



# Play Ball

## Play Ball

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### Corporate Sponsor



**MLB Sizzler Pitch Hit & Run program**



## Play Ball November 2003

### Sustainability – Why it is important.

Sustainability, if taken literally can be interpreted as providing a means through which something can be continued. We're grappling with the impact of that statement right now in terms of finding answers for the next few years for Play Ball.

The obvious financial angles are all being explored: getting more money in or spending less or preferably a combination of both. Since the outset we've made it known that funding will be ramped down in each subsequent year as a result of our how the program was set up with the ASC. So far we've been able to sustain the levels of year one by being smarter with our spending as well as the ABF and Softball Australia picking up some of the running costs.

It's hard to see the same levels of funding happening in year three however, as the amount we receive from the ASC greatly reduces it would be difficult to predict that we will recover this from traditional income sources such as sponsorships.

The reality of sponsorship in today's market is that we have some stiff competition in the shape of the other 21 sports involved in the Targeted Participation Growth Program, not to mention the many other sports and community groups out there all after the same thing. Faced with those rather imposing odds, we've had to think more laterally on sustainability and quantify what it means.

One of the more interesting things that has come up in discussions has been understanding the impact the program is having at local, state and national levels. The relevance of this to our collective bottom



line is in finding out the true worth of all the activity to our sports. To state the obvious, if we're not producing more participants at a club level, then what is the point?

Furthermore, if we are getting these new people to join (great results for the year!) what happens in the following years; are they staying or leaving?

### **Sustainability 1**

In an ideal world, the new club members we create in year one should still be around in year two and beyond if our club systems are strong and showing the new members a good time. If this isn't happening, then despite everyone's best efforts, everything amounts to nought in terms of net gain to the respective sports. It's probably leading into the point of another discussion but it is easy to understand why clubs are an integral part of Play Ball activities. They have to be involved from day one otherwise we're risking a handover that comes with no guarantees (i.e. continuing membership).

### **Sustainability 2**

To get back to the original point, the emphasis here I guess is that if our collective investment in this program is going to pay off in the long term, then we have to continue to invest our time and resources in educating clubs about how to recruit and retain members for themselves. This is one element of sustainability that strikes similar chords between the ASC's interests and our own. Providing a club with *resources* without *know-how* is a sure recipe for disaster. We have to truly engage them in the process so that they understand how to go out and do this work themselves in the future, as well as provide for the gains that they may have made in the present. This is demonstrating sustainability beyond the financial.

### **Sustainability 3**

Here's the hard one: How do we provide funding for state activities at similar levels in the coming years? Is it really necessary to fund to that extent? (*I doubt that we'd find two state programs that would say they don't need the money but...*) The reality is that

some level of income has to be found at the state level if they are to continue in their current form. Fee increases will yield a slight swing upwards, as will an increase in program participants. Keeping new members in the clubs that were recruited in each preceding year however is a quantifiable source of income to the state, and one that could and should be part of the a reinvestment program.

So while we're grappling with the financials of the program from a national perspective, we'd urge you to carefully track program participants so you can answer the questions of worth and value of your program for yourselves. It might lead to some answers for you in terms of if it has been money well spent.

**Peter Wood -  
National Development Manager,  
Australian Baseball Federation**

# State Reports

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## **Victoria**

### **Victorian Baseball Association**

The beginning of the summer season has seen Play Ball explode in October / November.

Victoria is well on the way to meeting targets thanks to the outstanding work undertaken by the clubs involved in the program.

Waverley Baseball Club have been the leader this year with 16 diamonds being used for Under 10 machine pitch and Under 8 tee ball. Baseball Victoria were recently invited to view the spectacle on a very hot Saturday

morning with MLB caps and t-shirts visible over four fields. All teams represent local schools who have been presented with Pitch, Hit and Run kits but all are registered and well and truly a part of the Waverley Baseball Club.

Werribee Baseball Club, through a Play Ball letter drop has reached 98 registrations for tee ball from virtually nothing last year.

A Play Ball television campaign will shortly be commencing in Ballarat and will also be used in Bendigo and Albury / Wodonga to recruit new registrations.

A further 20 Baseball Victoria clubs have also recruited new players through Play Ball and I will highlight their efforts in future newsletters.

