



LINE DRIVES
THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE BASEBALL WRITERS
NEWSLETTER

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The President's Message
By NCBWA President Joe Dier

Membership:

Fall baseball is in the air, and that means that the pre-2009 NCBWA All-America team cannot be too far behind; please stay tuned for emails from the NCBWA about the nomination process and email them to the appropriate regional representatives.

On another pleasant note, I am honored to become the 47th president of the National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association. Let me give a major set of kudos to 2007-08 president Shamus McKnight of Nebraska for his tremendous leadership and work. Shamus has been a solid part of the presence of NCBWA in Omaha at the NCAA World Series for several years and represents the organization in a wide variety of positive ways. It has been a pleasure to serve under him in the NCBWA officers' rotation.

This group has meant so much to the national awareness and promotion of college baseball through the Dick Howser Trophy, the Stopper of the Year Award, the Pro-Line Athletic All-America and Freshman All-America teams, Pro-Line Athletic Players of the Week, and all the all-region and all-district squads. We know we have the fairest means of selecting our honors' teams of any group nationally, and this lends great credibility to our organization.

Please feel free to contact me or any one of the 2008-09 officers (see contact numbers and emails later in this newsletter) as we approach a very critical year in the history of college baseball. The NCAA has several proposals on the table again for shortening the number of games, practice seasons and hours of weekly participation, and these could affect the phenomenal growth of college baseball from the mid-1970s until today.

Our group hopes to stay atop these major issues and continue to be a sounding board and proactive player in college baseball media nationally. Thanks for your input and for letting us know how we can continue to improve NCBWA as we near our 50th anniversary (48th year in 2009).

Joe Dier, Mississippi State
NCBWA President

FSU's Posey Captures 22nd Annual Dick Howser Trophy

Buster Posey, Florida State's slugging catcher and Atlantic Coast Conference Player of the Year as well as 2008 CoSIDA/ESPN the Magazine Academic Baseball Player of the Year, is the 22nd annual recipient of the Dick Howser Trophy, presented by Whitney Bank.

The St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce and National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association (NCBWA) selected Posey in a vote of over 300 members of the NCBWA and Dick Howser Trophy committee from an initial field of more than 700 nominees in 2008.

The presentation was made on June 14 prior to the Seminoles' first game in the 2008 NCAA College World Series against Stanford at Rosenblatt Stadium at the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce.

A follow up, on-campus presentation to Posey is being planned in conjunction with a November home FSU football game in Tallahassee.

Information Coming Soon for 10th Annual NCBWA Preseason All-America Team

Conference offices will soon be receiving nomination forms for the 2009 NCBWA Preseason All-America Team. NCBWA Board members will collect the nominees from the conferences that they are responsible for and assemble as a committee to choose the 10th annual team. Look for these nominations to be distributed by Nov. 1. Please contact NCBWA Associate Executive Director Russell Anderson with questions.

2009 NCAA Baseball Rules Changes

The NCAA Baseball Rules Committee has received approval for the following rules changes during its annual meeting in July. These rules changes were approved by the Playing Rules Oversight Panel (PROP).

NCAA BASEBALL RULES COMMITTEE 2009 RULE CHANGES

Major Rules Changes

Rule 1-3-c-A.R. Add “At the time of the pitch, a coach must position himself no closer to home plate than the front edge of the coach’s box and no closer to fair territory than the edge of the coach’s box nearest the field.

PENALTY: Warning on the first offense; a further violation shall result in the coach being ejected.

“Rule 1-3-c. It is required that base coaches wear some form of NOCSAE approved head gear. Play will not continue until compliance with this rule is met.”

***Rationale: To enhance the safety of base coaches, who often are assisting runners and may not be directing their attention to the batter at the time of the pitch. Additionally, base coaches that are outside of the coaching area are in jeopardy of interfering with a live play.*

Rule 3-6-f, A.R. 2: “If a coach leaves the dugout or their position to argue **a ball or strike call (including a checked swing)**, the coach may be ejected without warning.”

***Rationale: Clarifies that no one should be allowed to argue a ball or strike call which includes a check swing.*

Rule 3-6-a, A.R.1: “An umpire first may warn any violator **or team** before ejecting the individual(s) from the game.

PENALTY: Ejection after either warning.

***Rationale: Clarification that a warning can be issued individually or for the entire team.*

Rule 3-6-k: “Jurisdiction on personal confrontations and conduct towards the officiating staff does not end until the umpires have left the parking lot.”

