

# THE Play Ball

Official Newsletter

April 2003

## Play Ball

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### MLB Sizzler Pitch Hit & Run program



### 'PLAY BALL' 'WHERE ARE WE....WHERE ARE WE GOING?'

In the last Play Ball newsletter Peter Wood congratulated everyone involved with the Play Ball program on a job well done under difficult circumstances. In this edition of the newsletter we are going to examine best practices that have been successfully used over the past 10 months in various targeted areas.

The reality of the Play Ball program is that we must compete with other sports with more personnel, money and resources at the grass root level. With this mind we need to be more creative on how we delivery the program and think outside the normal framework provided.

The Play Ball National Management Committee has established guidelines and procedures for the development and implementation of the Play Ball program which is in accordance to ASC specifications.

The management committee is always looking for inventive ways of implementing the program. You are only limited by your imagination as to how Play Ball can be developed in your state.

The program's primary objective is to increase player registrations for baseball and softball within Australia, however we still consider the two sports competing against one another for players at the grass root level. Unfortunately this mentality is continuing to affect the outcomes of the Play Ball program in certain areas. As a group we all need to step back from the program and take a look at the bigger picture and determine what we all want to accomplish and that is registration of new players to softball and baseball.

We need to stop competing amongst ourselves for player and consolidate our joint efforts to start and challenge other sport for players.

In year two, we need to expand the program to double our outcomes and fine tune the strategies for recruitment.

## **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 are school or community based depending on geography, history, current interest or available personal.

The following are strategies that are being used, or will be used in the Play Ball program throughout the country.

➤ Ensure all Tee Ballers and Coach Pitch / Rookie Ball players who are under 10 and are playing in clubs or associations and have never been registered before, are now registered within the Play Ball program. You can now offer greater service apart from these children being insured. We can now advertise to these players directly for programs such as Yard Ball, Play Ball, Gala Days, Come and Try days, Mod Ball, Three Pitch, Diamond Ball, Fast Track and holiday camps.

➤ Establishment of Tee Ball (Play Ball) centres based at 2-3 clubs where those clubs have had little involvement with Tee Ball before. Play Ball facilitates the centre and charges a fee of \$30 per participant. A coordinator is paid and the clubs provide the volunteer coaches. Various advertising is 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.

➤ Establishment of a Play Ball program with autistic or disability children. This is not based at a club and involves participants from all over the state. A \$30 fee is charged. Advertising and promotion for this program includes the networks of autism or handicap groups. Coordinators are paid and parents and

volunteers from the autism and / or disable groups are used to coach and instruct.

➤ Register participants from our special schools competition play in a formal competition over 8 weeks. Twelve teams / schools are involved - coaches are paid and assigned to each team. The competition can take place at the association or club grounds and is coordinated by the state body.

➤ Develop a competition in the country region, which will link the state body to Active Australia schools. 6 - 8 school teams will be registered with the local association and play one night a week at the local complex.

➤ Advertise the program in selective Active Australia schools.

➤ Offered the program to all clubs with assistance from the state. The club will use the resources of the Play Ball program and the state body when they create the links with their local schools. The kits will be the focus when dealing with schools and clubs so that one kit will always equal one team.

➤ Develop a school based competition in on the back of the school kits for the Play Ball program.

➤ In recent times, letterbox drop were conducted in certain targeted areas with a number of registrations recorded.

➤ Promote and publish your own Play Ball program via school newsletters and / or a letterbox drop in homes in target areas.

➤ Assist clubs who have conducted a schools Tee Ball (Play Ball) day at their field. Six schools send three teams each and play 4 games over a day. This day is followed up with a gala day at the club two weeks later. Each school can be provided with a

PH&R kit for entered teams. After year one, kits were only distributed to those schools that had 12 or more players registered with the club.

## **Program Implementation**

In the second year with time to prepare, look at expanding the program to all member clubs and to also use other methods for recruitment.

