



**BABE RUTH LEAGUE, INC.**

Home of Babe Ruth Baseball,  
Softball, and Cal Ripken Leagues



**Babe Ruth Leagues of Virginia, Inc.**

## MINUTES

September 22, 2013

Dorey Park Recreation Building  
7200 Dorey Park Drive  
Henrico, Virginia

### In Attendance

Paul Link, State Commissioner  
Don Gowen, Asst State Comm. /Softball Opns,  
Tommy Clary, District 2 Commissioner  
Brandon Currence, District 1 Commissioner  
Bob Rhyne, NFC 13-15 President (D13)  
Curtis Moore, District 3 Commissioner  
Ken Bosserman, District 4 Baseball Comm.  
Dennis Cobb, District 4 Asst. Commissioner  
John Armentrout, SE Region Asst. Comm.

John DeYoung, Asst State Comm. /Baseball Opns.  
Dave Gushee, Secretary/Treasurer  
Gayle Clary, District 2 Asst. Comm.  
Nancy Currence, District 1 Asst. Comm.  
Bruce Frye, Assistant Softball UIC, South  
Dave Cogar, District 8 Baseball Commissioner  
Glenn Spangler, District 4 Softball Comm.  
Phil Larcomb, District 9 Commissioner  
Don Rose, Jr., State Umpire in Chief

Paul Link, State Commissioner, called the meeting to order at 1:35 pm.

Tommy Clary offered the invocation, dedicating the day's business to the benefits of Virginia's baseball- and softball-playing kids.

By unanimous vote, the reading of the minutes of the Spring meeting was waived.

Dave Gushee reported that the State treasury contained, as of 9/1, \$15,788.36 in the checking account (compared with \$13,357.84 in 2012) and \$55,550.03 in mutual funds (compared to \$44,897.32 in 2012). The increase in funds value has resulted from investment of a return of a bridge loan to a league restructuring its finances, and a strong growth in stock values. A number of expected expenses, including State Officer expenses, have not yet been submitted, but from informal estimates of those expenses, it looks like the budget for the year will be close to recent history, with revenue exceeding expense by about a dollar per team. Investment income for the year to date is \$916.09 (compared to \$823.53 in 2012), reflective of the ongoing very low current rates of return generally being experienced as a consequence of low discount rates set by the Federal Reserve System Board of Governors.

Ken Bosserman noted that the strong stock market of the recent past is not a given; our investment policy needs to be alert to changing market positions, so that the diversity of our investments can be kept up to date as market conditions change. Gushee agreed completely and pointed out that he and the State Commissioner are in continuing discussions about how our investments are distributed.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **State Tournaments**

Paul Link began by thanking all the volunteers, including those present, for their contributions to the running of the tournaments. Overall, with the exception of the extreme heat during some of the tournaments, things went very well. The heat led to the potential for heat exhaustion and rescheduling of games from afternoons to mornings and evenings. Several tournaments were affected by intense local storms, but Paul commended the volunteers for their effective responses to get fields playable.

On the not-so-positive side, Paul noted that some tournament teams are also travel teams and expect to win the tournaments. When they don't, they occasionally "get nasty" (Paul's descriptor). The Board members agreed that the State needs to alert the leagues to address attitudes that lead to this behavior, as next season gets under way. Paul will work out the methods by which this issue will be addressed.

### **BASEBALL**

John DeYoung noted that the Babe Ruth-specified Rawlings baseballs were a problem. They were poorly made. Paul Link reiterated the State policy: for Virginia State tournaments, any Babe Ruth-authorized baseballs can be used if the Rawlings balls on hand turn out to be inadequate.

John also noted an issue with the distance to the fences in the 12-70 State Tournament. Some managers felt that 200 feet was too close. This issue was discussed in greater detail later in the meeting.

Another issue in some tournaments was the balance between Gate Pass revenues and tournament expense. This issue was also discussed later in the meeting.

Brandon Currence asked whether the Board felt it was appropriate for a Host League to award the Don Rose Sportsmanship Award to itself. The Board felt it was not appropriate but did not move to create a policy statement on the issue. After discussion, it was agreed that the Host League should involve the umpires for input into the award decision. It was further agreed that the Host League should not present the Award before the tournament is over to a team that does not win the tournament – in other words, don't give it to the selected team right after it is eliminated and leaves to go home. Doing so deflates the pressure for players, coaches, and fans

to continue to display good sportsmanship as the tournaments progresses to its conclusion.