***Rationale: Clarifies when an official's jurisdiction ends with regard to the officiating crew.*

Rule 5-16-b. Any threat of physical intimidation or harm to include pushing, shoving, bumping, kicking, spewing, spitting....

***Rationale: that any type of spitting or spewing that is directed at an official will be cause for an additional suspension.*

Rule 9-4a and 6-5-f: Each team shall be allowed three (3) offensive and (3) defensive conferences per game. If the game goes into extra innings, the team will receive one (1) extra free conference plus any unused ones from the first nine innings.

***Rationale: An attempt to improve pace of play.*

Rule 1-12-b-PENALTY for a. and b: "...cause an unusual reaction on the baseball shall be removed from the game. If detected **after the first pitch** the batter shall be declared..."

***Rationale: Clarifies when a batter should be called out for using an illegal bat.*

Rule 2, Ejection; 3-6-d; and Appendix D:

"3-6-d: A.R. 1, Sight and sound shall mean that the ejected person(s) cannot view the contest, cannot communicate with their team nor be where the umpires may hear them. It may still be possible for the ejected person(s) to be able to hear the sounds of the game; however, they must have left the confines of the playing field and the grandstands.

A.R. 2, The ejected individual is not allowed to return to the dugout, field or grandstands until the umpiring crew has been escorted to their dressing area by security or game management.

PENALTY: A minimum of a one game suspension, in addition to the post-game or post-participation ejection, will apply to any individual in violation of this rule."

***Rationale: Assists game management and the umpires in identifying what the Committee defines as "sound" as well as defines where an ejected individual must go and sets penalties for violations of 3-6-d.*

Also, change wording in A.R 3 and A.R. 4.

Rule 5-2-f, A.R. 3: T.V's shall be turned off in the Clubhouse during a game.

Revise the penalty for "f" to read: ...shall be removed from the stands or shall receive a post participation ejection.

***Rationale: Brings the regular-season code in line with all post-season play regulations.*

Rule 7-7-e, p. 81: "Hits the batter in the batter's box or hits the dirt or home plate and then hits the batter or the bat, which is in the hand or hands of the batter, while the batter is still in the batter's box; or . . ."

***Rationale: Clarifies that when the batter is still holding the bat, a ball should be ruled foul that rebounds from the ground and hits the batter while the batter is still in the batter's box.*

Rule 8-6-b (1) (b): "... return the ball to the base and the fielder may tag the runner or the base."

***Rationale: Eliminates the ambiguity between 8-6-a and 8-6-b, both rule sections now allow the defensive player the same type of defensive response when playing on a runner.*

Rule 9-4-b, A.R. 1: "If afterthe coach goes to the plate umpire to announce a pitching change, the second trip is charged (when the change is recorded on the official line-up card). If moved to a defensive position, the removed pitcher shall not return to pitch."

***Rationale: Clarifies when the second trip is officially charged.*

Rule 9-4-d: A trip to the mound, that may include a conference with the infielders ... begins when the coach crosses the foul line and shall be concluded when the ... "

***Rationale: Clarifies when a defensive conference begins.*

Appendix B:

Section A-1-a: Delete "replays showing balls or strikes"; add: Allow in-stadium replays of swinging third strikes, if shown immediately and prior to the next batter of either team.

***Rationale: Clarifies the time frame that swinging third strikes may be shown on the video board.*

Section A-3: Add to the existing sentence, "Any instance in which an umpire has made a judgment call may be replayed only one time at regular speed and must be replayed prior to the next batter (for either team) entering the dirt area around home plate.

***Rationale: Defines when a judgment call may be replayed and sets a definite time frame for the replay.*

Rule 3-6-e: "... decision and seek its reversal." Coaches are not entitled to a second opinion simply because they dispute a call. [See Appendix E, (c) 1-7]

A.R.: After a request for an umpire conference has been granted, coaches are not allowed to continue to argue a call once the final decision has been made. If a call is reversed, coaches are entitled to an explanation.

PENALTY: Ejection.

***Rationale: Clarification for Appendix E.*

Appendix E: Add to F), Line 5: Add: "Also some calls cannot be reversed without creating larger problems. Examples include a "catch/no catch" with multiple runners or a ball that is ruled foul."

***Rationale: The addition defines that a ball that is ruled foul cannot be changed.*

U.S. National Team Finishes Record 24-0 With Collegians

Hunter Morris (Auburn; Huntsville, Ala.) snapped a scoreless tie in the top of the 12th inning, and Kendal Volz (Baylor; Bulverde, Texas) got a game-ending ground out with the potential tying run at third base as the USA Baseball National Team defeated Japan 1-0 in the gold medal game at the 2008 FISU World Championships. It was Team USA's third consecutive FISU title.

