

A DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR BASEBALL IN GREAT BRITAIN

A CREATIVE PROJECT

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, baseball was played by less than 3,000 people in the country of Great Britain. This was from a population of over 50 million people. Baseball was often seen by children as complicated, by teachers as glorified rounders (a simple children's game in Great Britain), and by parents as too long and requiring too much commitment.

Major League Baseball had tried a number of initiatives to spread the game commercially and to increase participation. However, these efforts were often spread too thin or were too short in duration with most lasting only a few days (Pearce, 1999). Development initiatives were expected to be quantified to the owners of MLB teams, thus creating a numbers-first environment that drove away numerous potential volunteers. This quest for numbers often brought baseball initiatives into the school setting.

A number of government reports (Learning through PE and sport, 2004; Department for Education and Skills, 2002; Department of Culture, Media, and Sport, 2001) highlighted the need for school and club links for the growth of sport amongst youth. Redwood (2003) saw sports clubs popularity rise when their sport was introduced in primary

and secondary schools, while Green (2002) questioned whether schools' physical education was developing lifelong skills. The need for funding of qualified coaches in schools was highlighted by Andrews (2002). The lack of cooperation between club and school sport complicated the issue.

Meanwhile, elite play in Great Britain was floundering. Only one club competed in European competition between 1994 and 2003, when three teams were eligible each year. The youth national teams rarely won games in the qualifying tournaments. The men's national team qualified for the European Championship in 1996, and then fought to remain out of last place in each subsequent tournament (Confederation of European Baseball, 2005).

Sports development in Britain was in constant tumult, revolving between conflicting government initiatives and inconsistent funding. British baseball served as a strong case study of this turmoil, aiming to fill voids in the sporting pantheon but unable to achieve significant gains in participation.

Statement of the Problem

No literature or plan has been found specifically targeting growth of a sport with little financial backing or an established knowledge base. Major League Baseball wanted to develop baseball in Great Britain because of its large and relatively wealthy population and its close ties, socially and politically, to the United States. Major League Baseball

fluctuated between two approaches: a generic push for numbers of participants and a quest to establish elite programs. These two approaches were not complementary to each other, nor were the expectations of MLB owners practical.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this creative project was to design and evaluate a comprehensive plan to develop the game of baseball in Great Britain in an environment where the sport was relatively unknown to potential participants or spectators and financial resources were minimal.

Research Questions

Two research questions will be examined in this study.

1. How can participation in baseball be increased in Great Britain?
2. How can the standard of play and instruction be improved?

Definition of Terms

Club sport – Structured amateur sports groups with no direct links to school programs. Once established, club activities strive to satisfy as many levels of participation as possible for their members.

Development - The systematic spreading of knowledge and structures to participants in order to raise the numbers and skill of those involved.

Assumptions

Assumptions necessary for this study are:

1. Implementation of a plan will overcome the natural aversion to all things new.
2. Increasing the knowledge and awareness of baseball will increase the participation levels of baseball over a period of time.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study are:

1. The geographic area of Great Britain, and;
2. The sport of baseball.

Significance of the Project

The game of baseball in Great Britain has gone through recurring peaks and valleys since its introduction over two centuries ago (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2008), while progressing little since World War II. In order to catch up to their European counterparts in the sport, a comprehensive plan to expand participation numbers and foster elite development was needed. With this direction, the program gained more acceptance in the culture, increased their funding from government bodies, and gained prominence in school sport. The development of a comprehensive plan for all sectors of the baseball community guided volunteers with their clubs. Implementation benefited the community

while providing opportunities and inclusion for children. This paper was intended to comprehensively describe the fundamental processes in developing baseball.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

The review of literature will discuss the recent history of British baseball, examine Major League Baseball's European development plans, consider the sports structures specific to Britain, and assess the means of developing a sport locally within a national context.

