

*A Narrative History of the
Montgomery County Senior Softball League
A Continuing History – 2018*

THE BOYS ARE BACK FOR YET MORE AGAIN

The 2017 *Montgomery County Senior Softball League* season ended before anybody was ready. But this is the way it always seems to happen year after year. The end of the summer seems to sneak up on all of us, and none of us ever looks prepared to accept that it all has suddenly come to a halt. But, hey... this is what senior life is all about. Things going fast. But as we have all come to learn, good things go beyond what we all ever expected. Whoever thought any of us at this age would be having so much fun? Look what just went by in 2017. The winter season, as always, was more fun than expected. The summer season's league re-structuring proved to be a success that created many new friendships and team camaraderie, more than any of us anticipated. Our hope was for more good things to continue coming. The league membership looked ahead to the approaching 2018 season with much anticipation. And the league officers were already preparing for the next season long before the last-game dust settled at Hatfield School Road Park...

THE ORGANIZATION PREPARES FOR 2018

The annual MCSSL Board of Directors meeting, held on Wednesday, November 1st, 2017, was once again conducted at KC Prime Restaurant in Warrington, PA. A total of twenty-nine board members (league officers and managers) were in attendance. Attendees were immediately advised by Secretary Jim Marple that any formal voting requiring a two thirds majority at today's meeting would require nineteen of the attending members in agreement to pass a majority vote. Commissioner John Frantz opened the meeting at 10:30 a.m. briefly presenting the day's agenda. John had a bit of notable news for the members, advising that Bruce

Williams, the Summer League Director, had received an application from a female, the first since way back in the early 2000's when the league's three original female players all retired. This year's primary agenda items included the annual treasurer's report, the annual audit report, revisions to the by-laws, field improvement proposal, and the 2017 MCSSL suggestions list.

Treasurer Stan Schwartz reported on the league's financial situation, which remains very sound. The member application fees for the upcoming 2018 season were as follows: Winter Season fee remains at \$100; Summer season fees are \$100 for White Division play only, \$135 for White and Blue Division play, \$125 for White and Red Division regular play, and \$110 for White Division regular and Red Division extra play. Stan next reported that this past 2017 season, the league's charity activities resulted in donations of \$625 to the Phillies Ball Girls Charity, and \$1,000 to Hatfield Township's William J. Chapman Memorial Scholarship Foundation.

Assistant Commissioner Mike DeStefano next reported on the league's annual audit, conducted by league member Ron Clemens. As anticipated, there were no issues. Mike then discussed some of the details of the league's insurance coverage for league members under various circumstances (i.e. covered are players in all games, field maintenance team members performing duties, members at league social picnic events at School Road Park, travel team members at all home and away games.) Mike was going to check what coverage other travel teams have on their own players and advise the board later.

Jim Marple next presented the proposed revisions to the existing By-Laws, which were mostly clarification issues addressing the new three tier league structure. Also included were clarification revisions to the duties of various officer positions. After discussion of details, the proposed revisions to the By-Laws were unanimously approved by all twenty-nine members.

The next item on the agenda was a discussion on the Field Improvement Proposal for School Road Park softball field. Tom Lane, Field Operations Director, had previously contacted Integrated Turf Management, Inc., a company specializing in field maintenance. The company met with Tom and his MCSSL reps, Hatfield Township reps, and Softball America reps (who also utilize the field on a regular basis). ITM assessed the field, then forwarded a written proposal to renovate the infield (not outfield), including remedying the drainage conditions. The

total proposal cost was \$3,920. The township offered to split the cost, resulting in a cost to the MCSSL of \$1,960. (Note: SA opted not to contribute to the cost; MCSSL did not take exception based upon the fact that SA pays a significant amount of more money to the township greater than the charge to the MCSSL.) Discussion was then held regarding the proposal. As an addendum, the motion was made to investigate added minor repairs to the outfield up to \$500 additional. The proposal was put out for vote, and all twenty-nine attendees unanimously voted for approval. Tom moved forward with the project. Tom advised he would also work with ITM to develop a new method for the MCSSL Field Maintenance Team for field preparation and care.

