

Baseball PEI

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2020 Baseball PEI Fall Forum Minutes **Saturday, 17 October 2020, 9 am** **Electronically, via Zoom**

In attendance:

- Walter MacEwen, President, Baseball PEI
- Janet Cameron, Director of Provincial Teams, Baseball PEI
- Darrel Kirev, Director of 11U Competitions, Baseball PEI
- John Munro, Director of 13U Competitions, Baseball PEI
- Connor Myers, Director of Administration/Skill Development, Baseball PEI
- Joelyne Taylor, Director of Female Baseball, Baseball PEI
- Mike Richards, Supervisor of Umpires, PEIBUA
- Rudy MacDonald, Bedeque
- Andrew Cameron, Cornwall
- Scott Taylor, Stratford
- Patrick Kelly, Kensington
- Jean-Paul Pendergast, Kensington
- Kris O'Brien, Cardigan
- Tanner Doiron, Summerside
- Adam Connolly, Summerside
- Nicole Doucette, Western
- Don LeClair, Past President, Baseball PEI
- Randy Byrne, Executive Director, Baseball PEI

Meeting:

- 1) Walter MacEwen called the meeting to order at 9:02 am.
- 2) A roll call was done for the purposes for everybody to introduce themselves to the group and to be highlighted on the roll call for the meeting. Eighteen (18) people were present.
- 3) Several topics submitted by the Board of Directors, and created by the Board of Directors, for discussion were examined:
 - a. The issues with a lack of volunteers, especially within the coaching ranks, were discussed. Many promising baseball minds are discouraged to coach, due to several factors, including difficulties and hassles with parents in terms of coaching decisions and disciplining players, the time and material commitments, and so on. As well, this affects the number of volunteers willing to serve on minor baseball association Boards, which often leads to one or two people on each Board doing the majority of the work, which, in turn, can lead to burnout. It was suggested that associations may be wise to recruit managers for teams even before coaches. If a manager is set up and will take on the planning, booking, "paperwork" and et cetera, it makes it more appealing for someone to coach.

There was a question about the ability to make things easier for coaches to know how to update the website. Randy Byrne said Baseball PEI will be developing a step-by-step video to send out to teams in 2021 on how to properly update the website.

Kris O'Brien made the comment that in the Cardigan association, special attention is given to recruiting coaches and managers of players at the Rally Cap level, as those people usually stay on throughout their child playing minor baseball.

Basically, if more support is offered, the more willing people are to coach and volunteer.
 - b. In 2020, ejections and suspensions were up dramatically – well over double from 2019 – so the topic of umpire abuse was discussed. It being a strange year due to Covid-19 and the worries associated with that, people were more on edge.

However, it was noted that, especially at the "A" levels, associations are almost willing to take anybody who will come along and coach and that person may not be the best suited for the position. Therefore,



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related to the first topic, if you have more qualified coaches and more people between suited for the work, there could be fewer instances of abuse towards umpires. Coaching mentorship was brought up, in the sense that if a mentor could work with a new coach to give them more confidence and abilities, but also in ways to deal with certain situations and umpires, that could be extremely helpful. There was discussion as to whether it would be more beneficial for this to be association- or Baseball PEI-led, as some coaches bristle at the notion of another coach coming in and telling them what to do, as opposed to somebody they know and with whom they are comfortable. While there are benefits to this, it may be too taxing for associations already strapped for time and volunteers and probably would benefit from Baseball PEI taking a key role in developing such a program.

Heavier deterrents in terms of discipline – i.e. an automatic one-game suspension for an ejection and a two-game suspension if the ejection was in the fifth inning or later – were discussed, and the majority agreed this was needed. However, it was suggested by John Munro was that in serious cases of umpire abuse, it would probably be more educational and beneficial if the offending party sat down with the category director, their association president and a member of the PEIBUA, likely over Zoom or some medium like that, and discuss the situation and ways forward to deal with certain issues that would not lead to umpire abuse. All in attendance felt this was a very worthwhile way forward in cases of umpire abuse.

- c. While Covid-19 wreaked havoc with society and the sporting world, Baseball PEI fared relatively well in the summer of 2020. While growth has been experienced over the past number of years, it was posed to those in attendance about some ideas to help improve the experience and further grow the sport here on PEI. One suggestion was to focus on Rally Cap and introductory programs – if those programs are fun, players will remain and continue to play. Baseball PEI should continue to support associations in these measures and offer assistance in growing Rally Cap in areas.

