



# Virginia

## Babe Ruth Baseball & Softball



**MINUTES**  
**September 24, 2023**  
**Courtyard by Marriott, Jefferson Meeting Room**  
**638 Hillsdale Drive**  
**Charlottesville, Virginia**

**In Attendance**

Paul Link, State Commissioner	D.J. Stewart, District 4 Asst. Baseball Commissioner
Paul Coates, Asst. State Comm., Softball Operations	Matt Clark, District 5 Commissioner
John DeYoung, Asst. State Comm., Baseball Operations	Billie Clark, District 5 Asst. Commissioner
Glenn Spangler, Asst. State Comm., Training	Pat O'Brien, District 6 Baseball Commissioner
John Lucas, Southeast Region Commissioner	Sheri Zimmerman, District 7 Baseball Commissioner
John Armentrout, Southeast Region Asst. Commissioner	Dave Cogar, District 8 Commissioner
George Burke, State Umpire-in-Chief	John Kemper, District 9 Baseball Commissioner
Donny Rose, Jr., former State Umpire-in-Chief	Lisa Kemper, District 9 Asst. Baseball Commissioner
Brandon Currence, District 1 Baseball Commissioner	Chris Frazier, District 10 Commissioner
Brian Eamigh, District 1 Asst. Baseball Commissioner	Allan Cogswell, District 7 umpire
Tommy Clary, District 2 Baseball Commissioner	Steven Cohn, Director of Operations, Stafford Babe Ruth League
Gayle Clary, District 2 Asst. Baseball Commissioner	Nancy Currence, former District 1 Asst. Baseball Commissioner
Curtis Moore, District 3 Commissioner	Caleb Dunlea, President, Christiansburg Parks & Recreation BRL
Ken Bosserman, District 4 Baseball Commissioner	Len Lattiak, District 5 umpire
Dennis Cobb, District 4 Asst. Baseball Commissioner	Kevin Wimer, District 4 umpire
Ray Pitsenbarger, District 4 Asst. Baseball Commissioner	

Paul Link, State Commissioner, called the meeting to order at 12:26 p.m.

**Introduction of guests:** Paul Link introduced himself as the State Commissioner and stated that his term will end in 6 days. He then introduced the following guests: John Lucas, Southeast Regional Commissioner; John Armentrout, Assistant Regional Commissioner, Operations; Allan Cogswell, newly appointed Baseball Umpire Advisor North; Steve Cohn, newly elected District 8 Commissioner; and Caleb Dunlea, Youth Sports Supervisor, Christiansburg Recreation Department. Paul then asked the District Commissioners and other attendees to introduce themselves

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

**Moment of silence for Calvin Ness, Charlottesville player:** Paul announced that Virginia Babe Ruth had a tragic player loss this year in Charlottesville Babe Ruth. 13-year-old Calvin Ness was accidentally struck in the head by a line drive (during pre-game warmups) and never regained consciousness. He underwent brain surgery the following morning and was taken off life support later in the day. A moment of silence was requested in memory of Calvin.

**Reading of minutes from the State Spring Meeting:** Following a motion by Curtis Moore, the reading of the minutes of the 2023 State Spring Meeting was waived by unanimous vote.

**Treasurer's report:** Paul referred to the operating budget handout recapping last year's budget vs actual expenses.

Revenue was +\$1,366 compared to projections. Key items noted were that the Wise loan was repaid in full and that income increased from extra team counts in 2022. 2023 league fees remain unpaid for two leagues. Paul reported that by the close of the year the NFC loan will also be closed out. One league (Radford) sent charter fees to the State instead of to Headquarters. Phil forwarded the payment to Headquarters to balance the books.

Expenses were \$10,166 under projection driven by the lack of grant requests, no umpire training in Wise, no Commissioner expenses, awards savings by eliminating the t-shirts, and reduced meeting expenses owing to the Southeast Region Meeting being held in Virginia (Williamsburg).

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Opening remarks and 2023 season review:** Before Paul Link started reviewing the 2023 season and giving his final report he thanked all Commissioners for their efforts managing their Districts, all of the Umpire Advisors and the UIC for umpiring games and tournaments and training a plethora of new umpires over the years, and the Executive Committee for all of the support that they have given every year that he was the Commissioner. Paul said "I really can't thank everyone enough."

