

December 2002



# THE Play Ball

Official Newsletter

## Play Ball

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Play Ball MC

### Corporate Sponsor



MLB Sizzler Pitch Hit & Run  
program

### Play Ball Program Implementation



To provide an insight into the establishment of the Play Ball program, the Australian Sports Commission's (ASC) new TPGP is a three way partnership between government, business and sports. The ASC has targeted a small number of sports for special support to help them grow by expanding membership of clubs and associations.

Through the MLB Pitch, Hit and Run program several modified games are utilized to introduce the participants to skills and activities common to softball and baseball. Special considerations have been built in to accommodate the range of ages and skill levels of the participants, with the emphasis on providing a gateway to both sports.

The objectives of the Play Ball program are to provide opportunities for children to participate in games and activities in a learning environment that are fun, safe and embody principles of fair play. Play Ball provides an entry level for children wishing to progress to the sports of softball and baseball.

The joint proposal submitted by ABF and ASF focuses on Play Ball as a product, common to both sports.

The program provides a tool for clubs/associations to actively recruit from schools and the community by establishing feeder competitions.

After completing the PH&R introductory course & lessons, Play Ball participants advance to one of several modified bat & ball games. Safety and developmental considerations have been factored in to accommodate the range of ages and skill levels of participants.

In broad terms, Play Ball utilizes a four-step process that provides an insight into the fundamentals of the sport and introduces participants to pathways for softball and baseball. Students will complete the following sequence when participating in the program. Each element of the program can be conducted separately and students progress to the next step at their own pace.

1. Sizzler Pitch, Hit and Run introductory lessons on skills development.
2. Sizzler Pitch, Hit and Run Skills Activities.
3. Modified 'Fun' Games.
4. Organized baseball and softball club competitions.

Funding for Play Ball comes courtesy of the Australian Sports Commission, with Major League Baseball providing the major sponsorship.





## Northern Territory

During the month of September, NT Play Ball personnel conducted liaisons with all the Primary Schools in the Targeted Area of Palmerston and the Rural Areas. 13 of the 16 Schools were visited and detailed information was presented to the schools with regards to the NT Play Ball

Program. During these visits the development officers were able to establish what the needs of the schools were and what direction to take with regards to the roll out of the program. Subsequently the NT Play Ball Program has been altered to work with the suggested requirements of the targeted area schools. During the month of October, three schools (Bees Creek Primary, Sacred Hearts Primary & Bakewell Primary) have had a number of clinics conducted. A total of 684 children have attended these clinics.

The NT Play Ball personnel believe the comprehensive liaison of the targeted area schools enabled a better planning process for the program, its implementation and direction. Continuous feedback from schools, teachers & students, have enabled the Play Ball personnel to reevaluate best practices and alter the program where necessary. Continuous updates to other schools have kept their individual interest with the program. It is planned that the NT Play Ball program will continue through until the end of Term 1 2003 where all Schools will attend a 2 day Carnival with potentially 40 to 60 teams participating.

NT Softball and NT Baseball experienced minor difficulties in communication between each other early on but these have been rectified. Finances for the program were eventually received with equipment and promotional gear arriving in the NT in good time.



## South Australia

The Play Ball program is fully operational in all 3 target areas of Hills, Gawler & Seacombe Club.



Year 7 student from Sacred Hearts Primary School batting off a pitching machine

The State Office is in frequent contact with all 3 areas. Skills sessions commenced in August in all areas with competitions predominantly in 4<sup>th</sup> term. MLB shirts and caps are being made available upon advice of the number of teams involved in competition in each target area.

### GAWLER & DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION:

46 sessions conducted in Lyndoch, Williamstown, Angaston & Redeemer Schools in the Barossa with 1151 students participating with competitions conducted between 20<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> September. From these 4 schools saw 86 participants formally registered.

