

The American National Eagles are a high school-aged summer baseball program. We are one of the original programs that formed the St. Louis Amateur Baseball Association (SLABA) back in 1988. We've had a long history of playing good baseball and have had several players make it to the major league level. What we offer is a chance for parents to watch competitive league games during the work week as well as playing in weekend tournaments.

One important fact is this - no coaches are paid money to coach. Our program director is Bill Becher, and has been coaching summer baseball for nearly 40 years. We offer a program that provides a quality baseball experience for a low cost. We like to have non-parents coaching as that keeps the appearance that favoritism is not happening.

You can visit our league site at <http://www.slaba.net/>

Winter workouts. We start working out players around the first of the year. We select Saturdays and have used several facilities to conduct workouts. The goal of these workouts is to shake the winter rust off the players and help them get ready for high school tryouts. So we run eight Saturdays right up to the last week in February. High School tryouts occur the first week of March so we have to be done with our workouts before then.

Our season starts around Memorial Day weekend. We have to wait for players to complete their high school season. Our younger teams usually start sooner since their high school season ends earlier than varsity. Our season runs through July, with the possibility of a tournament the last weekend of July. We encourage families to refrain from vacations during the season as it shortens a team's bench and reduces the number of days the team can play. We help managers with their scheduling and offer suggestions based on the roster size and pitchers.

We encourage teams to have a minimum of thirteen and it should have 14 to 15 players. Players will go through slumps and injuries. Proper rest is needed and it's better to sit a player earlier in the year for rest so that we can have him available at the end of the year. We understand that puts pressure on the manager to make sure players are getting the opportunity to play. We also stress that competition brings out the best in players. Just because you pay the fees, that doesn't entitle you to equal playing time. If you don't start on your high school team and are playing behind the starter, you as a player have to get better, work harder and definitely take advantage of opportunities. Sitting on the bench pouting about not playing is not a good look for a team.

Our league plays 14-16 games depending on the number of teams. These games run 7 innings and you should expect to play every one. There is no time limit other than darkness. There is a 10-run rule after five innings. We do our best to reschedule rain outs because American National places a high value on winning the league. After the league is over (around July 12-15) our playoffs start. Depending on the structure of the league, you can expect to play two or more playoffs games. Our league scheduling

occurs in February. We currently play home games at Lutheran North HS and the Hazelwood Sports Complex.

Non-league games and tournaments. It's important to get a good mix of additional games through non-league games and weekend tournaments. We like our teams to play one-two games during the week then play several games on the weekend. We suggest that a team play four weekend tournaments (or more depending on the roster size and pitchers) along with additional games against opponents not in our league. You can also play league games on a weekend. Lets say you have one game to schedule against the Jefferson County Blazers. Their home field is Fox HS or Seckman HS. That is a long drive from north county. You could schedule a DH against the Blazers on a Sunday. The first game would be the league game and the second game would be the non-league game. We will guide you in preparing your schedule.

Out of town tournaments. You can play in out of town tournaments. Recently our varsity traveled to Cape Girardeau to play in a tournament. We also traveled to Evansville to play five games in a weekend. The fees do not cover hotel or traveling costs. Usually out-of-town tournaments require you to stay in hotels they offer. These tournament organizations get a kick-back on hotel rooms so you must follow what the tournament dictates. At the varsity level, we ask the players to room together (2-3 to a room) as that builds a team atmosphere and prepares them for life on the road in college baseball. For the 15u and 16u teams, players should room with their parents.

When it's all said and done, you should be playing 30-plus games, depending on how well you do in tournaments and the playoffs. Considering your season runs from Memorial Day to July 23 (around there), that's about eight weeks. In 2016 our varsity played 57 games from May 29th to July 31st. 57 games in 64 days. That was quite a season. We're not saying that's what your season will resemble, I just saying depending on how well you do in tournaments can dictate a pretty big schedule.

The fees are \$1,050 per player. We have two program fundraisers that everyone participates in. Funds raised are to cover expenses that the fees don't cover. We have a trivia night and require players to get one table at \$160. Each team puts together several raffle baskets. They have their guests pay for their spot and we have a good event for the program. We ask each player to sell seven Super Bowl squares at \$10 each for our program boards.

Additional fundraisers. We encourage teams to run additional fundraisers. BBQs or selling pizza or washer tournaments or poker tournaments are some of the fundraisers teams have run in the past. We have had players pay their entire fees selling pizza. We understand that we're asking for a pretty large financial commitment but if parents do their research, they will find that we are a reasonably priced program for select baseball.

