



Meeting of October 15, 2005

Saint John Vineyard

Teams represented:

Fundamental Baptist, Kennebecasis Baptist (by email), Kings Valley Wesleyan,
Kings Way Assembly, Main Street Baptist, Rothesay Baptist, Saint John Vineyard

League Executive present:

Vance Crozier (president)
John Greer (umpire coordinator)

Here are the ideas brought forward at this informal season wrapup, in no particular order...

Season length, etc.

Although we'd all love to play until the snow comes, or our wives call us inside, we do have time constraints to deal with when it comes to field time. One option worth looking into may be skipping the month of May altogether, using the usual City fields from June through the end of August for the regular season, then moving to the Kennebecasis Valley for playoffs in September.

Another option has been considered by some teams that make an appearance at the Bethany Orthodox Tournament in late fall. Once the regular season has concluded at the end of August, those teams interested in trying it would have a short season of orthodox softball as a tune-up for the tournament, or just a change of pace for some. It was noted that we would need to take into consideration such things as equipment for ump's & players and the fact that some of our players are not cut out for the pace of orthodox. Although not a natural fit for us, some teams may want to plan on scheduling some exhibition games after our regular season is done, or organize a tournament among those teams that are interested. Let the executive know if this sounds like something your team wants to be involved in!

It was discovered last year that Memorial field was generally available on Friday nights. This may be an option for us if work is really to take place on Shamrock come the 2006 season. The City will be consulted on this.

Playoffs

The playoff format worked well last season - how could it not with 8 teams! Hopefully we'll have more teams to deal with in 2006. Once a format has been decided on, it was suggested that a scheduled consolation round would help give those teams that have been bumped out of the playoffs some nights out, keeping the field time roughly even for all teams. It was tried, unsuccessfully, to run a consolation round 3-4 years ago. Perhaps if we devise our schedule long before the playoffs start, we can schedule slots for "loser of series A vs. loser of series C", but we need those teams to show up. Hey, it'll be August - best month to play ball in around here!

Tournaments & All Stars

What was brought on as a budget necessity, the August 6 tournament at Memorial Field was a great success on all fronts. We actually got the books into the black before the end of the season, prizes were rounded up & awarded (thanks again to The Old Bat Company, Green Lee Shoes and Joanne Jamer therapeutic massage) and 4 teams came out. Everyone enjoyed the great weather & the chance to play on teams with some guys from other teams.

It was suggested that a season kickoff tournament at Memorial may be a great way to start the season, possibly with some invited teams taking part. Another option could be a co-ed tournament, either as a start or finish to the season. There has been some discussion over the past few years about co-ed possibilities, even a separate division operating under the SJCD banner. After some research it doesn't seem like there is enough interest yet to sustain a division for a whole season, but a tournament over a weekend or a few exhibition games may be a viable option.

Ah... the All Star Game! We have always had trouble with this game, trying it on different times, days of the week, fields, etc. Several improvements were proposed. The home run derby is, well, inconsistent at best & ties up the field for one guy from each team. Maybe non flight-restricted balls can be used, the derby could be shortened (top four hitters only...) with that time used for a skills competition. Infielding efficiency, an outfield-to-home plate relay, etc. Another option thrown out there was an "All Star Challenge" game vs. another league's team (the Outlaw League, for example), using players that are picked for both their witness *and* their skills. All Star team vs. league champs is another possibility, as is having the organization of the All Star Game rotate to a different team every season, allowing that team to focus on the game & to try something different if they like.

2005 Rule changes

It was generally agreed that the +2 homerun rule was good for competition (with a "split opinion" from RBC), and there were no problems with the bat restrictions. The ASA list should be consulted again before buying any new bats this year, a link is on the league website (http://ca.geocities.com/sjcd_churchslowpitch). One team requested a printed copy of the list for each team, eliminating the chance of an "I didn't have the list" argument further down the road.

One point was brought up concerning the 7-run rule. There were several instances last season when the home team was behind by more than 7 runs going into the bottom of the 5th inning, but would only be allowed to score 7... Perhaps the 7-run rule

should be removed for the bottom of the 5th in these cases - something to officially look at for the next meeting.

2006 Rule changes...

The home plate safe-line was the subject of some discussion last season. Karl Conrad described it this way: "I think we should change the ruling on crossing the home plate line. Currently we have to have a hand or foot fully over the line whether in the air or on the ground. The best way to rule this line would be to call it as if the line, and the area beyond it, was home plate. That is, any body part coming in contact with the line or beyond it would be considered home plate contact, not in the air over it. This would be much easier for the umpires to call and less confusing to the players.

Not really rules, so much as random suggestions & reminders:

- Make sure you have a new ball or two in your gear bag at all times! There were a few games last season where we only had a single new ball for a double-header.
- Should home plate itself be part of the strike zone? I don't know about this one - I like freezing a hitter with a pitch that hits on the front corner of the mat (You know, the one time I did it!).
- Umps need to make sure they are enforcing the 6-foot lower limit consistently.
- As mentioned above, more could be done with the All Star Game. Maybe it would be easier to promote & better attended if it was a fundraiser for missions/charity (maybe PRO Kids?)
- All teams showed a great deal of sportsmanship this year, and generally kept a good attitude during & after controversial calls.

Promotion

After the Christmas season has passed, Eric and Vance will begin promoting the league to potential churches. Pastors should be approached, but they are not necessarily the best contact to organize a team. The official invites should be going to the most appropriate person. Bulletin board announcements could also be sent around with a request to post.

Newsong has been great with promo spots & is willing to have us on more often in the future. We will continue to work with this outlet, especially heading into spring.

Membership rules

There always seem to be a few players who swear on the field, someone shows up with a beer shirt, etc. Despite this, we still want to avoid a churchgoers-only, player card situation. This is meant to be an outreach as well as a Christian sports organization. That being said, the league must ensure that the church knows & approves of the guy running the team, as the team rep is setting the example for his team on & off the field, both with other players & with spectators. There may be a call for roster sheets to be passed on to the church's pastoral staff, which we have tried before.

Umpires

John Greer did a great job coordinating umpires again this year, with minimal numbers of umps available on many nights. Some of the umpires we have on the "roster" now are getting older, some are worked more than they'd really like, several seem to need to take their vacation during the summer! There were some early playoff games that had umpire-related scheduling problems. We need to recruit some more umpires. Even if they are only responsible for a handful of games, it would get some new faces in the rotation & could only help.

I don't know how many times I have heard "Great job on those umpiring clinics Larry," - and it's true! It was suggested, that one clinic prior to the start of the season for new umps would be great. How about it Larry?!

Well that should be enough to get you thinking about the upcoming ball season. Keep in mind that this was a non-voting, all ideas welcome meeting. There were some very good ideas in here, and some of them should be brought to the first meeting of 2006. Feel free to talk among yourselves!