The U.S. squad completed its 2008 tour 24-0 and established a National Team record for lowest staff ERA at 0.88 (the previous mark of 1.29 was set in 2003). Team USA did not allow more than two earned runs in any game and tossed its sixth shutout of the summer in the FISU title game.

Hitting leaders for the unbeaten Team USA squad included Blake Smith with a .327 average (18-for-55 in 20 games), Jared Clark with four home runs and Micah Gibbs with 17 RBI in 23 encounters. Team member Kentrail Davis, who later became inactive, batted .370 in nine games. The team hit with better-than-average power with 25 home runs in 24 contests and a .419 composite slugging percentage.

Among the record-setting pitching staff, Volz did not allow an earned run in 14 innings over 13 appearances, struck out 16 and notched eight of Team USA's 10 saves. Teammate Tyler Lyons was similarly perfect with no earned runs over 14 frames, 17 strikeouts, two bases-on-balls, four hits, and the squad's other two saves. Blake Smith and Kevin Rhoderick also had 0.00 ERA over a combined 10 innings. Primary middle reliever Kyle Gibson paced the squad with a 5-0 record in 13 total trips to the hill. Stephen Strasburg, who later pitched for the U.S. Olympic Team in August, topped the unit with 48 strikeouts in 34 innings of work along with a 3-0 record and 1.06 ERA. Team USA pitchers also limited opponents to a summer-record .154 batting average.

The team fielded at a superb .975 percentage with just 22 errors in 24 games, and 12 individuals played flawlessly in the field.

2008 USA National Team Roster

Name, School, Position, B/T, Ht., Wt., 2008 Class, Hometown

Jared Clark Cal State Fullerton OF R/R 6-4 215 So. Van Nuys, Calif.
Christian Colon Cal State Fullerton IF R/R 6-0 180 Fr. Corona, Calif.
Kentrail Davis Tennessee OF L/R 5-9 198 Fr. Theodore, Ala.
Matt den Dekker OF Florida L/L 6-1 205 So Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.
Derek Dietrich Georgia Tech SS/RHP L/R 6-1 195 Fr. Parma, Ohio
Josh Fellhauer Cal State Fullerton OF L/L 5-11 175 So. Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.
Micah Gibbs LSU C S/R 5-11 223 Fr. Pflugerville, Texas
Kyle Gibson Missouri RHP R/R 6-6 195 So. Greenfield, Ind.
A.J. Griffin San Diego RHP R/R 6-5 215 So. El Cajon, Calif.
Chris Hernandez, Miami, Fla. LHP L/L 6-1 195 Fr. Miami, Fla.
Ryan Jackson Miami (Fla.) SS R/R 6-3 180 So. Miami Springs, Fla.
Mike Leake Arizona State RHP/UT R/R 6-0 190 So. Fallbrook, Calif.
Ryan Lipkin C San Francisco R/R 6-0 200 So. Vacaville, Calif.
Tyler Lyons Oklahoma State LHP S/L 6-2 195 So. Lubbock, Texas
Tommy Mendonca Fresno State 3B L/R 6-1 200 So. Turlock, Calif.
Mike Minor Vanderbilt LHP L/L 6-3 175 So. Chapel Hill, Tenn.
Hunter Morris Auburn 1B L/R 6-4 215 Fr. Huntsville, Ala.
Andrew Oliver Oklahoma State LHP L/L 6-3 209 So. Vermillion, Ohio
Kevin Rhoderick Oregon State RHP R/R 6-0 190 Fr. Scottsdale, Ariz.
Blake Smith California OF-RHP L/R 6-2 220 So. Modesto, Calif.
Stephen Strasburg San Diego State RHP R/R 6-5 215 So. San Diego, Calif.
Kendal Volz Baylor RHP R/R 6-4 225 So. Bulverde, Texas
Scott Woodward Coastal Carolina IF L/R 6-1 185 So. Markle, Ind.

Rob Walton (Oral Roberts) served as head coach of the 2008 National Team with pitching coach Jerry Meyers (Old Dominion) and assistant coaches Nino Giarratano (San Francisco) and Ritch Price (Kansas). Eric Campbell was the general manager for the USA Baseball National Team. Current Baylor baseball media relations contact and NCBWA member Larry Little served as the 2008 National Team press officer; Little held the same position with the 2005 National Team.