Have clubs attend a compulsory strategic planning meeting before the 2003 - 2004 season. Introduce Play Ball among a number of other initiatives.

Play Ball along with a number of methods of recruiting or starting competitions should be explained to the associations and clubs. You should come from the position of supporting and advising the clubs with resources but not from a position of doing all the work for the clubs.

The key to this association meeting is to motivate the clubs to do the work with your support.

It has become evident that Play Ball will not work unless the clubs undertake the work with support from the state.

After the first year it should be easier to gain results working with existing clubs rather than trying to establish new competitions without direct club support. The only variance from this strategy is the registering of players in special schools and disability competitions.

With the large number of affiliated clubs and the limited resources of the state body only work with those clubs who approached you after the initial meeting. Do not 'chase' clubs who showed no interest.

The Play Ball program will only grow and develop if we continue to evolve over the next couple of years to find the right mix of strategies and recruitment program for the targeted areas.

It will be the national management committee challenge to maintain and even increase the level of resources over the next couple of years to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of the program throughout Australia.

We need to look forward on how we, as a collective group, can register over 30,000 new members to clubs and the Play Ball program in the next several years.

The challenge is there.... Can we achieve it?

**Chet Gray – Coaching Operations  
Manager (ASF)**

# State Reports

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## **Northern Territory**

The first ever Play Ball carnival was held at Bees Creek Primary School on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> April and was a huge success. Sixteen teams composed of under 8 and under 10 students were divided into teams representing Bees Creek, Sacred Heart and Litchfield Christian schools. 151 students attired in hats and t-shirts representing different Major League Baseball clubs engaged in competition throughout the morning and would have continued beyond lunch if permitted. The support of teachers, volunteers and

parents helped make the carnival enjoyable, fun and safe for all involved.

Baseball and Softball NT Development Officers and volunteers conducted a series of clinics over a three- week period at each school that in the first week provided the children with the basic hand eye coordination skills that are applicable to most bat and ball games. The second week is organized around skills activities and the final week is participation in modified games. The Carnival is then organized to bring all the participating schools in an area together for the children to show off their new learned skills.



## Tasmania

Clinics are currently being conducted in the Kingborough area with more to be confirmed in the Derwent Valley region in the near future. A great boost to the Tasmanian Play Ball program has been Australian player, Alisa Denne (who has recent moved home to Hobart) and state men's player Richie Law. Both players have been available to facilitate clinics.

Participants have responded well to both individuals, with the highlight of receiving autographs from the two on whatever is available - arms included!! Teachers have been impressed with Alisa and Richie's contribution and are very keen to continue with the program.

### Off the Tee



At the Margate school, all students from grade 1 to grade 6 have participated in clinics and shown excitement about the program. It is intended that games will be arranged between schools after Easter, registering players for an 8-10 week roster in third term. A surprise is that some schools would like to have clinics in second term - a term which is usually reserved for winter sports!!



## Western Australia

Since our last Play Ball newsletter, two gala days have been held in WA. The first was held at State Softball Centre in Mirrabooka on March the 15<sup>th</sup>. Approximately 150 children participated in the clinic and over 20 baseball and softball staff were present on the day to assist with the facilitation. Chermai Clews and Jodie Stevenson from the under 19 Australian Women's team and under 16 national champions Benjamin Phillips, Gregory James, Robert Andrews and Jason Garner were on hand to assist with the running of the day.

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, the second Play Ball tournament was held. This time the tournament was held across two parks – Crimea (5 diamonds) and Waltham (4 diamonds). There were approximately 17 boy teams and 11 girl teams decked out in MLB caps and t-shirts participating in this day. Over 20 active coaches and a number of support staff assisting on the day.

The gala day was held over a 3 hour period. It concluded with a closing ceremony, sausage sizzle and a demonstration of the Coach Pitch game with adults also being involved.