## SOFTBALL

Don Gowen reported that most went well. He also reported problems associated with heat and rain issues, but the frequency and intensity were not as bad as in some previous years. The tournaments were all held in Stafford. Don reported that the problem that Paul Link noted about the attitudes of some tournament teams that are also travel teams occurred in softball as well.

State tournament results are posted on the State Web site.

### **Regional Tournaments**

Virginia hosted seven Regional Tournaments in 2013 -- two baseball and five softball .

The Cal Ripken 7-8-Year-Olds (Rookies) Regional was held in Varina. It was very hot, but the teams and umpers coped well. There were four very good teams; because of scheduling difficulties from heat and rain, the final game was not played. Co-Champions – West Raleigh and Eastern North Carolina – were declared.

The Babe Ruth 16-18 Regional was hosted by Northern Fairfax County 16-18 League and held in Chantilly. Mobile, Alabama, won. Greater Fairfax was runner-up. John DeYoung reported that there were some problems resulting from participants and host league volunteers who obviously had not read the MTIP and contract, especially with regard to arrangements at the host hotel and meeting the facilities requirements for umpires. On the positive side, the host league volunteers did an excellent job on the field and in the press box, and several area restaurants provided excellent buffet spreads for volunteers, officials, and umpires.

The five softball Regionals Tournaments were hosted by Glen Allen. As always, Glen Allen did an outstanding job. Summit Point won the 10U championship.

### **World Series**

The 13-15 World Series was held at Firemen's Field in Purcellville. One major highlight was a Saturday evening celebration of the late Don Rose's extensive contributions over some 30 years to Babe Ruth baseball and to many other sports in Loudoun County as coach, umpire, and builder of athletic facilities.

A frightening highlight was an injury from a collision at home plate. The base runner was knocked cold and appeared to have sustained a very serious neck injury. He was very carefully loaded on a stretcher, taken from the field by ambulance, and then flown by helicopter to the hospital. It turned out later that he had suffered a severe concussion and was not permanently injured, but no one at the game knew that at the time. John DeYoung reported that the emergency personnel's effective response was recognized in a presentation during the closing ceremonies.

One of the games turned out to be the shortest game in Babe Ruth 13-15 World Series history – one hour, ten minutes. The shortest before that was 1:16 (in 1966). Final score: 1-0.

The Host League had never before won the 13-15 World Series. This year, it (Greater Loudoun) did. The Host-State Northern Fairfax County team was the 16-18 runner-up in 2001.

Phil Larcomb added that Winchester went to the final out in the 2011 10-Year-Olds World Series and lost on a walk-off hit to Kentucky, 5-4. He also believes that Glen Allen went to the finals that year in the 14-Year-Olds World Series and lost by 1 run as well. Then-State-Commissioner Don Rose was deeply gratified that two Virginia host teams went to the finals of their own World Series in 2011.

### **Quality of Rule-Specified State Tournament Balls**

The Rawlings balls specified by Babe Ruth were of very poor quality this year. In some cases, all it took was one bat-ball contact to flatten them. Virginia has a policy of authorizing any Babe Ruth authorized ball for use in our State Tournaments if the preferred balls are not up to standard. In accordance with this rule, Paul Link will not allow any protests over baseballs at any Virginia State Tournament.

### **Waiver Process**

The revised process worked fairly well this year. In an attempt to make it even better, the 2014 national letter empowering the Virginia State Commissioner to grant waivers at his discretion for fewer than 12 players on a team and/or fewer than 4 teams in a league will be posted on the State Web site. When leagues are creating their credentials books for their teams going to State Tournaments, copies of this letter must be downloaded and placed in the credentials books, with the District Commissioner's certification indicating State approval. District Commissioners should alert their leagues to this requirement as tournament time approaches and then ensure that the letter is in the credentials book when they sign off on it prior to District Tournaments.

