
Vermont Old-Timer Baseball News

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He may not be Mr. October, but at least he's Mr. January

Last fall, Montpelier shortstop Lewis Franco heard about a project that was so interesting he dropped everything in order to help out.

Lewis joined with a dozen other men from the Calais area to pose for a calendar whose sales would benefit the Maple Corner Community Center. Lewis appears in the calendar as Mr. January.

The story was picked up by the national news media. In the photo below, which appeared in USA Today, Lewis is the fifth from the left.



photo: Craig Line

We asked Lewis a few questions.

VOTBN: What was your baseball experience before joining our league?

LF: I grew up in Atlanta and was a pathetically devoted Braves fan throughout my childhood, when the Braves really stunk. They pretty much competed for 5th place against the Padres or the Astros in the 6 team NL West division every year. Symbolic of my misplaced affection was the time I went to a game that set the all-time modern attendance record for fewest attendees. I think there were about 700 tickets sold (in a stadium that held 60,000) and then it rained and most everyone except me and my buddy left.

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Results of May 26 games

Burlington 7, Champlain 7 (10 inn.)
Winooski 6, Montpelier 3
Killington 10, Mad River Valley 2
Chelsea 19, Northfield 3
Kingdom 7, Caledonia 2
Morrisville 8, Lake Region 3
Jericho 8, Newport 6
South Royalton, bye

Standings

| | W | L | PCT. | GB |
|------------------|---|---|-------|-----|
| Chelsea | 3 | 0 | 1.000 | -- |
| Killington | 3 | 0 | 1.000 | -- |
| Champlain | 2 | 0 | 1.000 | .5 |
| South Royalton | 2 | 0 | 1.000 | .5 |
| Winooski | 3 | 1 | .750 | .5 |
| Morrisville | 2 | 1 | .667 | 1 |
| Jericho | 1 | 1 | .500 | 1.5 |
| Kingdom | 1 | 2 | .333 | 2 |
| Lake Region | 1 | 2 | .333 | 2 |
| Mad River Valley | 1 | 2 | .333 | 2 |
| Newport | 1 | 2 | .333 | 2 |
| Northfield | 1 | 2 | .333 | 2 |
| Montpelier | 1 | 3 | .250 | 2.5 |
| Burlington | 0 | 3 | .000 | 3 |
| Caledonia | 0 | 3 | .000 | 3 |

Games scheduled Sunday, June 2

Champlain at Montpelier
Jericho at Burlington
Winooski at Chelsea
Killington at Northfield
Mad River Valley at South Royalton
Kingdom at Lake Region
Morrisville at Newport
Caledonia, bye

Got a computer? Check out our web site and let us know your e-mail address.

In case you didn't know, our league has a web site with the complete schedule and results, updated weekly throughout the season: baseball.neknetwork.com
If you received this newsletter in the mail but you have an e-mail address, please let your manager and the league know about it so you can get future issues and other notices sooner.

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mikew@together.net

Wood vs. Metal Bat Update

At the February 10, 2002, league meeting the teams voted to prohibit metal bats starting with the 2003 season. The vote was 11 in favor, 4 against.

However, once teams started getting organized and practicing, many players and managers indicated they wanted to have a more comprehensive debate about the issue.

At the next scheduled league meeting, July 21, this question can be reconsidered. Any vote taken at that time will be binding for the 2003 season.

Make sure your team manager knows your views.

In general, those in favor of continuing to use metal bats have mentioned the higher potential cost of wooden bats, and the lack of a compelling reason to make the switch to wood only.

Those in favor of eliminating metal bats have mentioned the greater safety of wood bats due to slower bat speeds compared to metal, and the traditional use of wood bats in baseball history.

**Next league meeting: Sunday, July 21, 2002
4:00 PM, Lighthouse Restaurant, Winooski
Open to all managers and players**

Letters to the Editor



Send letters by email to mikew@together.net or by regular mail to P.O. Box 10, Newport, VT 05855. Every letter must be signed, but your name will not be printed if you so request.

To the Editor,
I know you have to be 45 in order to pitch in this league. I will turn 45 in July. Do I have to wait for my birthday or can I pitch from the beginning of the season?
Jerry M.

League rules say you qualify on your birthday, not before.

To the Editor,
Last year I was told that I would receive Hardball magazine, but I didn't get any issues until the season was over. What happened?
<name withheld by request>

Your manager did not submit the team roster until the season was more than half over. This year there are precise guidelines for submitting the roster to the league.

Diary of a Rookie

By Jae Hong, Winooski team



In moving up to Franklin County from New York City last Fall, I left behind a lot of things, including a softball team which would meet on Central Park's Great Lawn once a week. There, we would chase the glory days of our youth in the less threatening confines of slow pitch softball. The play was leisurely

much of the time, but we made up for it at the post-game recap, usually held in the back of our favorite Irish pub.

