM | 36 | 29 | 7 | 58pts |
| Sluggers Kerava | 8 | 5 | 3 | .625 | Amstel Tijgers | 36 | 23 | 12 | 47 .. |
| Japan B.T. Helsinki | 8 | 4 | 4 | .500 | Haarlem Nicols | 36 | 22 | 12 | 46 .. |
| Zebbras Hameenlinna | 8 | 2 | 6 | .250 | A.D.O. Den Haag | 36 | 19 | 16 | 38 .. |
| Bases Turku | 8 | 2 | 6 | .250 | Unique Giants | 36 | 18 | 17 | 37 .. |
| | | | | | Ola U,V.V.Utrecht | 36 | 18 | 17 | 37 .. |
| | | | | | Canon De Spartaan | 36 | 17 | 18 | 35 .. |
| | | | | | H.C.A.W.Bussum | 36 | 17 | 18 | 35 .. |
| | | | | | Quick Amersfoort | 36 | 13 | 22 | 27 .. |
| | | | | | Tex Town Tigers | 36 | 0 | 36 | 0 .. |
| <u>CZECHOSLOVAKIA.</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| SOKOL KRC PRAGUE | 24 | 18 | 6 | .750 | | | | | |
| Kovo Prague | 24 | 16 | 8 | .667 | | | | | |
| Technika Prague | 22 | 16 | 6 | .727 | | | | | |
| Prirodni vedy Prague | 22 | 10 | 12 | .455 | | | | | |
| Zahradnictvi Prague | 22 | 10 | 12 | .455 | | | | | |
| Motorlet Prague | 22 | 8 | 14 | .364 | | | | | |
| Podoli-Tempo Prague | 18 | 6 | 12 | .333 | | | | | |
| Sigma Olomouc | 18 | 3 | 15 | .167 | | | | | |

BASEBALL IN GLOUCESTER.

In the early 1960's there were a couple of news items in the South Wales Echo, of Cardiff, which touched on the history of the game, English baseball in this context. If memory serves me correctly one statement was that a Gloucester Rounders Association had been formed in the 1780's.!!! Another item stated that baseball had been played in Gloucester, dying out during World War I.

Some months ago I decided that I would examine newspapers published in that city to discover what I could about the Gloucester Baseball Association. I knew a little already about the rounders era shortly before 1892, this information had been acquired from newspapers published in Liverpool, as a result of reports in the Liverpool press about games between sides representing Liverpool and

Gloucester.

It appears that during the rounders era, which ended in the spring of 1892, Liverpool had always beaten Gloucester. The Gloucester Challenge Shield, the championship trophy of the Gloucester Rounders Association, seems to have been won by Ryecroft in seasons 1888 to 90. In 1891 the G.R.A. had 8 clubs in membership - Gordon League, Gordon Wanderers, Ryecroft, Kingsholm, Albion, Nelson Villa, Rangers, Atlas. Gordon League won the championship in this, which was to be the last season of rounders.

In May 1892, the Gloucester Rounders Association received a letter from the English Baseball Association, formerly the National Rounders Association of Liverpool and Vicinity, stating that its title had been changed and requesting the G.R.A. to change its title, and to refer to the game as English Baseball.

x. Indicates that I have seen a team mentioned in a particular year.

| <u>SENIORS</u> | <u>1892</u> | <u>93</u> | <u>94</u> | <u>95</u> | <u>96</u> | <u>97</u> | <u>98</u> | <u>99</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Gordon League | x | x | x | x | - | x | - | - |
| Kingsholm | x | x | x | x | x | x | - | - |
| Ryecroft | x | x | x | x | - | x | - | - |
| Sissons | x | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Atlas | x | x | x | x | - | - | - | - |
| Rangers | x | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Barton Rangers | - | - | x | - | - | - | - | - |
| Barton End | - | x | x | - | - | x | - | - |
| Sherborne Street | - | - | x | - | - | - | - | - |

In 1895 two other clubs were mentioned, Newnham Baseball Club, and Newnham Gymnasium, but it was not indicated whether or not they were senior clubs. JUNIOR TEAMS mentioned were Kingsholm, Barton End, Atlas, St. Mary's Hall, Gordon League, Ryecroft, Exchange, Harlequins. The junior competition began in 1892, and the junior champions won a cup.

Senior Shield Winners. 1892 ? ; 1893 Kingsholm; 1894 Kingsholm; 1895 Gordon League; 1896 Kingsholm.

Junior Cup Winners. 1892 Atlas; 1893 Kingsholm; 1894 ? ; 1895 Kingsholm; 1896 Barton End.

Representative Games. 30th. July 1892 at the Co-operative Field, Gloucester, Gloucester beat Liverpool for the first time ever. I have found no accounts of further games in the period which I have worked through to date.

Monday, 6th. August 1894, on St. Catherine's Meadow, Gloucester, Gloucester beat Cardiff.

Monday, 5th. August 1895, at Grangetown, Cardiff. Gloucester beat Cardiff.

Saturday, 17th. August 1895, at St. Catherine's Meadow, Gloucester. Cardiff was beaten yet again by Gloucester.

Monday, 7th. August 1899, at Grangetown, Cardiff. Gloucester beat Cardiff.

Sam Vallender was described in 1891 as the finest bowler in Gloucester, he was selected for representative teams for more than a decade; and played on at least four teams which won the Challenge Shield.

Another celebrated player was Walter George, one of the best rugby backs of that period. Walter was connected with Ryecroft in its Shield winning days. He captained the Gloucester representative team in 1891-92, but was lost to the game when he left the town. Many of the baseball players were also prominent rugby players. Rugby was the major sport in the town; but others starred at soccer.

Kingsholm and Atlas were teams connected with ironworks. Sissons was a works team. Gordon League was the name of an educational and recreational institute for young men. It fielded teams in various sports - there was a rugby team of that name existing into the 1970's.

1892. Gordon League beat St. Woolos (Newport) at Newport.

1895. Atlas (Gloucester) beat Bristol North at Eastville Park, Bristol.