British Baseball History

British baseball sounds like a contradiction in terms to most people (Belton & Chetwynd, 2006). But along with most of Western Europe, baseball has existed in Britain with ebbs and flows throughout the twentieth century. In fact, Great Britain won the first baseball World Cup in 1938 (Chetwynd, 2007). Additionally, Italy has had a professional league since 1948, and the Dutch have had a "honkbal" federation since 1910 (Gmelch, 2006). Despite this history, the total number of baseball players on the continent still hovers below 100,000 (Confederation of European Baseball, 2006), less than the estimated number of players in the 1930s (Bedingfield, 1999).

As far back as 1889, a professional baseball game was played at the Kensington Oval in London, and witnessed by the crown prince – later to become King Edward VII. As the game ended, he was asked for

his impressions of the game. He stated, “The Prince of Wales has witnessed the game of Base Ball with great interest and though he considers it an excellent game, he considers cricket as superior” (Gmelch, 2006, p. 273). For more than a century since, the British royal has seemed to speak for an entire nation.

In the 1980s and 1990s, elite matches or leagues were marketed on at least three separate occasions. In 1987, a league was sponsored that “gives the sport credibility by staging games to the best possible standard” (Belton & Chetwynd, 2006, p. 76). It was terminated by 1990. In 1993, minor league players from the New York Mets and Boston Red Sox drew over 5000 fans to the Oval (Chetwynd, 2008), although no evidence was apparent of that event being used as a platform to promote local play. The American ambassador to Great Britain opined that baseball ought to suit the British temperament, as it was not a violent game and is not played against the clock (Belton & Chetwynd, 2006). In 1998, the National League was formed in another attempt to artificially raise the standard of play (Chetwynd, 2008). This was done with much fanfare in the British baseball community, but many of the requirements for inclusion quickly disappeared and the more ambitious ideas were quashed. In each situation, the focus was purely on the elite level of play in the short term. Klein (2006) noted that British baseball had a diminished ability to generate new players capable of moving up the

ladder to the ranks of the clubs and elite play. The numbers of players continued to diminish through the end of the 1990s (Belton & Chetwynd, 2006).

MLBI: Recent European Development

Only in the context of baseball could Europe be considered underdeveloped, but by the standards of Major League Baseball, the continent is positively third world (Klein, 2006). Even where baseball is relatively strong in Europe, it is not popular outside its small coterie of devoted followers (Gmelch, 2006).

Major League Baseball International (MLBI) looked to increase grassroots participation and elite development throughout the 1990s, while putting on events and increasing their market share in licensing, sponsorship, and broadcasting (Major League Baseball, 2002). The emphasis was on establishing wider opportunities for young people to participate to create a greater pool of people from which talent can develop (Houlihan & White, 2002). In the late 1990s, MLBI decided to shift its developmental focus from international players to international coaches, with the idea that better international coaches will produce better international players (Pearce, 1999).

To improve international coaching, MLBI provided three initiatives. The first was an intense baseball immersion, where coaches were brought to the United States for several weeks to work with major

league teams in the fall instructional league (Pearce, 1999). Sixty-six coaches from thirteen countries had been hosted by thirteen major league clubs from 2000 to 2006 (Major League Baseball, 2006). The second was an envoy program, which sent the world's best instructors to needful baseball federations around the world, usually for periods of four to eight weeks (Pearce, 2003). The envoy program utilized top high school, college, and professional baseball coaches who were selected based on their experience, expertise, and passion for teaching the game of baseball. In 2005, 43 envoy coaches visited 24 countries (Major League Baseball, 2006). Third, the Coach-in-Residence program placed full-time professional coaches in the United Kingdom, Italy, and South Africa to bring expertise to their baseball communities. It began in 1999.

Like Major League Baseball, few sport governing bodies had the resources needed to achieve both grassroots and elite development simultaneously (English Sports Council, 2003), although sport for all and sporting excellence seemed complementary concepts and should reinforce each other (Houlihan & White, 2002). Hylton, Bramham, Jackson, and Nesti (2001) studied attempts to maximize return within the hierarchal progression from participation towards performance and excellence. MLB decided that in Europe, they would rely on trickle-down development (excellence translates into higher participation) after attempting to build the base for a pyramid (Holowaty, personal

communication, October 14, 2004). As MLB executive Sandy Alderson put it, “We seek to develop players who can come to the United States and prosper, and create an interest in their home countries” (Klein, 2006, p. 192).