Each player will get two game jerseys, a hat and t-shirt. We don't pay for pants, socks or belts. Each coach gets two jerseys and a hat.

Each coach or anyone in the dugout (scorekeeper) will have background checks done on them. This is a league requirement and the program pays for it. This is done every year.

For our league games, we use the umpire organization GSLU (Greater St. Louis Umpies). These are the same umpires that do high school games. Umpire costs for league games are around \$65 per ump per game. For league games, we pay for one umpire.

For non-league games, we usually schedule the GSLU umps too. Its easier than trying to find capable umps to do high school games.

Tournaments. We like for our teams to play tournaments that closely resemble a regular 7-inning game. Playing in a tournament that costs \$350 may play 90 minute games or a max of six innings. We understand time constraints on the weekend but we build our teams to play full games.

Stats. The league site has stats for league games only. We are required to use GAMECHANGER to score our games. You can score them live or later from a regular score book. But our league game stats are purposely kept separate and I'll cover that in the All-Star game. Your non-league games and tournaments are also scored in GAMECHANGER. We don't pay for parents to have 100% access to the GAMECHANGER stats but each team has an administrator that can pull stats off for parents to view.

Showcase. Fees cover our players performing in the annual SLABA Showcase. This is designed for juniors (and some seniors who haven't committed to a college) to display their skills for area college coaches. There are organizations that put on Showcases and charge players up over \$150. Our showcase does not charge players as our fees cover that player expense.

Baseballs. The league requires us to use a common baseball. Each of our team receives 3-6 dozen. As you are aware, we lose lots of baseballs at Hazelwood. Each dozen costs about \$65.

Tournaments. The older you get, the more they cost. Location/venue also has something to do with the price of tournaments. Our varsity played in a Premier tournament at SIU-E and the cost was \$825. So you can see if you get in several of those it can be quite expensive.

SLABA Post-Season. At the end of the season (mid-July), the managers gather for the All-Star meeting. Prior to this meeting, you as the manager selects one player on your team that will be the teams MVP. You do this using stats/performance from league games only. You do not select a player that hit four homers in a tournament. It's only based on league play. This player will represent our team in the All-Star game. The rest of the roster is discussed/voted by the other managers in the league. So you can expect to have several players on the All-Star game. There will be a lineup of position starters and reserves. Each team places at least one pitcher on the squad. The

starting position players play the first five innings then the reserves finish the remaining four innings. A full nine-inning game is played. This game is usually played on the last Sunday of July and has been at Car Shield Field (formally TR Hughes). The Varsity game is on Monday. Then on Tuesday, managers and selected players/parents gather for a banquet (Orlandos in Maryland Heights). A meal is served and the team MVP's are recognized and receive trophies. Other awards are presented too. This is a nice way to cap our season.

Insurance. league fees vary based on the number of teams we have. This cost is generated by the league and usually runs \$900 to \$1500 per team.

Field use. It cost money to play at Lutheran North and the Hazelwood Sports Complex. We have an arrangement with Lutheran North and the City of Hazelwood to pay one fee and we're able to schedule our games first. We paid Lutheran North \$1000 to play maybe three games. In the past, we've played as many as 15 games there. It depends on the number of teams we have. Next year we're looking to add Koch Park too.

Miscellaneous. We have miscellaneous expenses that pop up. We may buy wood bats for our team to play in a wood bat tournament. We've bought catcher's equipment or a radar gun to help the program. Baseball buckets, practice baseballs, scorebooks also fall into this category.

Finally, we want to say this about college baseball. No longer do coaches get out and "scout" a bulk number of their players. There are only so many scholarships at the Division 1 level and many times players "share" a scholarship. There is money to be had at the JUCO level (junior colleges), NAIA and Division 2 (partial but most is academic). College coaches run baseball camps at their schools. Players pay to attend. The coach has a captivated audience in that the player is there to perform for that specific school. Showcase events can be a big waste of money. There may be schools there that the player has not interest in attending or isn't given an opportunity to showcase his talents. I say this because a big draw for parents is their child getting a scholarship. Coach Becher has talked with many coaches and has written recommendation letters for players. College coaches don't care what player stats are, they are interested in grades, SAT scores, behavior, things like that. They don't want problems, they want players who work hard to get better and that are eligible to play in the spring. So don't get wrapped up in events that are showcases. Players get better scholarships based on grades. Players should look into the A-Plus program. JUCO colleges love A-Plus players.