Prizes were distributed to participants for effort and outstanding skills - thank you to Fielder's Choice for their contribution of these prizes. The day was a huge success, it emphasised fun and participation in a truly family atmosphere. A big thank you to the softball coordinator – Julie Berry for her contribution to the success of the gala days.



## ACT

ACT continues to roll out the Play Ball program in Jerrabomberra with grades 2 and 3 now complete.

Communications between the two sports has improved, with both baseball and softball meeting on a regular basis to discuss strategies to roll out the program. A number of strategies have been proposed in coming months, these include:

- Sending letters to schools to locate potential interest for term 2. ACT will offer a free kit bag to the school with the most participants at the term 2 gala day (proposed 18<sup>th</sup> June).
- Implementation of a web page with Play Ball information and visuals of schools participating in gala day's.
- Play Ball leaflets potentially offering a \$5 discount for new players of the program that join using the new Play Ball brochure.



The first Play Ball gala day held in the ACT was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April. The day was a huge success and was attended by 90 Students. 10 teams comprising of 9 players each participated, there were 8 teams from Jerrabomberra Primary School and 2 teams from Gundaroo Primary School. The teams were a mix of males and females from years 4 to 6.

Chris Hunter, the principal from Jerrabomberra PS is to be commended for her organisational skills, support of the gala day and the arrangement of the sausage sizzle for the children's lunch. Sue Kominck from Gundaroo PS also supported the gala day by providing two teams from Gundaroo for the event.



Bob Harrow, Michael White and Roz Tumsevics from Softball Canberra, combined with Camille Tipping, a teacher from Erindale College's and 12 to 15 students from the school's Elite Sports Program to make the gala day a huge success.

Year 11 & 12 students from the Elite Sports Program were given a team

each to coach, the balance of students were umpires for the day.

Games were of 30 minute duration, no scores were kept and teams played out all nine batters before swapping. The day was enjoyed by all, with the competitive side of the game being less of a focus and "having fun" was heavily promoted.

20 - 25 Games were played spread over 4 – 5 scheduled time slots. After the games were completed, throwing and hitting competitions from a "T" distances were under taken in search of the best boy and girl in each category.

Players all paid \$5.00 each to attend the gala day and were given a Play Ball cap to assist identify individual teams.

ACT will continue to promote their Play Ball gala day's with no scoring and an emphasis on their "have a go" philosophy. This aim of this is to encourage players to participate equally and assist the less confident players



## NSW (Country)

Play Ball has moved from the preparation stage of the program to having the children playing their competitions.

Coffs Harbour has been playing with four teams, Port Macquarie with three teams, Tamworth with eight teams, Toronto with eight teams and Wauchope with 2 teams. Results to date are that Narranga were successful in Coffs Harbour and Tamworth Public School in Toronto.

All targeted areas are reporting reasonable recruitment figures from the program. Precise numbers will be

known once they begin their domestic competitions. Taree and Armidale have shown interest in the program for year two.



**St Edwards (NSW) warming up**



**Going for first (Port Macquarie)**



## Victoria

Nearing the end of its Play Ball season, Andy Bailey (VSA) is chasing registration numbers and forms to complete requirements for year 1 of the program. To ensure this is met by all associations, Andy has requested a May deadline to supply information.

Schools are still being pursued in the Glen Eira and Dandenong targeted areas, with clinics being confirmed at present. Glen Eira have proposed to run tee-ball competitions in term 2 and Dandenong will run a Blast Ball competition.

### **Greg Weir – Victorian Baseball Association**

One season finishes and another starts at this time of the year.

The summer finals are complete and planning has already commenced for some of these clubs for Play Ball next season.

Geelong Baseball Club after their fantastic work before Christmas conducted another 'mini' season after Christmas where 200 players participated in an 8 week season. All of these players have been given information regarding winter baseball in Geelong, which means some of them will be fronting up for their third season.