Sports Development in Britain

The structures for administering and delivering sport in the UK were extremely complex (Department of Culture, Media, and Sport, 2001). At different times, the emphasis on development varied between reactive and proactive strategies and between participation and performance objectives (Houlihan & White, 2002). Different branches of the British government looked primarily to create opportunities in sport (Sport England, 2004) while others looked primarily for world class performance (UK Sport, 2004), with no coherent plan for the athletes in between. Goals of excellence versus development, participation versus performance, created constant conflict in British sports federations – baseball included.

The dominance of club sport and the continued emergence of school sport provided grounds for coordination and teamwork, but also for conflict and isolation (Andrews, 2002). International sporting federations worked with and against the government initiatives, each with different objectives (Gooding, 1998). The government admitted that organizational reform was needed, as multiple statements of strategy led

to confusion, complex structures led to inefficiency, staff did not have the right skills, and many systems could be improved (Department for Culture, Media, and Sport, 2001). The constant identified was the need for programs that developed high standards of coaching and competition for young people (Department for Education and Skills, 2002).

A multitude of enthusiastic children enjoyed a variety of sports in their schools every year. Sadly, many did not take their interest any further, ending their involvement when they left school. It was ironic that at the same time numerous sports clubs were desperate for new members (Andrews, 2002).

Schools, with their resources of people, facilities, and equipment, were perhaps the most significant influence on youth involvement in sport (Stead & Swain, 1987). The Department for Education and Skills (1999) had a number of games requirements each pupil must meet, with life skills being acquired and developed and games activities learned. Despite this, Green (2002) contended that if lifelong participation is to be a primary aim of physical education, then there needs to be a shift in policy towards the development of wide sporting repertoires, incorporating extracurricular activities. In Redwood (2003, p.16), Ray Tudor of Capital Kids' Cricket said, "Children were badly let down by the education authorities in the late 1980s when they decreed that competitive sports were bad." School sports curricula were described as

“a mile wide and an inch deep” (Siedentop & Dinchin, 2003). In 2002 (Department for Education and Skills), *A Sporting Future for All* saw the way to build as sustaining participation and supporting talent development for young people beyond school, and by maximising the contribution of their facilities and human capital to sport in schools and the wider community.

Schools were to guide young people to national governing body affiliated or otherwise affiliated clubs through “School Club Links” (Learning through PE and Sport, 2004). Redwood (2003) encouraged schools to go a step further, utilizing budgets to pay for specialist coaching for niche activities instead of dredging the last ounce of energy from classroom teachers. Children would benefit from this expertise, but staff would also be able to improve their own proficiency and gain ideas for subsequent lessons.

Unfortunately, financial considerations often outweigh sporting needs in the eyes of school management (Andrews, 2002). Children lost participation opportunities provided through curricular physical education and extracurricular sport when they left school (Sports Council for Wales, 1998). Thus, children’s early involvement in sport in the community, whether through a sport club or informally with friends at a leisure center, was of great importance.

Local Development

Clubs needed to find the means to get players involved at a young age, and then provide routes for their continued progression to elite status (English Sports Council, 2003). A steady stream of enthusiastic newcomers was a way to secure the future of clubs (Andrews, 2002). Collins & Randolph (1994) stated that even in well-resourced and successful clubs, developments often depend on skilled and energetic individuals whose commitment is whole-hearted, beyond any call of duty, voluntarily assumed, and sometimes beyond reason. Sport development could not be predicated on exploiting voluntary work in order to obtain cheap versions of hitherto public services (1994). Development implied some form of professional intervention or localized voluntary action (Hylton et al., 2001). Sports development staffs needed to act more strategically and have more substantive managerial support to face the coming challenge (Collins, 1995). Houlihan and White (2002) added the need for a systematic and professional approach.

Sports federations and development staffs approached the challenge of supporting volunteers and engaging youth in different ways. Major League Baseball envoys supported developing baseball programs by providing detailed instruction to existing coaches and players as well as introducing new young fans and players to the game (Pearce, 2003).