Also mentioned was getting into the school systems and doing “baseball days” in Phys. Ed. classrooms, especially targeting the primary grades (Kindergarten to Grade 3). It was discussed that there are a lot of logistical hoops to jump through to do this, depending on the school; and at the end of the day, whether or not the Phys. Ed. teacher is interested in having baseball within their units will often dictate if this will happen or not. The merits of Winterball and Baseball 5 (a baseball-like game that can be played indoors without a bat) in this regard were mentioned, and it was noted that maybe it would be of benefit for Baseball PEI to look into reaching out to the PEI Phys. Ed. Teachers Association about doing a presentation on a P.D. Day and create units for teachers to use that incorporate baseball and hit the outcomes necessary in Phys. Ed. curricula.

The Fall Baseball Pilot was briefly discussed. While there have been some minor hiccups, the first year is going decently. It was shared with the group that if it were to continue in 2021, the playing ages would probably be changed to 10U, 12U, 14U and 18U, to help prepare players for their next season of summer baseball and to help with some issues in older players at the 11U age being too strong for younger players, and the safety concerns around that. Those in attendance thought this was a good idea.

There was discussion about potential financial barriers about playing baseball. Associations compared registration costs, especially at the Rally Cap level, and spoke to the need to advertise Kidsport more and maybe give out a few free registrations to players/families who need them. Finally, there was a request for Walter MacEwen to talk to Baseball Canada about maybe having a deal with Rawlings for free gear for young players, as Hockey Canada has with Bauer.

- d. John Munro brought forward to the group his desire of repealing the rule at 13U “A” and 15U “A” where the baserunner cannot steal home on a wild pitch or passed ball. While this rule was implemented a few years ago due to the quality of the play at these levels, the quality of play has improved. Also, this rule leads to lazy catchers not focused on blocking the ball and not hustling to get the ball at the backstop, knowing the runner cannot score. This rule was a source of great confusion and angst for several coaches – and for John and Randy themselves – and John felt it would be the best if the rule was scrapped



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altogether. Nobody in attendance argued with the suggestion to eliminate this rule at 13U “A” and 15U “A” in 2021.

- e. The Provincial Championships in 2020 were different from in previous years, due to Covid-19 rules surrounding gatherings, and most divisions used a best-of-three playoff system and a one-game final. While many players and coaches enjoyed this format, there was a discussion as to whether or not it would be feasible in future years. A couple of associations voiced concern about having their municipalities be able to prepare fields either later in September, or on short notice (which this system does require from time-to-time). In a normal year, Provincial Championships are usually completed by Labour Day weekend or the weekend after, due to hockey and Baseball Atlantic Championships. This year, those weren’t issues and the Provincial Championships went deeper into September. However, in a normal year, Provincial Championships have to be completed by roughly the Labour Day weekend, which would mean there would be less availability for fields and some divisions would have to end in early August. Also, Provincial Championships determine representatives at Atlantic Championships. To have the representative determined in a format that requires fewer pitchers would set these teams up for failure at Atlantic Championships, so if the “playoff” format were to be used, you’d have to have Eliminations in late-July/early-August, using tournament-formats, to determine the representative. The consensus was that the playoff format was fun, but in a normal season, posed too many logistical issues for it to become a regular occurrence.
 - f. The question was asked whether the Eastern zone – Stratford and the Kings County associations – should be separated in terms of “AAA” baseball. The Eastern team won Provincial Championships at 11U “AAA” and 13U “AAA” this year and it has the most players of any “AAA” zone on PEI. While Eastern won two Provincial Championships this year, they won none in 2019, and since the “AAA” zones were implemented in 2016, Capital District has won six titles, Eastern five, Mid-Isle two and Summerside two. There was discussion whether or not it is a structural issue or just a case of a good group of players and coaches coming through (the example of Capital District between 2016 and 2018 was given) and it was stated that population-wise, each of the zones are based on the Federal Electoral ridings which means they are relatively equal in terms of population. It was determined that results for all the zones should be monitored for the next two seasons, and at the end of 2022 season, the “AAA” zones should be examined to see if any changes should be made.
- 4) The meeting was adjourned at 10:44 am.