The Baseball Victoria Southern Tee Ball centre conducted out the Bonbeach Baseball Club has submitted its final report for the season with 64 registrations. These registrations were returns from last season and also new recruits from a massive letter box drop in the area. Paula Finch the centre coordinator has done a fantastic job with two age groups representing eight major league teams.

The season had 'McDonald' awards each week, a fun day that included a radar gun throw, target throw, long throw, fastest base runner and long hit competitions. The parents did not miss out on the day with a long hit competition for mums and dads.

Trophies for participation were received by all players with obvious delight.

It is also pleasing to note that the winter clubs and associations have also got right behind Play Ball with the Montmorency club leading the way with 55 new players involved in their Tee Ball program.

The Goulburn Valley Association have formed an under 12 competition for the first time with each of the seven clubs entering one team. The clubs are doing fantastic work after strategic planning meetings.

The Forest Hills BC are also entering an under 12 team for the first time in the Victorian Winter Baseball League. A plan was formed in conjunction with

Baseball Victoria and the club has then worked hard on that plan.

Planning has also taken place with the North-East association including Albury / Wodonga where plans are underway for Play Ball to commence in June.

Malvern BC is advertising for their own Development Officer for next summer working directly on Play Ball. A target for new registrations will be set for the D.O who will be partly funded through Play Ball funds.

Werribee BC have also gone into planning to try and put the Geelong model into operation to further grow the 60 new registrations from last seasons program.

The clubs / associations in Victoria are embracing the Play Ball program.



## South Australia

The Hills targeted area is facilitating clinics for year 3 to 5 students in Victor Harbor. The Play Ball coordinator at Victor Harbor PS is currently teaching within that school and is assisting teachers to learn the rules of the Play Ball program, implement fund raising strategies to assist students to participate in the program and the set up of a 6 week program to commence in term 2.

Within the Gawler region, skills sessions are currently taking place at Virginia PS. This has been a challenge for the program as a number of children are Vietnamese and a required to return home straight after school. The coordinator is looking for these children to form a Tee Ball team for the next summer season.

During term 1, Seacombe conducted interschool matches from 4pm to 5pm in two separate divisions.

Division 1 consisted of year 6 and 7 students with Reynella, Braeview, Seaview Downs, Flagstaff Hill and Woodend participating.

5 schools also completed in division 2 which was made up of year 3 to 5 students. Schools involved in this competition included Seaview Downs, Flagstaff Hill, Craighburn, Woodend and Hallett Cove East.

## Australian Sports Commission

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The new Australian Sports Commission Senior Sports Consultant for baseball and softball is Martin Roberts. Martin will be working as the primary ASC contact for baseball and softball and will provide his expertise in high performance sport to both softball and baseball. Martin is a dual Olympic representative and a triple Commonwealth Games gold medallist in swimming. He was a director on the Board of Australian Swimming for five years leading into the Sydney 2000 Olympics. Martin also brings with him extensive experience in coach education and athlete career and education management.

Combined with the support of the ASC's Targeted Sports Participation Growth Program, Martin will be working closely with softball and baseball in developing their Play Ball business plan for the successful continuation of the program over the coming years.

## MLB Report

Play Ball has proved to be a model of what integration at the grass roots can do to grow the sport in local communities. The popular program has been enthusiastically embraced from kids right across Australia - from the salty beaches of Queensland to dusty outback towns of the Northern Territory kids are proudly wearing the Major League Baseball gear supplied to participants.





If history is a guide we can expect that among the thousands of youngsters being introduced to the game through Play Ball there may well be some future big league ball players.

A historic 75 Australians are playing professional baseball in North America this year including many players whose careers started with Tee Ball.

Damian Moss started playing baseball when his under 9s soccer coach decided to keep the team together in the off season by starting a Tee Ball team. The 26-year-old Moss, who grew up in Sydney's western suburbs, is now beginning his second season in the Major Leagues pitching for reigning National League champion San Francisco Giants.



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