



THE Play Ball

Official Newsletter

July 2003

Play Ball

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Corporate Sponsor



MLB Sizzler Pitch Hit & Run program



End of Year 1

It's quite poignant that this newsletter is coming out to coincide with the end of year one. We've all had reason to reflect lately on the worth of Play Ball to our marketplace; weighing up whether it's produced the outcomes we're all looking for. The good news is that it has gone very close to achieving target of 9,000 + program participants, and even more pleasing is that the conversion rate to club registrations has been over and above what we had expected.

New kids to clubs has been the mantra that has driven the results and the National Management Committee has the states and their dedicated team of staff and volunteers to thank for that outcome. Sure these new registrations are self serving, but that's what it's all about. Our sports need to grow beyond our attrition rates; it's as simple as that. If we lose more than we gain, we're in trouble.

Each level within the framework needs a sort of critical mass to maintain if we are going to be around in the future.

For clubs, it might mean having at least 2 or 3 tee ball teams, for associations & districts it might mean the difference between a well patronised competition versus a Mickey Mouse version, and at the regional level it could mean greater bargaining power with the councils and other local governments for new facilities. State associations and the national organisations are no different; we need numbers for the same reasons, albeit that the bargaining power is with state and national levels and has the potential to have greater impact to the sports as a whole. Hence the drive for club registrations. We all stand to gain.

In our most recent round of meetings with the Sports Commission, we've been able to (*hopefully!*) trim down the desktop demands of the program. It has been top heavy in administrative



workload to date and we recognise the need to make it an easier and less onerous task. In saying that, the Commission and the ABF/Softball Australia are rightfully interested in both the sustainability of the program and the intricacies of where success lays. These are bigger picture details that will determine our direction going into the future.

To sum the past year of operations up, targets have been met and a little experience gained by all. Well done to everyone!

Peter Wood
National Development Manager
Australian Baseball Federation

State Reports



Northern Territory

The focus of the program continues in primary schools where our recruitment numbers have been moderate considering the time and effort put into the clinics. In the last two months, six schools with an approximate total of about 1000 children participated in the clinics delivered by NT Baseball's Lachlan Burrows and NT Softball's Lesley Scharnberg.

Carnivals were held recently at Woodroffe PS and at Wanguri PS and have resulted in a number of registrations and positive indications from the school sports coordinators of further involvement in the program in the future.

The Carnivals were conducted 'on site' at the schools and gave the children an opportunity to have fun while engaging in a competition that allowed them to show skills they learned through the clinics. Some of the more skilled players provided the entertainment as they tried in vain to smack the ball over fences surrounding the playing fields.

In addition to the MLB t-shirts and caps, the children also received flyers with Play Ball Program information and a Certificate of Completion with relevant baseball and softball association and club contacts on the reverse side of the document.



Drop that bat and run!!! Bees Creek Gala Day

Letters explaining the program have been sent to twenty-one (21) potential schools to gauge interest in the 3rd and 4th terms. We have also utilized the resources of SHAPES (Sports, Health and Physical Education School) to distribute flyers to all the schools in the Darwin metropolitan and rural areas. This outlet (SHAPES) has already provided us with a positive response from some of the schools.

Baseball and softball are also working with Tania Williamson from the Department of Sport and Recreation trying to organise the commencement of a Tee Ball competition in the third term.



Tasmania

Since the last newsletter, clinics have continued and three (3) gala days have been held in the Kingborough area. These ended with a very popular sausage sizzles and those attending would have to say that the attending coaches, Ali Denne, Lauren Rose, Leanne Cooper, Colin Webber, Luke Craig, Naomi Denne, Bryan Denne and Ev Seabourne were not thinking of having a BBQ at any time in the near future. We had no idea that primary aged children could eat soooooo many sausages in such a short time frame!!!

Regardless of the many sausages consumed, all participants including, teachers and coaches really did enjoy the experience. The June holidays slowed things down for two (2) weeks and school clinics resumed half way through the month with the last booking on July 4th.

As we receive the larger t-shirts from MLB, we will be revisiting the schools serviced so far to present them along with the certificates.

There has been a great response from parents to assist and 'Orientation' sessions planned along with presentations from Tas Sports on setting up new committees and Club/Association/League Management.

Ulverstone Association, under the guidance of Gwen Britton and Marlene Browne are looking forward to introducing the next stage to the very successful Tee-ball roster of 2002. Other areas are being developed over the winter to be ready in 3rd term.