### HILLS ASSOCIATION:

Sessions conducted in St Catherine's, Woodside, Murray Bridge, Crafers, Bridgewater & Macclesfield, Uraidla, Hahndorf, Norton Summit, Mt Barker South, and Aldgate. Competition phase to take place during 4<sup>th</sup> term.



## NSW (country)

The Active Australia Schools Coordinator will be contacting NSW (Country) coordinator in the short term to establish Play Ball. Coffs Harbour, Tamworth, Newcastle, and Hastings all appear to be on target for 1<sup>st</sup> term 2003. NSW is currently working with a community group at Blue Haven (Central Coast), preparing to implement Play Ball in the next few weeks.



## ACT

Softball Canberra and the ACT Baseball Association aims to provide a quality 'Play Ball' program for school children in the ACT. A kit has been designed to help as a guide and for ease of delivery. The Development Program has been divided into four sessions:

- Session 1 – Catching & Throwing
- Session 2 – Base Running & Introduction to Batting
- Session 3 – Batting
- Session 4 – Play the Game

Contract **Deb**, Program Manager, 02 6278 3000 or 0413 276 179.



## Queensland

Hercules Road State School, Rothwell (3<sup>rd</sup> largest primary school in the area - 750)

Under 8s	=	7 new players
Under 10s	=	6 new players
Total	=	13

The clinic was run on June 17<sup>th</sup>, more than a month before our Sign-on day to fit in with the PE Teacher's timetable. Running the clinic at this time had less impact compared to other clinics.

We saw all Year 1, 2 and 3 classes. The school does not allow advertisements into their school newsletter so was unable to publicize Sign-on in that way.

Scarborough State School, Scarborough (Largest primary school in our area - 1100)

Under 8s	=	13 new players
Under 10s	=	<u>9</u> new players (1 sibling)
Total	=	<u>22</u>

Clinics for Years 3 and 4 at this school were conducted before the 2001/2002 season and it had a direct effect on last year's registrations; increased our U8s from one team to three and our U10s from two teams to four. This year's clinic focused on Years 1,2 and 3, because of the 'Year of the Ts' promotion, and we saw twice as many classes. (1 extra Development Officer + 1 extra volunteer). The clinic was held on July 12<sup>th</sup>, just over a fortnight before our Sign-on (July 28<sup>th</sup>). Good timing combined with other advertising and an awareness created by existing club members within the school, translated to further signings.

Humptybong State School, Margate (2<sup>nd</sup> largest primary school in our area ...850)

Under 8s	=	14 new players
Under 10s	=	<u>6</u> new players
Total	=	<u>20</u>

This school has the local branch of 'Little Athletics' operating out of their grounds so naturally, many of their students join this activity. Their competition runs on a Friday night which coincides with many of our Under 8 and 10 fixtures, so we had few players from here. We saw all Years 1, 2 and 3 on July 15<sup>th</sup>.

The school allowed us to advertise sign-on in their school newsletter and put a poster on the notice board.

#### **Points of interest for future development of Play Ball:**

- The school clinics must be free.
- The local club should be involved in their arrangement or delivery.
- Once there are good numbers of players in a school, there is a bit of a 'domino effect'.
- Short ½ hour fun sessions are enough to pique the interest of the younger children.
- Children must be given some written information to take home to parents. A professional looking brochure makes a good impression but a photocopied flyer is better than nothing.
- Clinics should be held within a few weeks of Club Sign-on.
- Parents do not consider the 'next' season of sport until it is close.

