

APRIL 2002

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SIDELINES is the official publication of:

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SIDELINES

News and Information for **Springfield Youth Athletic Association** Players, Parents and Supporters

SETTING THE TONE FOR ANOTHER SEASON

Can you believe it's nearly time to toss the first pitch of our 2002 diamond sports season? Seems like many of us say that every year about this time. Winters packed with basketball and volleyball games, wrestling matches and various other activities make the days and weeks pass quickly for all of us involved in the lives of our children. Baseball and softball season seems to arrive so suddenly each spring.

I begin each new baseball season confidently informing my players, "We'll be the best defensive team we play this season." For the most part that has been the case, because we work awfully hard on that aspect of the game. I also ask my parents to be the very best fans we'll see all season, and they deliver each season, because they work hard too.

I expect my team's parents and the players to show the utmost respect for opposing fans, players and coaches, and most especially the umpires. I want parents to cheer for our players and encourage them during games, but I want them to refrain from coaching on the sidelines or in the bleachers. Instead, I ask them to share their suggestions or concerns with a coach during or after games. In my estimation, setting the tone for a season in this manner leads to better performance by the players and greater sportsmanship exhibited by everyone.

I expect my assistant coaches and I to handle players with respect as well. I've been guilty of just the opposite in my past. Too intense, too vocal was I. Once I realized it was necessary to focus more on being a baseball teacher who makes the game fun, and less of a taskmaster with a loud voice, my team got better and enjoyed the game more as young players. I enjoyed coaching a whole lot more as well.

A handful of years ago I could be heard scolding a player or umpire for being out of position or making a mistake, as my passion for baseball clouded my thinking. Today, I have the same zeal for the game, but I'll put an arm around a kid, or make light of the moment, while making my point in a much more positive and effective manner. Oh, I still pick spots to exercise my vocal chords. Just ask my players. But I strive to be positive and more like a teacher encouraging my "students" to be the very best they can be. I believe this motivates players, lifts their spirits and keeps them playing ball, whether the ball is hard or soft or hit off a tee.

Age and seasoning helped me become a better coach in terms of handling players. Coaching clinics, especially the wisdom shared by former Northwest High School coaching legend Bill Olson, were beneficial. But a terrific group of caring and fun team parents, including my wife, deserve most of the credit for helping me evolve as a youth coach. Some of them had the courage to positively say what had to be said.

My Pony baseball players, many of whom played together since coach pitch, will start of their final season of SYAA baseball on April 20. As their coach I look forward to the experience with mixed emotions. I can't wait for the first pitch to be thrown to start our season. A long and wonderful journey, one that began with a squirrely bunch of squeaky-voiced boys in 1997, will then sprint toward its inevitable conclusion in the midst of another sweltering Nebraska summer. I know I won't be ready to pack up our gear after the final out ends it all, and I'm faced with finding the right parting words for a great group of young men I had the privilege to coach.

I hope to see you on a ball field soon with your great pride, youthful enthusiasm and tremendous class on display, in red and black of course. Have a great season!



Frank Staskiewicz, Jr., *President*

FOOTBALL UPDATE

Mike Williams, Commissioner

Although we are on the verge of starting another baseball season, it's important to think football and get started on planning for the 2002 season. At the March SYAA board meeting plans were made to hold registration in May, a month later than last year, because we had many players sign up late in 2001. Although we were very pleased with the final turn out of participants, the late registrations created some problems getting everyone properly equipped.

Football registration will be held in the Springfield Legion Hall May 11 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. If you can't make it on May 11, you should mail your registration. However, mailed registrations will be considered late if not received by May 11. Registration forms will be sent home from school with students prior to registration.

This year we must strictly adhere to our late registration policy. This means every registration received after May 11 will require a \$10 late fee to be processed. For planning purposes no late registrations for tackle football can be accepted after June 15. Late flag football registrations will be accepted through July 31. It'll work out best for everyone if you mark your calendar today and plan accordingly to take care of registration.

We're not trying to make things difficult, but we do need to give ourselves adequate time to assess equipment needs and plan for the season. We need to be fair to those who sign up on time and make sure they get equipment. Also, we don't have enough football history to accurately project how many players will register, so we must allow plenty of time to get everything lined up.

I want to thank Dianna and Jim Jeffery for the great job they did with the concession stand for our games at Platteview last season. There is a tremendous amount of work that has to be done during the week, in the morning before the games, and after the games. The Jeffery family never missed a beat. GREAT JOB! Your efforts did not go unnoticed.

If you have any questions about the upcoming football season, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Our web site now has it's own home at:

www.syaaonline.org

Visit the site regularly to get all latest team information including rosters, schedules, highlights and more. Plus you can get information about all of our sports, the leagues we play in, rules and a lot more.

SOFTBALL UPDATE

Jim Bowers, Commissioner

Our first Todd Valley meeting for the new season was held March 7 in Valley. Fort Calhoun joined the league this year to expand the league to 12 towns. This year our 10 and Under team will compete in the "B" division again. The season will start the week before Memorial Day weekend and end around the week of July 6.

Our 8 and Under team is coached by Bret Feller, and the team will play on Tuesday nights. Dave Spurgeon coaches the 10 and Under team, which will play on Tuesday and Thursday nights. Our 12 and Under group is coached by CeCe Mitchell, and her team will play Monday and Wednesday nights.

Unfortunately, we had just a couple girls register to play for our 14 and Under team. We thought we had a lot of interest in this age group, but clearly we didn't. If you have any suggestions on how to get and keep our older girls playing ball, please visit with me sometime.