Once in Vermont, I scoured the internet for anything resembling a semi-organized men's softball league that I could join. Eventually, I came across the Northern Vermont Old-Timer's Baseball Association website. I got in touch with Mike Wagner and he very quickly pointed to managers for the 2002 season expansion teams. After a few miscues and lots of phone tag, I wound up signing on with the Winooski Athletics.

So in the early weeks of my rookie season, I've come to a few realizations. I'm sure I'll be learning more as the season goes on. Here's the play-by-play:

Game 1 (4/28): It's never too cold or wet to play ball in Vermont. If anyone told me I'd be playing opening day in thirty degree weather with a snow-rain-sleet cocktail falling on me for three hours, I wouldn't have believed it. I kept waiting for the ump to call it a day. But there I was, my long johns soaked through and early onset of frostbite after the fourth inning. It said something that these guys even showed up, much less played with such enthusiasm in an aborted flirtation with Spring. It was all for the love of the game.

Game 2 (5/5): Hijacked to a wedding in Baltimore. Packed a fresh baseball in my bag...just to hold...

Game 3 (5/19): The goat gets a pass. It's amazing how many cobwebs can build over the course of a week or two once you're past your playing prime. As shortstop, I managed to hurl the ball over our first baseman and into the adjoining field...twice! The shame! But it's a small dugout in Winooski, so there was nowhere to hide. And what did I get from my teammates? Nothing but encouragement and friendly slaps on the back. Ultimately, we lost the game by a few more runs, so I was spared an even greater sense of guilt, but I'll never forget how gracious these guys were.

(Jae Hong's 'Diary of a Rookie' will be a regular feature of our publication this season)

As far as playing, I did the usual little league stuff, then JV and Varsity ball in High School. Then not much until I turned 35 and was old enough for this league.

VOTBN: How did you get started with us?

LF: I actually played for several teams my first year, 1998. Eddie Krasnow was my original contact, but Champlain had a full team, so he told me to call Buckshot Seguin with Winooski. He was kind enough to let me play even though there were about 17 guys in the lineup. The next week Eddie needed players so I went back to Champlain. There was also one game when Newport didn't have enough players and I was loaned to them. I got to know just about everyone in the league, and to see what a great group of guys we had.

I started my own team in Montpelier the next year, just so no one could kick me off it. No, actually I started it because I live down here and the time commitment of driving at least an hour for every game was too much. I have young children and 5 hours away from the family every Sunday doesn't really work. As a matter of fact, the time commitment is still a big issue for me. Can I take this opportunity to put in a plug for weekday night games?

VOTBN: How and when did your knee injury happen, and how are you now?

LF: I tore the ACL playing basketball, then the miniscus playing basketball. Then I had a brilliant idea - give up basketball! Since then it's been fine.

VOTBN: How did you get started as an entertainer? What instruments do you play?

LF: I started playing guitar as a little kid. Then I played in bands in High School and pretty much ever since. I dabble on several instruments, but the guitar is the main one. Make sure you plug my CD, okay? On the web: www.cdfreedom.com/LewisFranco

VOTBN: What is your day job?

LF: I work for Northern Power Systems, which makes hybrid-renewable energy products, often using wind or solar power. I do Human Resources stuff.

VOTBN: What do you think of the move to only wooden bats?

LF: I'm thrilled! Anything that makes the game safer is a good thing. And the sound and feel of a wooden bat hitting a baseball is one of the great pleasures in life. Of course the balls won't go as far, but the ego rush that you get from launching shots into the Winooski river with a -5 metal bat is somewhat hollow. We all know that much of the credit should actually go to the engineer who designed the bat, not to the hitter. And besides, a little more humility and a little less ego is probably good for us.

New in 2002: Player Code of Conduct

At the February 10 meeting the league voted to require all players to agree to a code of conduct. You should have signed the form along with the traditional insurance waiver before playing for the first time. Since forms are often signed in haste and then forgotten, the contents are reprinted here for you to study at your leisure.

Any of the following actions can result in a player being ejected from a game, with possible suspension from additional games:

Pushing an umpire or intentionally blocking an umpire's movement.

Sustained arguing of an umpire's decision.

Using abusive, profane, or obscene language or gestures.

Throwing a bat, glove, helmet or other equipment in anger.

Creating a disruptive, threatening or dangerous situation.

A player who is ejected from a game must leave the playing field and may not remain in the dugout, but may stay in the immediate area (grandstands, etc.). If a player is ejected from a game and fails to leave the playing field and dugout area, or if the player remains in the immediate area and creates disturbances, then the player's team risks forfeiting the game.