Cricket adapted their game to involve a whole group so nobody is ever standing still and taught skills without making coaching sessions too regimented (Redwood, 2003). The South African Baseball Union envisaged that through their programs they would be able to prepare youth for the demand that top sport places on them (Huppe, 2001). The Football Association set up regional centers of excellence to sustain participation and raise standards (Wilkinson, 1997), while BaseballSoftballUK worked to recruit, train, and reward volunteers (Vernon, 2003).

The Football Association said their overriding principle was to provide quality experiences for all young players at all levels (Wilkinson, 1997). Sports development was about creating a pathway and setting up clear structures that enable sports performers to get started, keep going, get better, and become the best in the sport (Sports Council, 2000). Sport England (1999) felt that modernizing the sports, by working together and sharing common tasks, would help local club growth.

Further study hardened the emerging bifurcation between sports development as participation and sports development as talent identification and elite achievement (Houlihan & White, 2002). Although these concepts could be seen as complimentary, the argument of priority – performance and excellence over common development – continued (Cooke, 1996). Professionals and academics were still searching for the

ideal balance. Ultimately, sports development is about creating new and better ways of delivery in sport (Hylton et al., 2001). This study attempted to measure the outcomes of the development themes described above.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods & Procedures

This chapter includes information on the procedures applied across British baseball. The priorities of the national sports federation were to increase the number of players, have more players living in Britain selected for the national team programs, and to train more coaches to a high standard in order to make both the previous points possible and sustainable. These goals, between 2002 and 2005, were addressed with the following programs and procedures:

Encourage Youth Teams to Play Locally

British children (and their parents) were used to soccer, where they could ride their bike to the local park, pull on a uniform, play for an hour (being coached by any number of parents/adults who had played the game), and be home by lunchtime. The cost was minimal, the effort needed by kids and parents at sign-up was clear, and the kids were likely to be playing with a number of their friends from the neighborhood or from their school.

In 2002, the baseball leadership encouraged people looking to start a youth baseball team to join the national traveling league. However, the investment of time and money outweighed the value of learning to play

the game in a local setting. The financial cost of tournament registration fees and travel, in addition to time spent by parents who often did not understand the game they were watching, placed heavy constraints on the children and families participating.

For baseball to grow, a little-league structure of local play was encouraged. The resources (specifically, time and money) being injected would then be spent on the game, on the field, and on the kids; rather than money spent on fuel and time spent in a car. The local baseball leaders, a small group of people at best, could spend their time working with the kids at the field in short bursts as opposed to rounding up children for the weekend's games and asking them for money to fund these pursuits.

British Baseball Academy

The British Baseball Academy began in 1999 as a means to have the best coaches in the country work with more children. The by-product of this was the coaches that attended the academy would also be exposed to this higher level coaching. Between the children and the coaches, optimistically at least some of the key concepts would filter down to the lower levels. The academy was run from an abandoned U.S. Air Force base geographically in the center of the country, for one weekend a month during the off-season.

By 2002, the academy was essentially operated as an extended tryout camp for the youth GB national teams. There were less than forty kids on average in attendance, and the volunteer coaches not invited to coach with the national teams often withdrew their club's support of the concept. The parents and coaches were less likely to continue traveling great distances if they reached a point when their kids were excluded, and even if a percentage of their players were selected, traveling without those who weren't made the trips much less financially viable.

The academy program going forward from 2003 was remarketed in its initial conception – open to all as an opportunity to improve. Volunteer coaches were called upon to cope with more children, as well as make them more likely to volunteer as drivers from their clubs. Tryouts for the national teams were set for the spring to differentiate from the academy, and it was clearly stated in the academy mission statement that attendance provided no direct advantage to national team selection. The player's offseason work could do nothing but benefit the player for their club or their national team, and would help prepare them if they intended to participate in any tryouts.

Eligibility Rules for the Elite Clubs

Long term development of the game of baseball was deemed reliant on clubs being self-sustainable and the system providing routes for players to continue to progress. Every European country playing baseball

had restrictions on the number of foreigners allowed to play on their adult teams (Confederation of European Baseball, 2005), with one notable exception. In 2002, the British leagues had no qualifications or restrictions on their adult member leagues.