Good luck to all our girls' teams this season!

BASEBALL UPDATE

Jeff Kreifels, Commissioner

The weather may still be on the cool side, but the 2002 baseball season is here. Coaches began their practices in hope this may bring on the typical warm weather of the season.

Coaches for this season have been appointed. Frank Staskiewicz and Don Dalton will each head a Pony team. John Kohlbeke, Mike Williams and myself will lead the three Bronco teams, and our three Mustang teams will be coached by Mark Reissener, Kent Wirges and Mike Buskirk. These individuals are greatly appreciated for taking the helms of these teams knowing it's time consuming, sometimes challenging, but always rewarding experience to lead our young men.

A meeting was held with the coaches to share direction and expectations for this season. Sportsmanship exhibited by coaches, players and fans was discussed. It has been, and always will be, the primary focus of SYAA teams to exhibit sportsmanship and respect to all involved. I have the utmost confidence our coaches will carry on this tradition.

The teams mentioned above will kick off their seasons in late April. Our coach pitch teams are being assembled as of this writing, and they'll begin their seasons in mid May. Great memories are made by all those involved whether they are players, parents, family or friends. I am confident that as we venture through the season those memories will be positive and a treasure to keep for a long time.

BOARD ELECTIONS

At the February Board meeting the following board members were elected:

President - Frank Staskiewicz, Jr.*

Vice-president - Scott Lane*

Secretary - Michelle Oiness*

Treasurer - Mike Kalin*

Baseball Commissioner - Jeff Kreifels

Softball Commissioner - Jim Bowers

Football Commissioner - Mike Williams

Volleyball Commissioner - Leigh Ann Amerine

We welcome Mike and Leigh Ann to the board as the newest members. The other board members were incumbents.

FIELD MAINTENANCE COORDINATOR NEEDED NOW!

As of this writing we still do not have a Field Maintenance Coordinator for the 2002 diamond sports seasons. In the absence of a coordinator we haven't been able to get some of the pre-season field preparation work done, and we were late getting the batting cage net hung. We also have just one person lined up to drag and stripe fields for games, check fields for rainouts, and update the rainout message for coaches. If the coordinator position isn't filled soon, the pre-season field work will have to be bypassed. If more help isn't found to prepare fields for games, coaches will have to be asked to recruit parent volunteers to do the work. If you're interested in serving as the coordinator and/or preparing fields for games, please contact Frank Staskiewicz today. SYAA pays \$8/field for dragging and striping, and we need two or three more people for the job.

1ST ANNUAL SPRINGFIELD CLASSIC WOOD BAT TOURNAMENT JUNE 17 - 23

The Dew Drop Inn in Springfield is sponsoring this fun wood bat baseball tournament for Pony and Bronco teams. SYAA is the official host of the event, and we stand to benefit greatly from the concession proceeds. We'll need a lot of help from our parents of Pony and Bronco players, so please be as generous with your time as possible. Actually, anyone can get involved!

A number of fun events for players and fans will be held in conjunction with the tournament. Check out our web site for all the details as plans come together. If you're interested in joining the fun by volunteering to help, please contact Frank Staskiewicz.

CALENDAR

May 9, Board meeting, 7:00 p.m.

May 11, Football registration, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

June 13, Board meeting, 7:00 p.m.

June 17-23, 1st Annual Springfield Classic Wood Bat Tournament (Pony, Bronco baseball)

July 11, Board meeting, 7:00 p.m.

Monthly Board meetings are open to all and are held on the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Our regular meeting site is the Springfield Legion Hall. However, the date, time and location are subject to change due to the availability of the hall. Only members of the Board of Directors are sent meeting reminders. If you plan to attend a meeting, you're encouraged to contact a Board member to confirm the meeting will be held as scheduled.

BOARD APPROVES COMPETITIVE BASKETBALL, VOLLEYBALL

In February the Board approved a motion to begin sponsoring competitive basketball teams for boys and girls, and competitive volleyball teams for girls.

A large number of basketball teams already compete competitively in the Twin River Valley League, Predator League, and in the Midwest Invitation Tournament (MIT), as well as other tournaments in the area. These teams do not have sponsorship and must acquire their own uniforms and equipment, and collect and pay their own fees.

S.Y.A.A. will provide all the administrative functions, very similar to how we operate today for diamond sports and football. Platteview's varsity boys and girls head coaches have agreed to help us get our basketball program off the ground. A commissioner will be appointed soon to join the board and spearhead the effort to sponsor teams beginning with the 2002/03 season. If you're interested in holding this position, please contact any current officer right away.

Similarly, we'll sponsor competitive girls' volleyball. Leigh Ann Amerine was appointed Volley Commissioner in February. She'll be working with Platteview head coach Jason Owens to develop the volleyball program over the coming months, so we'll be prepared to sponsor teams in 2002/03. Please contact Leigh Ann if you have any suggestions or insight to share with her.

2ND ANNUAL HUSKER / DRAGON INSTRUCTIONAL BASEBALL DAY CAMP

Nebraska Cornhuskers head coach Dave Van Horn and his assistants and some current players will lead the camp in late June on a day to be determined. The camp will be held at the Gretna Middle School baseball complex. Pre-registration is required. The camp fee is \$30 and includes lunch. For more information call or e-mail Patrick Phelan at 332-5344 or pwhelan@dlrgroup.com.

SYAA THANKS THESE GENEROUS SPONSORS FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF THE 2002 DIAMOND SPORTS SEASON!

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Springfield Youth Athletic Association
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