The next item on the agenda was the review of the 41 suggestions submitted by the league membership. The suggestions, as in years past, were categorized to expedite the discussion and voting process. (As always, the details of all the individual suggestions were posted on the Member Area of the website.) A majority of the individual suggestions did not receive a motion from the floor to vote upon. Following are the highlights and results of the suggestions that were brought to vote: 1) Limiting the number of infielders to four was NOT APPROVED; however, the rules document will be revised to include a note that both Blue and Red divisions' modified rules be posted on the website; 2) Utilizing dedicated umpires was NOT APPROVED; however, an umpiring clinic and an "Umpiring Tips" document will be developed and available at the 2018 spring kick-off meeting; 3) Training of the field maintenance team in the new method for field preparation and grading was APPROVED, and will be an integral part of the ITM contract to improve the field; 4) Compensation to the field maintenance team members was NOT APPROVED; members of the team indicated refusal to accept any compensation if this suggestion was passed; 5) Elimination of the batting rugs was APPROVED; rugs should not be necessary when the field project is completed.

The final item discussed was the heat index issue. Bruce Williams advised that he uses the index for the immediate area around Hatfield. The issue was brought up questioning whether insurance would cover players during an "official" heat warning. The members were advised that there is no caveat in the policy that addresses heat indexing. The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m. by Commissioner Frantz, who thanked all for their spirited discussion and input.

THE 2018 WINTER SEASON

Gordy Detweiler, the MCSSL's winter league director, once more got the indoor season got off to a quick start. The Hatfield facility, under the new ownership of XL Sports World, continued the long-standing business relationship with the league. The league this winter season saw the biggest increase of players yet with a total of 112 signing up to play some winter softball. In mid-December, Gordy assembled the managers and held the traditional draft. Gordy had enough to field ten teams this year, which also made scheduling a lot easier. On Tuesdays and Thursday there would again be a full four games scheduled at 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 12 noon, and 1:30 p.m. As last year, the playing schedule included two additional time slots on Wednesday mornings at 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

The league this year had a significant increase in player applications, both for the winter and summer seasons. A total of twenty new players entered their applications. Earlier in late December, the new winter players were invited to the Hatfield facility for a "workout" session with some of the regular winter players. In early January, Bruce Williams, *Director Summer League*, scheduled the official player evaluation and workout session for the summer managers and officers to observe and rate the new players, who would ultimately be placed on teams in accordance with individual team needs and parity. (As a side note, the league received the first female application in years, but the individual failed to respond to the workout session invite.)

The winter indoor season barely got started before the first nor'easter of winter decided to blanket the North Penn area. The boys opened the season the first week of January by playing on Tuesday and Wednesday, but by Thursday the first of several storms to come shut down the whole area and the games had to be postponed. By the time February rolled around it didn't get any better. Two more storms forced game cancellations for the day, and on one additional day games were cancelled when the facility shut down for administrative purpose. Just when things were supposed to improve weather wise, March brought a series of nor'easter storms that made the record books. The season had to be extended into the third week of March, where twelve postponed games had been re-scheduled. For the first time in MCSSL history, the fourth nor'easter of March caused cancellation of previously snowed-out games. The season had to be extended yet again into the last week of March before all the games could be completed according to schedule. All in all, it was one horrible weather-related winter season, but despite

the setbacks, the boys persevered, had as much fun as always, and looked even more forward to the summer kickoff.

THE BUSINESS SIDE

The annual CPR/AED training was conducted on Thursday, April 5th, which consisted of training for three volunteer members per team. The annual kick-off meeting was held on Friday, April 6th. John Frantz entered his sixth year as league commissioner. John was proud to announce that the league was entering its twentieth year. The 2018 season saw few changes from the business standpoint. The activities planned for the season were many which included: a trip to the Iron Pigs minor league game in Bethlehem, annual photo day picnic, MCSSL golf outing, a special 20th Anniversary Celebration family picnic, one-pitch tournament, and the end-of-season picnic.

Commissioner Frantz opened the annual kick-off meeting by welcoming all the new players to the league. The *Commissioner* was proud to announce that Ron Clemens had accepted the position as the league's new *Treasurer*, and that Howie Schwartz had accepted the position as the league's new *Promotions Director*. The highlights of the meeting included putting emphasis on all the safety aspects of playing, and the *Commissioner* reinforced a number of other key issues, including weather and heat criteria, the requirement that all pitchers wear a mask, and the screen must be used during batting practice. The structure of the league for 2018 would retain the Red, White, and Blue levels of play, and teams in all three divisions would remain the same, with any new players being placed as needed. Another few highlights of the meeting were two presentations, one a special PowerPoint presentation by Joe Kelly entitled, "*The Joy of Senior Softball and Why We Keep Coming Back for More.*" This was followed by *League Historian* George Schreader presenting a PowerPoint program, "*The MCSSL's 20th Year – A Short History of the Year-to-Year Highlights.*" Both Joe's and George's presentations captured the many positive reasons and motivations of why this gang of seniors enjoys the game of softball so much, and this league in particular.