The concept of eligibility restrictions relied on two primary factors. First, competitive balance: if a team with more money can pay to bring in more foreign (read: better) players, and the rest of the league cannot compete with this team, the entire league suffers. Second, internal player development: it is much easier, especially around an international city such as London, to go to a global business and locate an American, Canadian, etc who already knows the game than to put the time and effort into developing local players. The young players interested in adult baseball, and those coming up through the youth leagues, ran into a “glass ceiling” of foreigners. They were not given the opportunity to play at a challenging level, and thus the British players’ skills did not fully develop, so the player was not as good as the foreigner. The short-term, easy-fix philosophy became self-fulfilling long-term.

The baseball federation’s solution from 2003 was to implement eligibility restrictions amongst the elite clubs. Rather than rely simply on passport status (as was commonplace elsewhere in Europe), a more comprehensive method with game development at the forefront was devised. Players who had developed in the British youth system were

given precedent, but so were players who devoted time to coaching kids, to umpiring, or to playing or coaching in the national team and academy structure. Young players were also given precedence. This was intended to accomplish the goals of the restrictions elsewhere in the world, while acknowledging the benefits that talented foreign players and coaches bring to the game and the league. This also was intended to force clubs to engage in a level of game development if they intended to play at the highest level, something they “owed” to the game but also something the sustainability of their own clubs and their own league required. The competitive balance issue (based on financial means) was less significant at this time due to the immature stage of the clubs’ development.

Center of Excellence through Universities

The term Center of Excellence referred to a designation awarded to a university, club, or training site where the facility and staff enabled athletes to excel. A number of national governing bodies of sport, as well as the British Olympic Association, British University Student Association, and Sport England, provided these awards as incentives and as a means for further achievement and esteem. In 2002, one Center of Excellence designation existed (unofficially) in baseball or softball. It was bestowed on the derelict air base that the academy and national teams used for nationwide training. Nothing about the facility echoed of current excellence, and no staff were based there.

The task of developing a baseball Center of Excellence program through British universities began in 2003. The concept was to train as many future teachers, camp counselors, and sports leaders as possible in the game of baseball. It was also to use university sports facilities for training purposes and field development, and to have trainee teachers operate summer camps on campus as recruitment for the creation of local little leagues. Specifically, baseball training courses were included in the university course curriculum for students in teacher training and physical education. An equipment loan program and reward structure was drawn up to subsequently encourage these pupils to volunteer as coaches, teach baseball in summer camps, and use the sport in the future as qualified coaches and teachers.

It was initiated through two universities in 2004, with expansion to six for 2006. A grading system by which the centers could continue to progress was developed, awarding them for number of children involved, number of trained coaches, and ultimately for participation in baseball events outside of their own community.

Coaching the Coaches

Experienced coaches and coach trainers shifted their focus from coaching the players to coaching the coaches. Specifically, applying their knowledge and directing their time to those leaders who would best be able to implement what they learned directly to players, creating

exponential potential for development. This was deemed more constructive for lasting improvement than having the coaches (limited in time and scope) focus on the players over short periods of time. In this scenario, the players would return to their clubs and the less refined training techniques of their coaches. By training the coaches directly, a loophole could be closed.

Specific coaching qualifications were designed and implemented across the country in conjunction with existing governmental programs. There were four levels of achievement, with escalating conditions and requirements for attainment. These mirrored the plans of other sports, although a lesser level of game knowledge had to be assumed at their entry into coaching (with the lower profile and a limited number of past participants to draw from). Immersion in the sport was accomplished through the British Baseball Academy, the Center of Excellence program, and a collaboration project with the English rugby federation. Coaches who sought out instruction or displayed a willingness to learn were invited to coach alongside national team coaches and at the academy. The academy also sponsored instructional clinics focusing on fundamental baseball skills, as well as child protection, first aid, and general athlete improvement.

The Center of Excellence program relied on existing sports leaders to learn the basics of baseball and initiate their own youth leagues.