A runner who fails to make a reasonable attempt to avoid a collision with a defensive player shall be called out. Any other runner advancing on the play shall be required to return to the last base visited. In the event that an umpire determines that a collision was flagrant (i.e., attempting to bowl over the catcher when it is clear that he has the ball and is waiting to apply the tag), he has the authority to eject the offending player from the game.

A runner who is out due to a force play at the base to which they are advancing must not block the line of a throw from the fielder at that base back to the base which the runner occupied. If a runner does block or prevent a throw then interference is called and both the runner and the batter or runner behind him are out.

A fielder may not fake receiving an incoming throw in order to cause a runner to slide unnecessarily. A flagrant abuse may result in the player being ejected from the game.

A fielder receiving a throw at a base may not completely block the base from the runner.

There shall be no contesting of an umpire's ball and strike or judgment call. Any contesting of an umpire's calls shall only be done by the manager. Any player who verbally or physically abuses an umpire shall be ejected from the game.

Players should be aware of and obey local rules about smoking at each field.

Alcoholic beverages of any kind are prohibited on a playing field or in a dugout. Players should be aware of and obey local rules about alcoholic beverages at each field location, including grandstands, parking lot, etc.



Sign Up Now for MSBL World Series

Official signups have begun for the annual post-season MSBL World Series tournament in Phoenix, Arizona, Oct. 28 - Nov. 2, 2002.

If you want to play, send an e-mail message to Mike Wagner at mikew@together.net or call 802-334-7514. Be prepared to pay \$250 by July 1. This will cover the tournament entry fee and your uniform jersey and hat. Checks should be made out to "N.VT Old-Timers Baseball" and mailed to Mike at PO Box 10, Newport VT 05855.

What is it?

An annual end of season tournament played on major league training fields around Phoenix, Arizona. It attracts about 5000 players on 400 teams, in different age and skill divisions. Each team plays 6 games in 4 days Monday - Thursday, then playoff and championship games as needed Friday and Saturday. The event ends with an awards banquet on Saturday night; usually there is a guest speaker at that event.

In the past individual players from our league have played in this event, joining teams from other leagues as free agents.

Our team:

This year we will have our own team representing our league. The league will not subsidize the cost, it will be up to the players to pay their own way.

If we have one team then it will play in the age 38+ Federal Division. If we get 25-30 players who want to go then we might also have a team in the 48+ Federal Division. MSBL tournament rules say that players who will turn 38 through 12/31/02 are eligible to play in the age 38+ divisions. Our league's age restrictions for pitching DO NOT APPLY to MSBL tournaments: everyone is eligible to pitch.

Dates:

We would be in the Monday Oct. 28 - Saturday Nov. 2 group. We will reserve a practice

session on Sunday Oct. 27. It is highly recommended that players arrive on Saturday Oct. 26, in order to get used to the climate and to participate in the team practice.

Travel - air:

Option 1: from Burlington, VT. Estimate \$500 round trip per person. The schedule is tiring, the first leg is always to Laguardia Airport in NYC, then a long wait, then 2 legs on another airline.

Option 2: from Manchester, NH, on Southwest Airlines. Discount fare is \$362 round trip. "Friends Fly Free" fare is \$500 round trip for 2 people, or \$250 each.

Option 3: from Albany, NY, on Northwest Airlines. Fare is \$357 round trip, Saturday night stay is required.

Travel - rental car:

Avis Car Rentals offers a discount for MSBL members; call 1-800-331-1212 and mention discount code AWD# B745000

Travel - hotel:

Marriott at Phoenix Airport (44th St.) is conveniently located to the main MSBL field at Tempe Diablo Stadium, and to other fields. It has a dining room, weight room, pool with Jacuzzi and full hotel services (laundry, room service). Basic rate is \$99 per room per night, plus tax. This is a team rate for minimum 10 rooms. Each player can take a room or 2 players can share a room, same price.

Players are free to find other lodging in the area. For example, in 2001 the Sheraton in Mesa had a rate of \$82.00 per room per night, with up to 4 people in a room.

Tournament entry fee:

In 2001 it was \$170, figure \$200 for 2002.

Uniforms:

Estimated cost of jersey \$35, hat \$15. These will be dark green mesh short sleeve shirts with "Vermont" in script across the chest. The hats will be the Flex-Fit style in dark green with a script "V". Players will need one pair of gray and one pair of white pants, and socks should be all white, or white with dark green vertical stripe.

Practice:

We are considering entering the Arizona team in the Labor Day weekend MSBL regional tournament in Albany, NY. Participation would be optional and would cost extra.

There will be a game scheduled in the Burlington area against a team from Ottawa, Canada, which will be touring in Vermont at the end of September.

We will also play October 13 at Middlebury College against a team of attendees at a fantasy baseball weekend.