Grant Weir -  
Play Ball Coordinator



**Registration Evening –  
The Basin, Victoria**



## **South Australia**

### **SA Baseball League**

All Play Ball programs are up and running and we have received an enthusiastic response from all clubs involved with the program. The general feeling is that this is a

wonderful program, and a great way to be implementing baseball and softball in our community. Local Play Ball clubs have received excellent responses to the program, with clubs often exceeding their estimated targets.

The shining light has been from Mt Gambier which is a strong baseball area. Initially they did not expect to get a program off the ground, but after doing some fast PR and leg work around the district numbers look likely to exceed 300 after the completion of year 2.

Friday afternoon / evenings seems to be a popular time with most groups, as this time seems to clash least with other sporting and after school commitments. These times have also been popular with coaches and umpires from clubs as this again is a time which allows the maximum number to be involved in the program.

Another positive which has stemmed from the introduction of the program is the development of club personnel. There have been several clubs which have initiated discussion and measures to continue the work and employment of a part time Development Officer. This allows clubs to keep better contact with schools in their local area and develop good working relationships with the schools. It also allows better access, smoother transitions between schools programs and clubs and a larger presence of baseball within schools around the local club.

All of these things will foster greater numbers and participation not only in Play Ball programs, but also in the development through the junior ranks.

Sue Wells –  
SABL Development Manager



**Tee shot in South Australia**

### **SA Softball Association**

Term 4 of the school year is up and running. (very fast .....it's almost Christmas!) Bob Nicholson (Seacombe) and Jessie Gill (Hills) are busy visiting local primary schools and Natasha Howard has begun working in the Gawler region. Natasha is in the last year of an Early Childhood Development course and is looking forward to working with the "littlies" in the area, with help from local SASA Board Member, Kaye Copland.

70 softball skills sessions have been conducted by Bob in Seacombe local schools resulting in a new team from Braeview Primary being included in the Southern Valleys softball competition. This competition is currently running with 4 teams from junior primary and 5 teams contesting the senior primary program.

Jessie has spread herself far and wide throughout the Hills area, adapting games to the skill levels of the children as she goes. Skills sessions have been held in primary schools in Mylor, Hahndorf, Scott Creek, Heathfield and Hills Christian School, with a special mention for Murray Bridge South Primary.

Murray Bridge is an area where there is little opportunity for the lower socio economic group to be involved in sport and Jessie feels that with help she can see the possibility of setting up an after school competition. There are several senior players from Murray Bridge playing in the Hills competition this year, so with Jessie's

experience in setting up the Victor Harbor competition from nothing earlier this year, something could happen. All schools visited are keen to play in a carnival / competition this term.

Now that Natasha is aboard things are starting to move in the Gawler region with primary schools at Sandy Creek, Mt Pleasant, Springton and St Jacobi School being visited recently. Planning for first term next year has begun with Angle Vale and Evanston Gardens Primary Schools and Trinity College (all 4 campuses of North, South, Blakeview and Gawler River, a combined total of approximately 600 students under 10 years of age) all signed up and ready to go.

All schools have expressed their delight and appreciation for the equipment supplied by MLB and has made good use of t-shirts and caps in their games. Children always seem to pay attention to the coach and play much better when well decked out!

Di Wells -  
SASA Development Program Manager



### **ACT**

#### **Softball Canberra**

The Play Ball program is steaming along with clinics being conducted in many schools throughout ACT. Terms 3 & 4 have seen a total of 11 schools enjoy the program.

Gilmore Primary School, Jerrabomberra Primary School, Aranda Primary school have all enjoyed gala days so far this year.

Holy Family School had their gala day on Thursday the 20<sup>th</sup> November for Kindy / Year 1 and Years 2/3. Children are paying \$5.00 to participate and sausage sizzle and cap will be issued.

Diamond Ball & Blast Ball has now been introduced in the 2003 / 2004 season as new Junior Pathways Games. All Junior Affiliates

have reported that it is a success and have a total of 58 new Diamond Ball teams registered in leagues and 6 Blast Ball teams. (Jerrabomberra, a new junior affiliate is up and running with 6 Blast Ball & 6 Diamond Ball).

Numbers are increasing in the 4 - 7 year age group although a fall off is experienced in the 12 - 16 year group.

There is a trend for junior sport to have high participation numbers on Saturday mornings; yet keeping teenagers on the diamond is proving to be more challenging.