Sports professors and students at the university, as well as members of the local existing baseball clubs, were recruited. They were then offered subsidized training programs and frameworks of league structures that had success elsewhere in the country.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Below were the results three years after the baseball development programs were implemented. Significant growth was achieved in every measure except youth clubs travelling, a planned by-product of the focus on local play.

1. Five youth clubs were established on the principles of local play or changed their organization to this effect between 2002 and 2005. The results follow in Table 1.

Table 1

Youth Club Participants in 2002 and 2005

<u>City</u>	<u>2002 players</u>	<u>2005 players</u>
Bracknell	36	92
Coventry	0	223
Glasgow	0	270
Horsham	0	150
Plymouth	24	93

At the same time, the numbers of youth clubs involved in the national traveling leagues dwindled; an expected side effect. A net gain in players

remained with a much higher number of games played per year. In 2002, there were 28 travelling youth clubs. By 2005, that number had fallen to 12.

2. The academy program grew from 2002-2005. The numbers in Table 2 show the increase in coaches and players in the program, and the corresponding income that goes directly back into the continuing development and growth of the academy and its players and coaches.

Table 2

British Academy Growth 2002-2005

	2002	2005
Registered Coaches	16	28
Registered Players	42	102
Gross Income	\$3800	\$11500

3. The eligibility requirements for adult club baseball had direct and indirect consequences, despite not yet being fully implemented by 2005. The growth within the clubs is shown in Table 3. Additionally, in 2003, no British club competed in European club competition. In 2004, one British club competed and finished 7th in qualifying. In 2005, two British clubs competed, one finishing 4th in Europe.

Also, the players from the British domestic league who were selected for the national team European Championship roster increased

from four in 2003 to 10 in 2005. The 2003 team finished 10th (of 12) with a 2-5 win-loss record, while the 2005 team finished 7th with a 4-3 record.

Table 3

National League Club Expansion

National League	2002	2005
Number of Clubs	6	6
Adult Teams in those Clubs	6	15
Youth Teams in those Clubs	3	9
Adult Teams in the Country	32	48

4. Center of Excellence Program

The Center of Excellence Program began in 2003. By 2005, the number of coaches registered with the national federation at the designated universities had grown to 88 (14% of the national total). Two campus youth baseball programs had formed.

5. Coaching the Coaches

In 2002, this initiative did not exist. External programs focused on increasing numbers of youth exposed to the game. British federation programs were, for all practical purposes, non-existent.

In 2005, each and every coach (13) in the Great Britain youth programs were introduced to the game or trained through this mentorship initiative. Quantitative data could not be obtained during the

time period of the study. However, this remained a crucial element to the long term development of the coaches and the sport across Britain.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion of Findings

The drive for local youth play, the growth of the British Baseball Academy, the rule changes for adult league eligibility, the center of excellence document, and the philosophy of coaching the coaches formed a comprehensive initial development package for British baseball. Included are the means to increase youth participation, discover and educate more coaches, and increase expertise and competition for elite athletes. Significant improvement was seen in the first three years of these programs. It could be speculated that growth would continue, and potentially would expand when the programs are fully developed.

Not all of the programs mentioned were successful. While more children were participating in baseball due to local youth play, some teams folded rather than convert to local play. The number of kids playing was still not substantial enough to support the growth of adult baseball from within. The youth national teams, with more kids trying out and more practicing through the winter at the academy, still struggled to compete against the average national team in Europe. But even with these realities, the game of baseball was growing and improving overall by virtually every measure. Appendix A provides a template for the next stage of elite development, a fulltime national

academy, intended to create opportunities for British athletes to develop into national team players, college athletes, and potential professionals.

Conclusion

Many options were available regarding the best way forward in such a complex and difficult situation. Several methods might show similar short-term success. What has emerged through past study is the necessity to work on many levels (youth, adult, recreational, elite, financial development, facility development, etc.) simultaneously to make definite, sustainable progress. Equally important to providing entry routes is providing exit routes for continued development, both for players and coaches. The path followed in this study proved successful overall. With the critical mass of players established, a more disciplined and demanding program for achievement could be advanced. The model for this academy concept is outlined in Appendix A. Below is a template emanating from this study for initiating a development plan.