Paul announced that the 2023 season was a challenge for everyone. He did not dwell on SportsEngine (SEHQ), but they were at the heart of many of the problems that were faced by all. The result was lost leagues, reduced team counts because rosters were not able to be uploaded online, and league frustration that left everyone wondering if it was all worth it. Virginia's string of consecutive years with 100% rosters online was broken. Nine leagues did not put rosters online, three former leagues did not charter (Alexandria Senior Babe Ruth, Cradock, and Colonial Heights), two new leagues did not charter (Metro Richmond and Riverheads), Fauquier Softball did not play with Stafford, and three softball leagues (Bath County, Churchville, and Craigsville) combined with West Augusta and then all four joined Softball Nation. Hopefully, they will come back to Babe Ruth next year.

Overall, the State went down 72 teams, but that included a 70-team paper loss in Northeast Augusta because of a SportsEngine roster duplication error last season. The net loss was two billable teams. Next season, Virginia will invoice 189 softball teams and 1,153 baseball teams.

Paul reported that District 3 added a new 16-18 league in Highland Springs and added a Cal Ripken Division league in South of the James before transferring that league to District 5.

District 7 completed an experiment with the The St. James in Springfield taking private teams under the club facility and chartering as Cal Ripken Division teams under the Pioneer Babe Ruth League. The experiment added eight teams to Pioneer's team counts.

State tournaments went smoother than any year that Paul could remember. He was able to visit all 5 State softball tournaments plus 6 of the 10 State baseball tournaments. The Southeast Regional tournaments in Virginia this season also went smoother than most years.

Performance wise, State teams had three Southeast Region runner-up finishes (Glen Allen 11s, Williamsburg 12s70, and Arlington 13-15s) and one Southeast Region championship (Manassas 16-18s). Peachtree also won the 12U Southeast Region softball championship.

In World Series play, Virginia had three Diamond Bracket runners-up (Glen Allen 13s, Arlington 14s, and Manassas 8U. Manassas was also the 10U World Series runner-up.

Overall, a great showing by Virginia teams competing on the national and international stage.

Virginia also had the Southeast Region Lefty Gomez Volunteer of the Year award winner. Paul Link and Paul Coates presented the award to Jamie Bohn on Sunday, September 10, in Rockville, Jamie's home league.

Paul concluded his opening remarks by stating the following takeaways from his 11 years of travel and administration as State Commissioner:

- Most team and player losses are the result of adults squabbling in Board Room disputes.
- Too many player losses are the result of territorial issues where one side refuses to budge.
- In competing with travel, boundaries are a huge issue that puts Babe Ruth at a disadvantage.
- Parents are driving away qualified umpires.
- Sportsmanship is at an 11-year low and parents have no idea that it is a problem.
- And finally, more attention is needed regarding facilities for hosting State and Regional tournaments; specifically, no umpire facilities, no restrooms with running water, and no working concession stands.

**District reports and State tournament review:** Each District Commissioner gave a brief report for their District:

- District 1 (Brandon Currence and Brian Eamigh): Williamsburg (the largest league in the District) won most of the District tournaments. Getting volunteers for tournaments was difficult. Overall good behavior. Some leagues play both Babe Ruth and PONY.
- District 2 (Tommy Clary): Lost the league in Colonial Heights and challenges with some other leagues. Only one District tournament (13-15s).
- District 3 (Curtis Moore): SportsEngine was a nightmare! Glen Allen won all the District tournaments.
- District 4 (Ken Bosserman): No problems with District tournaments. One league (Staunton) is ready to leave Babe Ruth largely owing to the problems with SportsEngine. Offered thoughts on creating a "Immediate Past State Commissioner" position, which would require a change in the Corporation's Bylaws.
- District 5 (Matt Clark): SportsEngine was a major frustration. It required a lot of work for him with the league presidents.
- District 6 (Pat O'Brien): Lost the Alexandria 16-18 league; will try again in 2024. Numbers were down in other leagues. Arlington did not field a 16-18 tournament team for the second year in a row. Fifty 13-year-olds signed up for the fall league in Vienna.
- District 7 (Sheri Zimmerman): Held six District tournaments and was the State Representative at one of the 16-18 Area tournaments. Arlington had a paid employee to enter data into the SportsEngine database.