Two years ago, softball had 240 junior teams participating in the morning competitions. Last year this fell by 25 teams to 215. This year we have shown growth in the number of registered teams and are now back to 232 and we are still receiving late registrations. This is a promising sign and Softball Canberra is excited to see growth in the number of junior members.

Roz Tumservic -  
Chief Executive Officer, Softball ACT



## Northern Territory

### *Report from Batchelor Area School Play Ball Carnival, 7 November 2003*

A hot steamy morning was not enough to dampen the spirit and enthusiasm of more than 100 students and teachers from the Batchelor Area School and Woolaning Homeland Christian College who were participating in a Play Ball Carnival held on Friday the 7<sup>th</sup> of November at the Batchelor School and the town oval.

A joint effort by the NT Softball and Baseball Associations came to fruition with a Play Ball Carnival (Tee Ball) that involved 123 students from the Batchelor Area School and 11 from Woolaning Homeland Christian College. The carnival was the culmination of

three weeks of instructive clinics designed to teach students the fundamental skills of catching, hitting and throwing a ball in a safe environment managed and delivered by accredited instructors and volunteers from the Darwin based Northern Territory Softball and Baseball Associations.

Students from lower primary through secondary levels participated in the event which had a total of 17 teams playing in round-robin competition for three different age groups. Each team had 'team managers' made up from the teaching staff at the schools who lent very vocal and constructive support for the students during the games.

The Sports Coordinator for the Batchelor Area School, Richard McHale, was elated at the positive response from the students and many of the teachers commented about the enthusiasm and commitment shown by the participants. McHale also mentioned the positive effect the sessions had on a number of students who had shown good skills in organizing teams of comparable talent during the clinics.

One of the highlights at the Batchelor Carnival was the last minute entry of Woolaning Homeland Christian College that sent in a team of secondary students who showed a lot skill and potential for the future. The college is even further down the track than Batchelor and this would indicate the commitment by the school and students to be more involved with the program.



**Participants from the  
Batchelor Carnival**

In addition to the carnival held at Batchelor on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, we have been flat out attending to clinics at five other schools from down the track at Berry Springs (a 45 minute drive from downtown Darwin) to Parap just 3 minutes from the Softball office at Gardens Oval. The last carnival before the 'wet' season begins in earnest up here will be at Gardens Oval on the 26<sup>th</sup> of this month and we expect to field approximately 15 teams or more to finish off this year.

The Play Ball Program is an ongoing effort by NT Baseball and Softball to introduce to children between 5 and 12 years old games and activities common to both sports.

Jeff Larson -  
Play Ball Coordinator NT  
*(On behalf of Play Ball NT)*



## Western Australia

Play Ball WA has concluded the school element for the 2003 season. "STEWY" has very successfully coordinated 90 school visits and has accumulated a fan club at the same time. Most clubs have attested to an increase in registrations, which they attribute directly to the school visits. These same school visits would not have occurred without the dedication of the Clubs, their committees and Stewy. Play Ball WA wishes the clubs every success for their Tee Ball Season.

Expectation for the upcoming transitional component is rife. The new guru on the block for coordinating all sessions will be Andy Henderson. Andy is being flooded with requests for transitional sessions and coaching in preparation for the gala days to be held at Softball WA Headquarters in Mirrabooka. This is an exciting time for adults and children. The adults watch with apprehension as the child revels in developing new skills.

Play Ball WA wishes to announce the arrival of total unity and as such will no longer be sending separate newsletter reports.

- For we are one
- For we are many
- From all the different codes we come.
- We are Play Ball WA

Julie Berry and Andy Henderson –  
For Play Ball WA



## NSW (Country)

Armidale has registered 120 children into their Play Ball program. Congratulations to David Dunlop for his efforts in organising this competition along with Development Officer (DO) visits to schools prior to the commencement of the competition. Manning Valley association has completed school visits by the DO and is expecting to register eight teams.

Coffs Harbour is currently organising school visits for December with the view to holding their competition Term in 2004. Their approach is to conduct three regions within Coffs Harbour area of four teams in each area. Depending on how this transpires, they may then have an inter-regional competition.

This approach is also being considered by the Hastings Association. Wagga Wagga has requested all relevant information and anticipates up to a 10 team competition. This will be scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> term 2004.