A Model for Sport Development

There are a few steps necessary to ensure full sport development across all abilities and ages. There must be a critical mass at youth and recreational levels to expect athletes to excel at the adult and elite levels.

- Create a means to identify, recruit, train, and mentor potential coaches.
- Make involvement at the entry level of the sport as simple, convenient, and affordable as possible.
- Design a further structure of practice and games for athletes who need more challenges in the sport, those who aspire to elite play, and those who show potential in their ability or their work ethic.
- Don't try to re-create the wheel – work within existing sports structures and use existing facilities wherever possible, especially when starting something new.
- Your best coaches must be able teachers of their trade. Young coaches must be willing protégés. This allows for the implementation of a system or program, and sets the groundwork to develop future leaders in the sport.
- The best interests of the athlete must always come first.
- Leadership is the delicate balance of delegation while ensuring a positive outcome – get the right people in the right positions with due diligence in recruitment and training. This responsibility becomes greater, not less, when relying on volunteers.

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Appendix A

What is a Baseball Academy?

The recent successes of 15-19 year old European and African players at the MLB European Academy and in professional baseball have shown that the next generation of ballplayers in the region is highly talented and has the potential to play with the world's best. They simply need the training to fulfil that potential.

MLB seeks to assist the training of the regions' elite junior baseball players. Over the past few years, several federations have developed national and/or regional academy training centers for their national team players and coaches. The best way to ensure the long-term development of this region's players is by supporting the programs and the coaches who work with them throughout the year.

With this in mind, MLB will provide resources to selected federations that will enhance each nation's academy systems and accelerate the development of their junior elite players. This plan has many benefits for MLB, the federations and most importantly the players and their coaches.

Based on MLB's work with the region's academies since 2006, three foci have been developed which will be used to guide future activities:

1. "Develop what is already working and working well", taking advantage of the infrastructures and, in particular, dedicated coaching staffs that will ensure the long-term success of programs.

2. Prioritize the types of support given to programs, starting with the things that they need most to succeed. In order, these types of support are:
 - a. Coaching support – both local and imported
 - b. Equipment – baseball and training-specific
 - c. Facilities development – Grants supporting Academy-led projects already in motion
 - d. Competitions – allowing players to get valuable game experience.
3. Expand into regional systems where possible only once successful national models have been developed. Only once a solid base has been established can program expand their reach regionally to include more players and coaches on a part-time basis.

The collective goals of the Academy system are:

- Creating the best circumstances for academic, athletic, and personal development.
- Ensuring the objectives are in the long term interest of the players and the program – getting the players to play at their highest potential.
- Providing Europe and Africa’s elite players with the best possible year-round training.

- Improving the performance levels of players through professional, consistent and monitored training.
- Training local coaches to ensure that they are using the most up-to-date methods in the training of their players.
- Creating a network of “baseball community centers” that will serve as venues for the training of coaches, athletic trainers, umpires and scorers.
- Creating a clear pathway for players from their national academies to the MLB European Academy, university baseball and professional baseball.
- Developing individuals, so they become great coaches, umpires, leaders and parents.
- Developing the players that will form the core of national teams in future editions of the World Baseball Classic.

What Do You Need?

The Academy structure has three crucial elements to fulfil its stated objectives. An Academy must have a direct connection and relationship with a school. There must be structure so participants have accommodation and food. Finally, there must be access to the necessary facilities, equipment, and support staff.

School

Some important factors to consider with the school:

- Class schedule allows for practice time.
- Access to library, technology, and necessary resources.
- Range of courses available to suit all potential candidates.
- Admission policies and/or costs are achievable for potential student-athletes.
- Tutoring is available.
- Regular communication with headmaster and teachers to monitor academic progress, give forewarning for any potential missed class time, and coordinate plan for advancement.
- Courses structured to meet the entry requirements for institutions of higher education.
- Availability of English classes.