### **Games Played Requirement**

There has been some confusion about this rule in the cases of high school players beginning their Babe Ruth seasons partway through the Babe Ruth season and in the cases of injured players. The rule (11.03d) is that the player must play in at least half of the scheduled games played starting from the time they are available. For players in one of these categories to be eligible to play on a tournament team, they must have a letter specifying the date on which the player became available from the high school coach, a doctor, or other relevant authority, that letter to be included in the tournament credentials book. Waiver requests are required in all of these cases.

### **Heat Guidelines**

This year, State policy was to follow the heat guidelines used by Northern Virginia Youth Lacrosse League. Starting in 2014, the guidelines, coupled with equivalent ones for lightning, will become rules and will be posted on the State Web site.

**General Comments** -- None

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Election of Officers**

Nominees:

State Commissioner – Paul Link

Assistant State Commissioner for Baseball Operations – John DeYoung

Assistant State Commissioner for Softball Operations – Don Gowen

Assistant State Commissioner for Training and Compliance – Phil Larcomb

Secretary/Treasurer – Dave Gushee

There were no nominations from the floor.

**VOTED** unanimously to elect the named slate for two years from November 1, 2013 to October 31, 2015.

### **2014 Budget**

Dave Gushee pointed out that 2013 is the fifth year of operation under current budgeting policies. Although the year is not yet complete, it appears that the 2013 outcome will be a repeat of the four previous years in which operating revenue exceeded operating expenses by about one dollar per chartered team. Last year, the Board reduced the fee per team by \$1.00 to \$5.00 per team (plus dues of \$5.00 per team for a total of \$10.00 per team compared to the previous level of \$11.00).

Dave reminded the Board that the State reserves have increased significantly over the past five years, primarily because the State Commissioner has donated his expenses back to us at the end of each year. The reserves now approximate two years cash flow. Last year, the Board considered ways to use the income from these reserves for some appropriate purpose. The Executive Board voted to lend a league some funds to help it restructure its finances in response to a significant organization change. This was a loan because the league was not in an economically distressed area.

At the Spring meeting, the full Board voted to institutionalize several items to use some of the reserve funds in memory of Don Rose, such as at least one annual Buddy Ball get-together with medallions for participants, to give a Don Rose Sportsmanship Award to the tournament team at each State Tournament best reflecting Don Rose's love of the game and good sportsmanship, and to provide medallions and plaques to T-Ball teams participating in State T-Ball tournaments.

This year, these activities proceeded as planned. Don will from this year on be remembered each year through these activities.

This year, the Board considered two additional suggestions for new programs to use income from the reserves. One was to develop a program to seek out opportunities in economically distressed parts of the State and to strive to plant new leagues in these areas, using reserves income as starter grants. The second idea was to create a program to provide funds to leagues to use to provide registration fees, and perhaps equipment and uniforms, to kids in the areas where leagues already operate. The goal in both cases would be to draw into Babe Ruth kids in Virginia now unable to play because of their own or their families' inability to pay the usual costs of joining a league.

The discussion which followed indicated a consensus that these are promising concepts. The Board VOTED unanimously to establish a task force to frame a proposal to bring to the Board at a future meeting to implement one or both of these concepts. Included in such a proposal would be how to identify candidate players or leagues, how to demonstrate the financial need, how to recognize the appropriate character ingredients that would indicate success in the individual case, what sort of application process should be followed, and how to decide on the funding level and the distribution of funds among the successful applicants. Ken Bosserman, Dave Cogar, and Phil Larcomb volunteered to serve on the task force.

### **Determining Hosts for 2014 State Tournaments**

John DeYoung polled the District Commissioners about whether their Districts would be able to host State Tournaments in accordance with the rotation schedule (posted on the State Web page and passed around at the meeting). All agreed that they expected to be able to find the necessary host leagues, with two exceptions. District 1 is scheduled for the 16-18 tournament. Brandon Currence pointed out the lack of teams in District 1 in that age group. Tommy Clary of District 2 volunteered to seek a host from his District.

For several years, the 11/60 and 12/60 tournaments have been held together, due to the relatively small number of teams available in each of these two categories. The Board VOTED unanimously to make it a policy to hold these two together henceforth. District 8 is scheduled for the 11/60 tournament; District 3 for the 12/60. Since District 4 will host the Southeast Region 12/60 tournament, it was agreed that District 3 would host both 11/60 and 12/60 at the State level in 2014.