- District 8 (Dave Cogar): All went well with District tournaments; several different leagues were able to advance to the State tournaments.
- District 9 (John Kemper): District tournaments went well. Difficulty getting rosters into SportsEngine, especially Winchester at the last minute. Jeff Bayliss is back in charge at Summit Point.
- District 10 (Chris Frazier): It was disappointing that the District 12s70 champion, Blacksburg, did not participate in the State 12s70 tournament.
- District 11: no report.

**State tournament reports from State Representatives (tournament brackets with scores are posted in the Virginia Babe Ruth website's Tournament Center):**

- Rookies (Curtis Moore): Good baseball. Glen Allen won the tournament. There were issues with the coaches' uniforms.
- 9s ((John Kemper): Arlington won. All of the teams were great; great pitching and fielding. The players would have more fun if the parents were kept in the parking lot.
- 10s (George Burke): The tournament went well—no ejections and no protests. Incredible community support!
- 11s (Dave Cogar): Played at Stafford at the same time as the State softball tournaments were going on in Manassas. Mike Broussard ran it very well.
- 12s60 (Chris Frazier): Wonderful tournament run by CJ Burgis at Pulaski's fields. The Cal Ripken tournament teams were hosted guests at the local wood-bat league games. Great to have this level of community support!
- 12s70 (Chris Frazier and Caleb Dunlea): Local vendors helped with outstanding giveaways (bats, gloves, etc.). Like a World Series with team dinner, skills competitions, and live streaming of games.
- 13s (Ken Bosserman and Glenn Spangler): D.J. Stewart did a fantastic job running the tournament at Monger Park in Mt. Crawford.
- 14s (Sheri Zimmerman): Owing to the heavy rain before the start of the tournament, no games were played on the scheduled field (Stratton Woods Park). Seven games were played at Chantilly High School and one game was played at Dobranski Field at Alabama Drive Park.
- 13-15s (Brandon Currence): The originally scheduled field could not be used, but the games were played on other fields to complete the tournament. Weather issues caused the final three games to be postponed until the following weekend.
- 16-18s (Tommy Clary): Great tournament and good communication with umpires. Major issue with extreme profanity at the 16-18 level.
- All softball age groups (Paul Coates and Dave Cogar): Went well but with inexperienced staff. Lacked State-tournament-level pageantry. Some of the umpires were not aware of age-group-specific differences in the playing rules.

**Regional tournament reports:** Owing to the fact Paul Link was the Regional Representative for both Southeast Region tournaments held in Virginia, he gave the summary reports for both tournaments. First he thanked John DeYoung, Sheri Zimmerman, and Pat O'Brien for assistance at the fields on some of the hottest days of the year.

Paul reported that the Southeast Region 12-Year-olds Major 70 tournament was won by the Bananas of Lutz, SFL, with Williamsburg the runner-up. Virginia had three of the final four teams. The only tournament issue until the final pool game was played was weather that caused flipping back and forth between two playing fields. After the final pool game, one team refused to accept the tiebreaker rule and caused quite a stir that had to be resolved by Robert Faherty. Outside of that, it was a model tournament. An umpire went down for heat exhaustion and a backup had to be called in to complete the fallen umpire's schedule. The umpire was released from the hospital after a day of observation but did not return other than to watch a game.

The Southeast Region 16-18 Year-olds tournament also had rain and heat issues that caused one manager to express his displeasure with the schedule revisions for the championship game that was won by Manassas, 1-0. There were also some other complaints about the facilities at Centreville High School (only port-a-johns, no field maintenance equipment for lining the field, and no umpire facilities on the final day because the school was closed and locked). There were also some complaints over a specific umpire call that resulted in the manager sending a GameChanger video of the play after the tournament. Judgment calls always have two sides.

**Buddy-Ball events in 2023:** Donny Rose reported on his wonderful Buddy-Ball experience in Greene County with 24 Buddy-Ball players playing three innings. Kudos to Sharon Gregory for putting it all together.

**New State Policy on following 2021 version of Rule 11.06, paragraph 7:** John DeYoung followed up on previous discussions of this issue reported in the minutes of the 2022 State Fall Meeting and the 2023 State Spring Meeting. John recommended that Virginia add a new State Policy to use the rule as stated in the 2021 rule book because the 2022 rule change has resulted in undue hardship for the host league of State tournaments for age groups for which the State is the host of the Southeast Region tournament (in scheduling fields, umpires, and volunteers), participating teams (coaches, players, and families), and those responsible for drawing and posting State tournament brackets. Following a motion by Dave Cogar, John's recommendation was passed by unanimous vote. [After the meeting, the new State Policy 1027 "Rule 11.06, Paragraph 7" was posted on the State website.]