All Targeted areas will be using the appropriate 'Junior Games' and it is envisaged that the already well established Tee-ball competitions will take them on board in the 2003 -2004 season. Tasmania is looking

forward to Jo Brown (Softball Australia – Membership Development Officer) visit later in the year to help promote these new junior games.

The success of our first year is attributed to the coaches named above as well as Richie Law who has recently left us for an apprenticeship in Queensland.

Ev Seabourne
Development Officer



Western Australia

Geoff Hooker Reports:

Morley Eagles Ball Club has been very enthusiastic in the use of the WA Play Ball Programs, Primary School Tee-ball Recruiting Program. The program invites tee-ball clubs to make arrangements with local schools for Play Ball introduction sessions. Play Ball coaches then facilitate the sessions at no cost to either the school or the club. Morley has made appointments with eight (8) schools. Play Ball staff have run sessions for over 750 Year 1, 2 and 3 students. Based on feedback from students and staff, Morley Tee-



Hit that PH&R Target!!!

ball should experience significant registration increases for the 2003 - 2004 season.

The Primary School Tee-ball Recruiting Program has now been presented to all Tee-ball Clubs in Perth and is expected to increase overall Play Ball results for this year and years to come.

Andy Ross Reports:

Play Ball in Western Australia is entering a new and exciting phase. The inclusion of Mrs Di Mount Bryson (President of Western Australian Tee Ball Association) to the Management Committee is the final link allowing the three diamond sports of baseball, softball and tee ball to amalgamate and to genuinely work for the benefit of the children in this state.

Five target groups have registered so far with the program and it is expected 100 schools will be visited for skills clinics by baseball and softball. The emphasis of the school visits will be to assist tee ball clubs at the grass roots levels, that is ages 5, 6 and 7.

Recent gala days held under lights at the softball headquarters in Mirrabooka, were a tremendous event for the children and their parents and it is envisaged that events such as this will be duplicated again this year.

Softball WA wishes the rest of the states well in their endeavours with the program and would hope that their year will be as successful as WA envisages theirs to be.



ACT

Play Ball ACT is in finally in full swing. It has been determined that schools will not be charged for clinic participation, however

schools will have to commit to attendance to scheduled gala days.

Softball Canberra hosted two successful gala days on the 4th & 18th June. Approximately 170 children participated in these days. The gala days were conducted in line with the new Softball Australia Junior Pathways Games with 'Diamond Ball' the focal game of the day. All games were 30 minute in duration, allowing the two teams to bat & field for 15 minutes each. This provided ample batting opportunities for both teams with the focus of the day on participation as opposed to competition.

The children seem to love these gala days and as time progresses we are finding more and more school want to become involved in the program and these gala days. Softball ACT is more than happy to take the gala days to the schools if this assists in exposing the program to the community.

In term two, clinics were completed in four schools:

- Duffy Primary School
- Isabella Primary School
- St Peter & Paul's-Garran and Chisholm High School.



Duffy Primary School

In term three, clinics have been booked at Rivett PS & Theodore PS along with a special needs school in the region.

With the summer season fast approaching, softball will be combining with baseball in a huge pre-season advertising campaign. It is expected that the number of new registrations to leagues will demonstrate the benefits of the PLAY BALL program.



Victoria

Andy Bailey from VSA reports:

The tee-ball / modified games are becoming increasingly popular within the Victorian associations and clubs are starting to become aware of the importance of the TPGP program which is being run within our state.

We have nine associations successfully running tee-ball competitions, all of which involve primary school teams. There has been a lot of interest shown by other associations in the leagues and the VSA is expecting that our number of target areas to increase next summer.

To improve our overall participation numbers we need to start building at the bottom of the pyramid. Tee-ball and modified games are the ideal tool to get primary school aged kids involved. The associations that are presently trialling Blast Ball and other modified games are having good results and lots of fun.

The benefits of the Play Ball program has not only been in the increases of our numbers but has helped bring about an increase in our government funding. This funding will allow us to cover the expenses of more players and coaches to facilitate more clinics in the schools.



NSW (Country)

Play Ball was completed in regional NSW in April, just prior to most associations commencing their domestic competitions. This offered a lead into their respective club competitions for recruitment. All had their success stories in one way or another but it is obvious the benefits that can be gained from the program regardless of the size or current status of the association. It is encouraging to find that the associations that participated are already talking about their plans for year 2 of the program and there is interest from 3 or 4 others to be involved.