Accommodation and Food

There are numerous methods and degrees of providing for accommodation and food. Current Academies range from simple assistance finding an apartment to government-sponsored dormitories with athlete-gear'd cafeterias. The crucial

consideration is that in order to develop the “whole” athlete, they must be eating and sleeping properly – how this is monitored and achieved can vary depending on the circumstances in each Academy. Considerations include affordability, access to healthy options, and level of supervision. In a less controlled environment, support networks with other players or local families can be constructed.

Facilities, Equipment, and Support Staff

Facilities:

- Baseball Field
- Sports hall/indoor training space
- Weight room
- Batting cage(s)
- Bullpen(s)
- Pool/whirlpool/sauna

Equipment (see Appendix A):

- Baseball equipment
- Athlete development
- Safety screens
- Testing and measurement devices
- Clothing

Support Staff:

- Specialized coaching experience
- Physiotherapist
- Medical – orthopaedic and doctor
- Sports science – training/testing/rehabilitation
- Academic advisor
- Nutritionist/cook
- “Family”

How Does it Work?

“Don’t replace baseball with baseball” Martin Brunner

An Academy has fundamental features in its planning, development, running, and in its growth and maintenance. Necessary facets are leadership, developmental priorities, budget considerations, ample practice time, and outreach programs. Program aspects, the value to the community, and communication techniques will then be discussed. Academies will make their mark in the off-season, when players can develop as athletes and have limited opportunities to interact and train with coaches.

First and foremost, to run a successful Academy, there must be one person who is the driving force to get things done. In all situations to date, this person is the head baseball coach, but cannot fill only that

role. They cover numerous responsibilities while remaining intimately informed where they delegate, be it baseball coaching, strength and conditioning, nutrition, academic advising, or administration.

The school and accommodation need to be arranged before the Academy begins, with some basic support structures in place. With a knowledgeable baseball coach on staff, the practices and training sessions can be meaningful with limited resources and facilities to build upon, but the structure cannot succeed without a solid education component and a place for the athletes to live and eat from the first day. In most instances, aspects will need to be added and refined as the Academy grows and develops; but the school links should be the first priority.

There are additional aspects that have much more variance depending on the local structures, but that nonetheless play an important role in the long-term structure. There should be a budget (however big or small) towards equipment, training materials, staff, staff development, and travel. The amount of time spent on the sport should be defined, with a baseline of twenty hours per week (including individual instruction) being the current norm. How will the athletes invited to attend be selected? What age will you cater for? Tryouts can be held, the selection person or group can work in conjunction with the youth national teams' coaching staff, consult with club coaches and area

scouts, there could be an application process, or any and all of the above. Finally, holding camps and clinics for a wider audience proactively develops local networks, trains coaches and players, helps with recruitment, and provides value and exposure to the wider baseball community. This outreach can provide a fundamental base from which to build the program, with higher quality athletes coming into the program, support of the Academy from local coaches, and more local training and game opportunities.

The following are the athletic aspects to be considered as part of the Academy program:

1. “Baseball practice”
 - a. Throwing, hitting, running
 - b. Strength and conditioning
 - c. Speed training
 - d. Agility training
 - e. Flexibility
 - f. Coordination
2. Anatomy and Physiology
3. Nutrition
4. Sport Psychology

Finally, here are some specific tips from the existing European Academies:

1. Keep up-to-date on the players' academics.
2. Have individual talks and set goals.
3. Keep parents and clubs informed.
4. Teach players to take responsibility for their own development.
5. Have individualized, whole athlete plans including macro- and micro-cycles.

Recommended equipment, training, and apparel needs (per 10 players)

Baseball

500	Baseballs
300	Tennis balls
100	Wiffle balls
10	Weighted balls
10	Composite bats
5	Batting Tees
2	Stopwatches
1	Radar Gun
1	Video camera

Training

30	Cones
10	Tubing/Sport cords
10	Medicine balls
10	Hurdles
3	Swiss balls
2	Ladders

Safety

2 per cage + 1 per field	L-Screens
1 per cage + 3 per field	Square screens
2	Sock nets
6	Helmets
2	Catcher's gear

Apparel

20	T-shirts or Undershirts
20	Baseball pants
10	Shorts
10	Indoor shoes
10	Spikes
10	Baseball caps
10	Gloves