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Election of State officers for 2023–25:** All District Commissioners had previously certified that they had been re-elected or a that new District Commissioner had been elected in their place. Dave Cogar placed the following individuals in nomination for the Executive Committee positions:

State Commissioner: Brandon Currence  
Assistant State Commissioner, Baseball Operations: Dave Cogar  
Assistant State Commissioner, Softball Operations: Paul Coates  
Assistant State Commissioner, Training: Glenn Spangler  
Secretary-Treasurer: Phil Larcomb

Dave Cogar called for nominations from the floor, but there were none offered. Following a motion by John DeYoung, the nominations were accepted and the candidates were elected by a vote of acclamation.

**FY 2024 budget:** Paul Link presented the 2024 operating budget in the absence of the State Secretary-Treasurer. Paul reviewed both the revenue and expense projections stating that the budget was balanced for 2024. A motion to accept the budget was approved.

**Review of the Cal Ripken Division Uniform Pilot Program:** The review yielded the following conclusions: (1) inconsistent uniform dress and (2) most shirts were left out looking sloppy and shoes were all inconsistent (new vs soiled). The consensus from the group was to not continue with the program.

**Southeast Region meeting – To be held December 8-9 in Myrtle Beach, SC:** Paul Link reported that the Southeast Region Annual Meeting would be held December 8–9, in Myrtle Beach, SC, and that Brandon Currence should clear his schedule to participate and should invite others from Virginia who should attend. Southeast Region Commissioner John Lucas reported on progress in planning for the meeting. John also commented on the difficult SportsEngine issues that all had to deal with in 2023. He anticipates that three or four Southeast Region tournaments will be held in Virginia in 2024. [When they are announced, State, Southeast Region, and World Series tournament locations and dates will be posted in the Virginia Babe Ruth website’s Tournament Center.]

**Southeast Region Hall of Fame:** John Lucas announced that a new member of the 2023 class of the Southeast Region Hall of Fame was our very own State Commissioner Paul Link. John inducted Paul and presented him with a plaque. A standing ovation with thunderous applause was given to Paul by all present.

**Babe Ruth International Hall of Fame inductee (Rebecca Slough):** Curtis Moore reported that Rebecca Slough of Glen Allen was inducted into the Babe Ruth International Hall of Fame at a presentation at the 13-Year-olds World Series in Glen Allen in August.

**Review of VBR machine-pitch pilot program (baseball and softball):** Discussion on the pilot program in Virginia to allow coaches to operate the pitching machine for their own teams centered on how few coaches elected to operate the machine versus how many let the umpire operate the machine. Feedback centered on the specific rules developed and that the coaches were afraid to violate the rules by inadvertently coaching players. It was decided to let the District Commissioners decide if this program will be used in their District tournaments and to leave it as a coach option in State tournaments. Going forward, State-selected umpires for Rookie State tournaments will be specifically trained on the use of the pitching machine. Paul Coates reported the pilot program was successful in softball.

**2023 State baseball tournaments rotation table and host league contract schedule:** John DeYoung reviewed the rotation table for State baseball tournaments (handout and posted on the State website). Most of the District Commissioners reported that they would have a host league for the State baseball tournament assigned to their District. They will follow up with Dave Cogar as soon as possible so that State contracts can be created and sent to the host leagues in January 2024.

**Number of umpires for Virginia State tournament games:** A question was asked about the inconsistency of the number of umpires assigned to State tournament games compared with Southeast Region tournament games. Donny Rose suggested that the State follow the Region’s policy of two umpires for each game on 60-foot fields and three umpires for each game on 70-foot fields and 90-foot fields and that the number of umpires for each game be the same for all games of a State tournament. A motion was made and seconded to change the State tournament contracts to be consistent with this.

[After the meeting, it was recognized that State Policy 1012 “Number of Umpires Used in State Tournaments” had to be changed to be consistent with the agreed-upon change. The revised State Policy 1012 was posted on the State website.]

**State Policy 1001 for the Parents Gate Pass Program Fee schedules for 2024 (baseball and softball):** John DeYoung noted that District 8 included the cost of the IF game in the calculation of the Parents Gate Pass Program Fee for District tournaments. He recommended that the State Policy 1001, which did not include costs of umpires and baseballs for the IF game be changed to include those costs. Following a motion, John’s recommendation was passed by unanimous vote. [After the meeting, the revised State Policy 1001 “Parents Gate Pass Program” was posted on the State website.]

