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SIDELINES

Published for the parents, players and supporters of Springfield Youth Athletic Association

DECEMBER 2003

Frank Staskiewicz, Jr., Editor

Times, they are a changin' for SYAA

As SYAA continues to evolve as a competitive sports organization, change is inevitable. More is on the way for 2004.

At the November Board meeting, the officers and commissioners voted unanimously to end SYAA's affiliation with PONY Baseball and begin a new and exciting relationship with USSSA (pronounced U-Triple S-A). The primary reasons for this change were flexibility and competitiveness.

USSSA provides a great deal of flexibility in terms of the competitive levels available for our teams to compete within. Our coaches can schedule games against any team it wishes to play, including non-USSSA teams. Under PONY our teams were restricted to playing only teams sanctioned by PONY until about mid June.

Our baseball teams will be able to play at level equal to their talent and competitiveness. The level can also change each year. Every team can compete in the state tournament, which means no more all-stars teams. Now every player will get the opportunity to compete in tournaments and for a state championship.

For the 2004 baseball season we'll enter only teams for boys 11, 12, 13 and 14 years old. If the experience is good, as we believe it will be, we'll add our 9- and 10-year-olds in 2005. More details are provided inside, so everyone will have a better understanding of the impending change.

Luke Shepherd, our basketball commissioner, will be returning to school to add a teaching certificate to the degree he earned last spring. He'll give up his position on the Board in February to focus on his studies after helping get our basketball program through its second year.

Finally, I'll be vacating my position in February as well. I'll do so with mixed emotions, but I truly feel the time is right for change at the top of the organization too. I've been involved with SYAA since I moved to Springfield in 1996 and spent the last five years as president. I'm extremely proud of all we accomplished together and the direction that has been set for SYAA.

Now the "torch" must pass to a new leader with fresh ideas for providing athletic opportunities to the kids in our community. If you feel like you're cut out for the job, feel free to contact me anytime to learn more. But please act soon, so the position can be filled during the annual election in February.

I wish you the very best this holiday season. During all the hustle and bustle, watch for information we'll send in the mail, or home from school with the kids, regarding our diamond sports registration coming up in January.

Frank Staskiewicz, Jr.
President

SIDELINES is the official publication of: **SPRINGFIELD YOUTH ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION** P.O. Box 409 Springfield, NE 68059

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SIDELINES

Springfield, NE 68059
P.O. Box 409
SYAA

BASEBALL

Gary Jacott, Commissioner

For the 2004 baseball season some of SYAA's baseball teams will compete in USSSA instead of PONY Baseball. We've had a long and beneficial relationship with PONY, but the Board felt the change in affiliation was in the best long-term interest of our program and the boys who play for SYAA.

There are several benefits to moving to USSSA. Here are the most notable ones:

Single-age divisions. USSSA's single-age divisions accommodate players from the same grade in school, which makes it easier to keep teams together as they move through our program. While teams are classified by a single age under USSSA, a 13-year-old team of seventh grade players, could include a couple 12-year-olds or even a 14-year-old. This provides us greater ability to keep players together, playing with their friends, throughout their youth baseball years.

Multiple levels of competition. USSSA provides four levels of play ranging from basically recreational to traveling select teams. Levels include A, AA, AAA and Major. Our teams will likely enter the AA division for the 2004 season, but they can schedule games against teams playing in other levels if they wish to do so.

More tournament opportunities. All of our teams will be able to compete in regular season tournaments, and the USSSA state tournament if they chose to do so. Some of the regular season tournaments are qualifying events for the state tournament. The top four teams in a state qualifier earn an automatic bid to the state tournament. If any of those teams has already qualified, then the remaining teams will earn those bids. More kids will now get to experience tournament play.

Greater scheduling flexibility. Our USSSA teams will be free to schedule any teams they wish to play, regardless of the opponent's affiliation. Now we can schedule games anytime against our neighbors in Plattsmouth and Louisville, and other towns south of Springfield, without the risk of being classified as a select team, which was the case under PONY rules. We can now include any teams in the Springfield Classic wood bat tournament as well. The season can run from early April through the first week or two in July.

There are many USSSA teams within the metropolitan Omaha area, including others within the same driving distances we're already used to traveling. Cities like Kearney and Grand Island host tournaments, which would provide our players and families an opportunity to have some fun getting away for a weekend of baseball if our teams chose to play in such events.

Other Tri-County towns will be introduced to USSSA or are already considering a move to the new organization. Gretna had a team in USSSA the past two seasons, and the team's coach reported a very favorable experience for his players and families.

The change to USSSA will affect just players ages 11 through 14 in 2004. Our 9- and 10-year-old boys will continue to compete in the Tri-County PONY League, and our coach pitch teams will continue to schedule games with some of the closer Tri-County towns. Providing our experience with USSSA is favorable, we'll move our 9- and 10-year-olds to USSSA in 2005.

We'll be scheduling an information meeting in conjunction with our registration process for 2004. You're encouraged to attend if you'll have a son playing on one of our USSSA teams next season. Information will be sent home from school with your child or sent to you in the mail in December. This meeting will be your best opportunity to get your questions answered and gain an even greater understanding of USSSA. You can also visit the USSSA web site at <http://www.nebraskausssa.com/> for more information.

We're looking forward to competing in USSSA in 2004 and providing our baseball players with an even better experience on the field.

BASKETBALL

Luke Shepherd, Commissioner

SYAA will sponsor three basketball teams this fall and winter. Our eighth grade girls team is currently competing in the Twin River Valley League, which wraps up with the league tournament in early January. They'll also play in the Midwest Invitation Tournament (M.I.T.) in March in Lincoln.

The seventh grade boys team is currently competing in the Papillion Predator League, which culminates with a tournament before Christmas. They'll compete in the Twin River Valley League beginning in January, plus the league tournament and M.I.T.

A fifth grade boys team is being organized, and that group will play in the Twin River Valley League as well.

FOOTBALL

Mike Williams, Commissioner

Another successful season of football ended in late October. We fielded three tackle teams including 9- and 10-year-olds, 11- and 12-year-olds, and 13-year-olds that competed in the Heartland B League. Our lone flag team competed in the Bellevue Junior Sports Association league.

We're continuing to search for just the right fit for our program in terms of a league affiliation. I'll be contacting some of the towns we play baseball against to see if there's any interest in starting a league consisting of our small communities.

CALENDAR

Thursday, December 11

Board meeting,
7:00 p.m., Springfield Legion

Thursday, January 8

Board meeting, board nominations accepted
7:00 p.m., Springfield Legion

January TBD

Diamond sports registration

Thursday, February 12

Board meeting, board election
7:00 p.m., Springfield Legion

Thursday, March 11

Board meeting
7:00 p.m., Springfield Legion

Thursday, April 8

Board meeting
7:00 p.m., Springfield Legion

Please note board meeting dates, times and locations are subject to change. Anyone may observe meetings, but you should check with a board member to make sure the meeting schedule hasn't changed.

VOLLEYBALL

Leigh Ann Amerine, Commissioner

We're still working to develop a program that appeals to the largest number of girls while not conflicting with other sports. We weren't able to do so this year, but we'll continue to forge ahead and try to get something in place for 2004. Stay tuned.

Check out our web site at:
www.syaaonline.org

SYAA is a non-profit youth sports organization dedicated to providing boys and girls in the Springfield, Nebraska, community a variety of opportunities to participate in sports and develop athletic and life skills through preparation and competition.

Happy Holidays