Conversion strategies from Play Ball competitions to local club membership will be an issue that most existing Play Ball associations are looking to improve. New associations to the program will benefit from the experience gained from previous Play Ball structures when they initiate their Play Ball programs. The summer associations will be approached to implement their program from October to December 2003 with the winter associations playing from February to April 2004.

Paul Fathers – CBNSW



South Australia

Helen Baker - SA Softball reports:

At the end of year 1 of the Play Ball Program, we at SASA would like to take the opportunity to congratulate our 3 target area co-ordinators for their "beyond the call" hard work and dedication. The program seemed like a daunting task in the beginning & although it was labour intensive, close to 1,000 skills sessions were conducted and our

goal of 600 registrations was ultimately exceeded.

Gawler Co-ordinator, Raelene Schwerdt was assisted by coaches from local clubs. Hills Co-ordinator, Jessie Gill, and Seacombe Co-ordinator - Bob Nicholson encompassed both management and "in the field" roles. Following of an extensive skills program centred in the Victor Harbour area, Jessie Gill succeeded in conducting a school competition for 14 teams (8 mod ball & 6 tee ball) in an area where no teams had previously existed.

With equipment now provided to those schools involved in the Play Ball program and MLB sponsorship these schools are keen to continue softball competition in the future.

Damien Norsworthy reports:

Currently the South Australian Baseball League is preparing to finalise active clubs and the extent of their involvement in the Play Ball program for year two. At present 3 clubs have expressed interest in becoming involved in the program in year two and with fantastic results published in year one for two clubs, (Goodwood and Port Adelaide) more and more clubs are wanting a piece of the pie.

With the list of clubs wanting to become involved growing, the SABL have sent out application for all clubs to gain access to the funding. At this stage the clubs showing the best initiative in delivering the program will be first in line to receive year two funding.

The SABL have set aside a portion to the funding to assist regional centres. In year one the Riverland showed their dominance in the country with just over 250 registered participants. The Riverland has set a goal of increasing this number to 300 in year two, and will continue to build on last years assistance to deliver Play Ball, ensuring its sustainability within the region.

Mt Gambier is the other centre looking at building a strong base for their farm system,

setting an outcome of 300 new participants in year two. Mt Gambier, with a strong volunteer base, and a superb facility with lights, is hoping to deliver a strong 8 week program in both terms four and one, in line with the schools. The program will be school based as they hope with the funding provided, 300 will be the minimum.



Queensland

Allow me to introduce myself, my name is Gareth Jones and with the recent departure of Scott Dickinson, I will be stepping into the role of Queensland Play Ball Co-ordinator. I have been a Development Officer with Baseball Queensland for the past four years on a part time basis and as of July 1st I will be working full time. We are also in the process of appointing an additional full time Development Officer.

In June I conducted a number of volunteer training days where club volunteers were armed with the information necessary to conduct recruitment oriented, school based clinics. The main goal of this was to empower the clubs to help themselves.

Once volunteers attended the training day, they were encouraged to attempt to initiate contact with schools. We (QBI) will provide clubs with the following assistance:

- Strategies to contact local schools
- Equipment to run the clinics
- MLB Caps and Shirts to give to new registrations and
- Gloves from a local supplier at a discounted price.

Most of the clubs have had a very positive response from the schools in their area and are gearing up to conduct their clinics prior to the commencement of the season.

I will be visiting the following schools in July:

- Kimberley Park State School
- St. Augustine's Primary School
- Gleneagle State School
- Pullenvale State School
- Tewantin State School
- East Brisbane State School

Our two interschool competitions will be starting again in August. They are the Redcliffe competition, which is played at the Redcliffe Showgrounds and consists of eight teams from six schools. The other is the Pine Hills competition, which consists of fourteen teams from seven schools.



Final Note:

On behalf of the National Joint Management Committee, I would like to thank all states involved with this program for their efforts in year 1. Year 2 will be an exciting phase of the program and it is anticipated that all states will be able to build on the solid foundation of year 1. Tinika Van Dort

The next Play Ball newsletter will be distributed on Monday 22nd September.

Photo Corner



Please forward your Play Ball photo's for inclusion in the next Play Ball newsletter