Don Gowen, on the other hand, reported that there was no agreed-upon rotation schedule for softball State Tournaments. He has several possibilities and is open to holding them all at one site or to dividing them up. He asked for volunteers, but didn't get any at the meeting. He will report later on his progress.

John reminded the District Commissioners to remind the host leagues to use the correct terminology for their tournaments. The tournaments are 8s, 9s, 10s, 11s, 12s, 13s, 14s, 13-15s, and 16-18s; no U's anywhere, unlike softball.

### **Update Posted State Policies and Bylaws**

Paul Link indicated that the State policies posted on the State Web site have in some cases become obsolete. With respect to the bylaws, it has been some years since they were carefully reviewed in light of changing practices. He asked for a committee to review and update both. The Board VOTED unanimously to create such a committee. Paul appointed John DeYoung as chair. Glenn Spangler, Don Gowen, and Phil Larcomb volunteered to serve on the committee.

### **Review District Alignments**

With leagues entering the State program and others leaving, the Districts are not even in numbers of leagues. The Board VOTED to create a committee to review the distribution of leagues and generate a recommendation for change, if any. Paul appointed Dave Cogar as chair. Brandon Currence, Bob Gerber, Curtis Moore, and Phil Larcomb volunteered to serve on the committee.

### **New League Update**

Paul Link reported that two leagues have begun the process of joining the State program. They are Warren County Babe Ruth, which was deactivated about five years ago and, with a new group of active volunteers, is in the process of reactivation. The other is Tappahannock, in Northumberland County.

### **Policy on Umpire Assignments for Tournament Play**

State policy is to follow Southeast Region policy.

### **Rose Scholarship Program**

Donny Rose wants to establish a scholarship program in memory of his father's dedication to good umpiring and the training of good umpires. Youths in Loudoun County would be eligible. He is looking for ways to fund the program and is negotiating for a baseball tournament around Memorial Day.

### **Tournament Contract Updates**

There are some inconsistencies in the existing language. Paul Link will work on these prior to next year's host commitments.

### **No-Show Teams at State Tournaments**

It seems that every year a team or two fails to notify a Host League that it will not be participating as scheduled. This fouls up the Host League tournament economics, because tournament revenue declines more than tournament expenses when a team does not show up and/or does not pay the Parents Gate Pass assessment. There was some uncertainty about the

actual effect on the tournament budget. A number of possible responses to help the affected Host League were discussed, including having the State pay the unpaid Gate Pass assessment. The State could then consider whether or how to penalize the offending league, such as by not approving the next year's charter until it reimbursed the State.

The Board decided that the Host League president is authorized to present to the State Commissioner a financial report substantiating a "loss" and its cause (the missing Gate Pass assessment, for example), and its effect on the overall financial result. The State Commissioner and the State Treasurer will decide how much, if any, financial reimbursement would be in order and also determine the source of the reimbursed funds (billing the offending league, or drawing from the State reserves, for example).

### **Distance to the Fences for Ripken State Tournaments**

Many of the Ripken leagues in the State play on fields whose fences are 200 feet from home plate. For some of the older Ripken teams -- 11 and 12-60s and 11 and 12-70s, this has led to lots of home runs and a feeling that the game's essence has been negatively affected. Some tournament teams have even sought to protest games played on such fields.

The Board recognizes the problem but believes that there is no way to require that existing fields be required to move fences farther out. The Babe Ruth rule book (pages 33, 90, and 93) recommends distances from 200 to 225 feet at the foul lines and 225 to 250 feet in center field. A consensus emerged that the rule book should be changed to recommend distances of at least 225 feet but preferably 250 feet at the foul lines for new fields. After discussion, the Board asked the State Commissioner to raise the issue of the rule book recommendations at the Regional Meeting in October.

### **Bat Rule Penalty**

There is no written ejection penalty in the rule book for using an illegal bat (see "PENALTY:" section on page 35). The Board in general feels that any such Babe Ruth rule should be uniform and clearly stated for local league and tournament play before the start of the season. Similar issues were raised concerning a beginning-of-the-season-stated rule with regard to requirements for regular season scorebooks as part of tournament credentials.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 pm.

Prepared by Dave Gushee, Secretary/Treasurer