- More volunteers to assist the Development Officers translates to more children seen.
- The contact with the school administration and PE teachers is invaluable as is evidenced by the fact that all three schools have entered teams into the new inter-school competition.
- Clinics are effective only if combined with other promotion of the Club.
- Developing a good relationship with staff of local newspapers and contributed weekly articles (not just a list of results) throughout the season. We found that by halfway through the season, we were regularly getting more space on the sport pages than cricket! We also put an article in every edition of the monthly Redcliffe Leagues Club News. They are sponsors and are one of the largest clubs in Qld with a huge membership. This has raised community awareness of our Club and sport. We feel that people in Redcliffe now have a perception that Padres is a large, well organized club and this has worked to our advantage. People do not want to get their children involved in a sport or organization that is not going ahead. Cost = time.
- Padres paid for newspaper display ads for the fortnight before July 28<sup>th</sup> in both of our local papers. The Quest paper also gives a package deal which places the ad in the two newspapers around our immediate area. (\$565 total). We see this advertising as an investment both in increasing membership and good faith with the local media. We also contributed \$70 to an ad run by BNR.
- Hand delivered a notice promoting baseball and sign-on to all schools in our area (about 20) to place in their school newsletters two to three weeks prior to sign-on. It is much more effective to approach the schools in person than to phone, fax or E-Mail information. Also gave them A4 size posters for their noticeboards. Cost = petrol and time.
- For the second year, we have given every new junior player a free quality glove (cost us \$22-28 each). This idea came from men's hockey who give their boys a free stick and PCYC soccer who give their players a ball.
- We have actively sought and maintained sponsorship which helps to keep our fees down.
- Have promoted baseball as a sport for boys *and* girls. 35% of our U8 and 10 registrations are girls. This community has a very strong softball association. People like the fact that *all* of their children can play at the same club.



# Victoria

## 'PLAY BALL' Strategies for Recruitment

Diversification is extremely important when putting together a plan for recruitment from the 'Play Ball' program. Some programs are club based others school or community based depending on geography, history, current interest or available personal.

The following are some strategies that have been used, or will be used in the 'Play Ball' program in Victoria.

- We have registered those TeeBallers and Coach Pitch/Rookie Ball players who are all U10 and are playing in clubs or associations and have never been registered before. We can now offer them a greater service apart from them now being insured. We can now advertise to these players directly for programs such as Yard Ball and holiday camps.
- We have established TeeBall centres based at 2-3 clubs where those clubs have had little involvement with TeeBall before. Victorian Baseball runs the centre and charges a fee of \$30 per participant. A coordinator is paid and the clubs provide the volunteer coaches. Various advertising was used to attract players such as school newsletters, local papers, and direct mailing to homes.
- As above but the centre is at one club only.
- We have established a Play Ball program with Autistic children. This is not based at a club and involves participants from all over Melbourne. A \$30 fee was charged. Advertising and promotion for this program used the networks of Autism Victoria. Coordinators were paid and parents and volunteers from Autism Victoria were used to coach and instruct.
- We have registered participants from our Special Schools competition that all play in a formal competition over 8 weeks. Twelve teams/schools are involved Coaches are paid and assigned to each team. The competition takes place at the State Baseball Centre and is coordinated by Baseball Victoria.
- We have a competition starting in Geelong, which will link Victorian Baseball, Active Australia Schools Network and Baseball Geelong. 6-8 school teams will be registered with Baseball Geelong and play on Tuesday nights at the new Geelong Baseball complex. (See attached article Re this program)



- We will advertise the program in selective Active Australia Schools working with the Victorian coordinator Sue Cormack.
- The program has been offered to all Victorian clubs with assistance from Baseball Victoria. The club will use the resources of the Play Ball program and Baseball Victoria when they create the links with their local schools. The kits will be the focus when dealing with schools so that one kit will always equal one team. In our case the 35 kits we have will equate to 35 brand new teams

The VBA undertook a targeted approach in Geelong that involved the coordination and cooperation of a large group of entities.

The Project aims were to:

- ◆ Develop working relationships between interested Active Australia Schools and the Geelong Baseball Club;
- ◆ Provide resources which would support / enhance the delivery of baseball in both the school and club contexts;
- ◆ Provide primary and secondary students with a pathway from school based experiences to club offerings;
- ◆ To successfully encourage the participation of 12 students per participating school to become involved in the Geelong Baseball Club Competitions commencing in October.