**Virginia Babe Ruth grants:** Paul Link reported that no requests were received by the September 1, 2023, deadline. Leagues should apply as soon as they recognize their need by using the form posted in in the Virginia Babe Ruth website’s Documents Center. The amount of funds available for grants will not be known until the end of the fiscal year because the State operating policy is to award grants based on the income generated by the investment account.

**2024 World Series invitations:** Paul Link reported that Virginia was not scheduled to receive any World Series invitations extended to Southeast Region championship teams for the 2023 tournament season. The only Regional Champion was Manassas (16-18s) and that was not an invitational tournament.

**New leagues expected in 2024:** Paul Link reported that the State was not giving up on Metro Richmond as a new league for 2024 along with Big Stone Gap (32 teams). Paul referenced how that the increased team counts associated with these new leagues would be a financial bonus for the State.

**State tournament host training:** Glenn Spangler reported on the State tournament host training. Paul Link added how improved it seems to be by taking the training to the host as opposed to holding group meetings. John DeYoung noted that tournament training was started to improve the consistency of how State tournaments were conducted. The group training improved consistency when compared with individual sessions because all trainees heard the same content and the same questions and answers from the trainers and the hosts.

**Umpire reports:** Donny Rose and George Burke reported on the experience of umpires in the 2023 State tournaments. [After the meeting, Brandon Currence announced that he would be appointing George Burke as the State Umpire-in-Chief for 2024–25 and Bruce Frye and Allan Cogswell as State Umpire Advisors for softball and baseball, respectively.]

**Umpire training and recruitment:** George Burke reported on the training sessions and efforts to recruit new umpires in 2023 and on plans for 2024. George reported that the majority of the umpires attending the training sessions are junior umpires. He and the State Umpire Advisors will be specifically looking to recruit more adult umpires.

**VBRUA compensation schedule for 2024:** The Board voted to keep the umpire fees at the current (2023) rates. George Burke noted that keeping the fees at the 2023 level was consistent with his suggestion at the 2022 State Fall Meeting regarding adding back a third umpire for games on 70-foot and 90-foot fields and that change had now been agreed upon. (See “Number of umpires for Virginia State tournament games” above.) [After the meeting, the VBRUA compensation schedule for 2024 was

posted on the Virginia Babe Ruth website's Umpires Center ("Umpire Compensation Schedule").]

**Alumni Association donation:** A motion was approved to donate \$100.00 to the Babe Ruth Alumni Association as a memorial contribution in memory of Calvin Ness. A motion was also approved to rename the MVP Award for the 13-16 Division "The Calvin Ness MVP Award" to further memorialize Calvin Ness as a Babe Ruth baseball player.

**Update on 2023 Washington Nationals Champions Day:** Paul Link reported that two Virginia teams qualified for Champions Day this year (Williamsburg and Glen Allen). Paul announced that Sadie Means was now managing this event for the Nationals but that not much communication had been received.

**Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties (State Policy 1026) update:** Paul Link led a review of State Policy 1026 concerning regular-season and tournament infractions. The conclusion of the group was that the policy seemed effective and should be continued at the State level even though the penalties may not be approved by the Southeast Region if they extend to games in Southeast Region tournaments.

#### **General discussion:**

Paul Link recommended each Commissioner join the American Baseball Coaches Association for the annual fee of \$75.00. Paul referenced the excellent training materials available including teaching videos plus the membership includes \$1M liability insurance.

Paul Link announced his decision to move Arlington Cal Ripken to District 6 where their Babe Ruth program is already. The other Commissioners had no objections.

Sheri Zimmerman (District 7) led a discussion on The St. James experiment with the Pioneer Babe Ruth League. She reported that there were territorial concerns at first but that none materialized and that overall it added to the District tournament even though the teams did not win. It also increased teams in the Pioneer house league. She explained the goal was to improve the overall tournament trail experience for the smaller leagues. District 7 has hosted an invitational event as a warmup tournament for Districts and she felt that it has been very successful.

Ken Bosserman stated that District 4 had hosted similar events for a number of years and that District 7 teams used to participate. It was agreed to improve communication of both events with more Districts next season.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Prepared by John DeYoung, Assistant State Commissioner, Baseball Operations