As Country NSW is predominately winter baseball there will be activity from associations as the winter season gets closer.

Paul Fathers –  
Country Baseball NSW



## NSW

### NSW Softball

The NSW Softball Association has been successful with their application to join the Play Ball program in year 2.

The Play Ball NJMC welcomes NSW to the program and we look forward to working with Troy Baverstock, (Development Manager) Andrew Purdon and Craig Malcolm (Development Officers) in this program. NSW Softball is aiming to bring 480 new participants to this program in the Penrith and Campbelltown areas.

### NSW Baseball

The Play Ball program is slowly taking form in NSW. On Friday 21<sup>st</sup> November we finished a five week program at Paddington Public School where some 125 infants took part in the program. We introduced the local Club (Eastern Suburbs) to the school in an effort to build the vital link between club and school, and I was assisted at the school by two club coaches during the five week program. The school has invited us back again for next year with a view to maybe expand the program in the future.

Bonnet Bay Club has been very pro active in approaching schools and has gained two new teams in their junior competition.

Macquarie Saints Junior Baseball Club held "Come and Try" days which saw them attract some 122 children and also ended up in signing 62 children as registered players.

Basically a lot of hard work has produced a pleasing effort from just a few clubs.

Garry Everson -  
Development Officer



## Queensland

Plans are in place to take Play Ball to Townsville, Lismore and Cairns during February 2004. We will be in Lismore for the first week in February, Cairns the second week and Townsville during the third week. We will be attempting to recruit new players for the start of the winter season as clubs in these areas play in winter competitions. We will also be visiting Central Queensland to try to restart the league in this area.

Gareth Jones –  
Development Officer



## Tasmania

After a very well attended meeting with Jo Brown from Softball Australia, Tasmania has included the new Junior Games in the Play Ball school clinics program and they are used in school as well as association rosters.

We have two new areas that have joined the Play Ball program. Swansea is a small town on the east coast of Tasmania. The local teacher and co-ordinator Trish Rees, along with her very enthusiastic band of parents (all of who attended the Junior Games meeting with Jo), have done a marvellous job in organizing the roster for over 60 children from Kinder to Grade 6.

The other new area, Bridgewater, is lacking in activities for this age group and there is a strong move to get children more involved in sport. Clinics are underway and the schools are keen to run their rosters during school hours in first term 2004. We have been fortunate to have Brad Carver who was recently named in the Australian Men's squad available for some clinics. Brad grew up there and still lives in Bridgewater and is a great role model for the kids.

In the Kingborough area, there are three schools still to become involved but already have 12 teams competing in Diamond Ball, Tee Ball and 3 Pitch Softball rosters with more to come.

Ulverstone association has around 150 participants once again and is currently addressing the transition from school based to the club based rosters.

We have had a lot of feedback from parents and all are impressed with the emphasis that is placed on participation and fun instead of winning. The other aspect that appeals, even though they realize the program is heavily subsidized at the moment, is the value for money at \$10 per child.

Our biggest hurdle is a lack of personnel to deliver the program however we seem to be slowly progressing toward our goals.

Ev Seabourne -  
Development Officer, Softball Tasmania



## Australian Sports Commission

Following the review of the year one Play Ball Annual Report, the ASC is pleased to confirm its continuing investment in Play Ball in year two.

The key areas that the ASC reviewed were membership, milestone achievement, sponsorship and sustainability.

Particularly encouraging aspects of the Play Ball program in year one were:

- Excellent Play Ball membership results against original projections in Victoria, South Australia and Queensland;
- Conversion of Play Ball members to club members in Victoria, the ACT and the Northern Territory;
- Good management structures in place, particularly at national level; and
- Great support from Major League Baseball International.

As with all sports in the Targeted Sports Participation Growth Program, the key challenge for softball and baseball is growing the program in a sustainable manner. From the ASC's point of view, this means that in addition to being well managed from the national to the local level, the program is moving towards financial viability. This topic will be part of the discussions before the annual National Delegates Meeting proposed for April / May next year.

In the meantime we look forward to working with baseball and softball throughout 2003 / 2004 and building on the success of Play Ball in year one.

Marcia Endacott  
Senior Sports Consultant

*The next Play Ball newsletter will be distributed on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2004.*