## Supporting Agencies

This project was supported by the Victorian

Baseball Association, the Geelong Baseball Club, the Active Australia Schools Network coordinated by ACHPER

Victoria, Leisure Focus incorporating the Barwon Region Sports Assembly and participating schools.

## Program Principles

The principles of the project were as follows:

- ◆ That the project and any funding attached, provide long term outcomes for participating schools – including the provision of teacher professional development where requested, the provision of teaching resources and future access to baseball equipment for school programs.
- ◆ That the project aimed to enhance club offerings by offering professional development to coaches where needed and providing club personnel with information on how to work effectively with schools.

- ◆ That the project had a focus on developing communication between the participating organisations and that the strategies undertaken by a given school with the club have been arrived at through consultation and consideration of the individual school contexts.
- ◆ That the club programs offered as the project finale were available to all interested students despite their baseball ability underpinned by the values of fair play, skill development, and participation for all.

## Project timeline

- Introduction of the project to Active Australia Schools Network Schools – June
- Meeting between interested schools, club personnel, VBA Representative, AA Representative and Sports Assembly Representative – June;
- Development of strategies for individual schools and clubs including the teaching a baseball unit to be completed by October – throughout Term 3;
- Invitations to interested primary aged students to participate in a 8 week Tuesday Night T-Ball Skill

Development / mini Competition – early October. The cost associated with student involvement is \$30.00 each which provides them with 8 weeks of tuition, a t-shirt, cap and drink bottle.

- Invitations for secondary students to be part of Under 12 and Under 14 Competitions commencing in October.
- Schools singularly or jointly achieving 12 students into the club will be awarded with an equipment, school resources pack valued at \$1,200.00.

## Outcomes

**The Geelong Play Ball project resulted in over 200 new registrations to the Geelong Baseball Club.**

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## AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COMMISSION'S TARGETED SPORTS PARTICIPATION GROWTH PROGRAM

The Federal Government's new sports policy *Backing Australia's Sporting Ability - a More Active Australia* gave the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) a clear direction to focus on increasing participation in organised sport, particularly at the club and school levels. The policy also seeks to find new ways of establishing partnerships between sport and business to enhance the sustainability of participation growth.

The ASC's Targeted Sports Participation Growth Program achieves these objectives. It is a three-way partnership between government, business and sport. The Program targets a small number of sports for special support, to grow their business by expanding active membership of clubs and associations.

By targeting mostly larger sports with an already extensive club infrastructure, the ASC aims to achieve significant growth in the number of people of all ages participating in grassroots sport.

The ASC's approach is to work actively in partnership with the targeted sports to deliver a program of sustainable participation growth. The ASC provides both financial and service support to sports. The ASC provides service support by giving access to the resources, programs and expertise of its Sport Performance and Development Group.

The sports currently involved in the Targeted Sports Participation Growth Program are: AFL, Athletics, Basketball, Women's Golf, Gymnastics, Softball/Baseball, Tennis, Sailing, Cricket, Hockey, Swimming, Rugby Union, Rugby League and Surf Life Saving.

For more information contact Simon Langford on 02 6214 1298 or go to the website at: <http://www.activeaustralia.org/business/tspgp.htm>



## Overview of targeted area activity

State	Organisation	# target areas	# of Schools	Est. # of participants	Est. # of registrations	% of participants
ACT	ACTSA/ ACTBA	2	23	5,000	1,300	26%
NSW	NSWBL	5	100	16,380	2,100	13%
NT	NTSB/BB	1	13	2,000	500	25%
QLD	BQI	3	15	6,818	600	9%
SA	SABL	3	15	3,000	500	17%
	SASA	3	40	2,440	600	25%
TAS	TASA	4	31	3,316	1,000	30%
VIC	VBA	6	50	4,500	1,600	36%
	VSA	3	31	6,960	690	10%
WA	BWA	3	50	6,500	500	8%
		<b>33</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>56,914</b>	<b>9,890</b>	

## Our program partners



Major League Baseball



The Australian Sports Commission

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