The USA Baseball Olympic Team was comprised of the top professional players not on a 25-man Major League Baseball roster and ended with the bronze medal in the 2008 Summer Games in Beijing, China. Moves continue to be made to have baseball and softball reinstated after the 2012 hiatus at the London Olympics through USA Baseball, Major League Baseball, the USOC, and the IOC. In the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games baseball tournament, Team USA took the bronze medal after defeating Japan 8-4 and finished with a final Olympics record of 6-3 under manager Davey Johnson (Texas A&M). Matt Brown, who finished with a team-best 10 RBIs in the tournament, hit a three-run home run to tie Japan at 4-4; and Jason Donald, who led the squad in Beijing with a .381 batting average, hit a two-run home run to put the game out of reach.

The USA 16-Under squad won the gold medal in the 2008 COPABE "AA" Youth Pan American Championships by downing host Mexico 7-3 in the finals. The victory at Estadio Beto Avila in Veracruz, Mexico, gave Team USA a 8-0 record in the tournament. The victory extended the 16U National Team's international win streak to 23 games and qualified it for the 2009 AA (16U) World Youth Championships in Chinese Taipei.

The USA Women's Baseball Team also won a bronze medal in the III IBAF Baseball World Cup in Matsuyama, Japan. Marti Sementelli hurled a one-run complete game to lead Team USA to a 2-1 win over Mexico in the medal round. The tournament featured a much stronger field than in years past and saw host Japan go undefeated on its way to gold. Malaika Underwood was named the WBWC's top second baseman, and she led the tourney in RBI with 11. Sementelli was named III IBAF Baseball World Cup most valuable pitcher.

The 18-Under National Team's undefeated run came to an against Korea in the IBAF World Cup at Alberta, Canada, but the silver medal was earned by all-tournament team performances from 1B Jeff Malm, SS Nolan Fontana at shortstop, 3B Harold Martinez, and lefty pitcher Matthew Purke. Team USA outscored its opposition 66-10 in the seven games prior to the 7-0 loss to Korea in the gold-medal final.

Milestones

2007 Dick Howser Trophy recipient David Price finished with a 1-0 regular-season record in his '08 MLB debut for the division-winning Tampa Bay Rays and later earned a win in relief against Boston in the American League Championship Series....Larry Hays of Texas Tech retired after 22 years with the Red Raiders and 38 total seasons (16 at Lubbock Christian) as a college head coach. He is just the third coach in NCAA annals to reach 1,500 career wins. Former Oregon State assistant coach (currently at Tech and Red Raiders student-athlete) Dan Spencer has replaced Hays...Minnesota State named Matt Magers to replace 32-year retiring head coach Dean Bowyer as head coach of the Mavericks...Mid-America Christian (Okla.) has hired Kevin Paxson as new head coach...Jay Bergman left the UCF program with 10 games remaining in the 2008 regular season. LSU Assistant Terry Rooney took over the reigns of the Knights program...Illinois State's Jim Brownlee also will retire at the conclusion of the 2009 campaign.....College of Charleston named Monty Lee, a former C of C player and South Carolina assistant, as its new head coach....Lee replaces John Pawlowski, who was named head coach at Auburn.

Where Are They Now?

The NCBWA has an occasional feature in the newsletter with "Where Are They Now?" updates on a number of college coaches, student-athletes and programs. This issue's segment features some of Dick Howser Trophy winners of past years. Several notables and their current assignments include: Robin Ventura, Oklahoma State, 1988, retired Major League Baseball standout, inaugural member of the College Baseball Hall of Fame and ESPN College World Series analyst; Brooks Kieschnick, Texas, 1992 and 1993, businessman in Central Texas, retired Major Leaguer and College Baseball Hall of Fame

member; Jason Varitek, Georgia Tech, 1994, star catcher for two Boston Red Sox World Series championship teams; Todd Helton, Tennessee, 1995, longtime power hitter for 2007 World Series runner-up Colorado Rockies.

NATIONAL COLLEGIATE BASEBALL WRITERS ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1962, the NCBWA is dedicated to the advancement of college baseball. Membership is open to writers, broadcasters and publicists of the sport. Members receive a directory, newsletter updates and official votes in the Howser Award Player of the Year, Regional Player of the Year and NCBWA All-America voting. The NCBWA also sponsors preseason All-American awards, the Stopper of the Year Award, publication and writing contests. Additionally, the organization maintains a website at www.ncbwa.com. For membership, send annual dues (\$20), along with mailing address, phone, fax and e-mail address information to Russell Anderson, NCBWA Associate Executive Director, c/o Conference USA, 5201 N. O'Connor Blvd., Suite 300, Irving, TX 75309.

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For more information contact NCBWA Associate Executive Director Russell Anderson (214-774-1351, rdanderson@c-usa.org).

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