THE MCSSL HALL OF FAME

The third year of the league's program to honor those who have contributed their time, talents, and determination to mold the MCSSL into the organization as we know it today saw five new league members inducted into the hallowed hall.

At the annual league kick-off meeting in early April, *Commissioner* Frantz and *Historian* Schreader presented a short overview of the process, in which all league members are encouraged to nominate those individuals whom they feel deserve consideration for recognition. The process remained the same, and the window period for nominations was opened to the membership until early May.

In accordance with the guidelines, nine nominees (not elected last year) were automatically carried over into 2018. This year, there were an additional four nominees who entered their first year of eligibility for a total of thirteen nominees. The Nomination Committee (consisting of chair *Historian* George Schreader, three current Hall of Fame members – Manny London, Dennis Lapin, and Gordy Detweiler – and three members-at-large – Ben Fiore, Bill Bogle, and Dale Bishop) reviewed the achievements and qualifications of all the nominees. As the guidelines allow for up to five individuals to be placed on the ballot, the committee came to consensus and placed five members onto the ballot – Tommy Corcoran, Mike DeStefano, Jim Marple, Dave Speelhoffer, and Bob Weaver. The ballot was forwarded to the *Commissioner*, who in turn submitted the ballot to the 42-person Board of Directors for their voting FOR or AGAINST. The open voting period lasted until mid-May. A margin of 70% is required for the individual to be inducted, and all five nominees were elected.

The results of the BoD voting were conveyed to the membership at the first social/photo picnic of the season in late May. Formal induction into the MCSSL Hall of Fame took place at the annual family picnic on June 16th. *League Historian* Schreader presented to the crowd the accomplishments of each individual, who was then presented the award by *Commissioner* Frantz. The list of MCSSL Hall-of-Famers continues to grow each year, and by the 2018 season there were fifteen inductees, all fine gentlemen who each in their own way have contributed time and effort to build this great organization, and all of whom have exemplified what founder Vic Zoldy's vision was about.

SCHOOL ROAD PARK FIELD IMPROVEMENT

A few short weeks following the Board's approval to contract with Integrated Turf Management, Inc., work began on the School Road Park field. Tom Lane, *Director of Field Operations*, was on hand to watch the start-up of the improvement activities at the end of November. After spending some time talking to the company manager, a gentleman named Steve Cataldo, Tom immediately had some good news to report to the league's board members. Actual work took about a week, and the final results ultimately exceeded all expectations.

When ITM had completed the project, the field was in excellent condition awaiting only the upcoming summer season. In addition to fulfilling the contractual obligation, ITM had also repaired the bare spot in left field (as well as a few other noticeable outfield spots) at no extra charge. All in all, a load of about twenty-five tons of infield mix was brought to the field, and at the completion of the project, ITM deposited the leftover portion near the league's shed for future use. During the final phase of the improvement on the last day, which was the "dressing-up" of the field, Tom had invited the entire field maintenance team to come out and watch the proper procedure as part of the "training package" for the team, which ultimately established the new and improved method to prep the field.

When the project was finally completed, Mr. Cataldo advised Tom that his company did not want to charge for the extra work done to the outfield. ITM was hoping the league would allow him and his company to "showcase" the School Road Park field and their work as a marketing/salesmanship tool, and his plan was to have the field looking so good it will attract more business. The league, of course, was absolutely amenable to this request, along with the promise by Mr. Cataldo that he would always be available to address any future problems or issues regarding the field. The proof of just how well the field had been improved didn't come until the following spring when the league players took the diamond. Nothing more needed to be said, as the smiles expressed it all.

THE 2018 SUMMER SEASON

Mother Nature refused to cooperate and continued to carry her winter interruptions right into spring. The scheduled start-up of spring practices and games in April all had to be postponed because of inclement weather. It was the first time in memory that the league regular season started with no teams having any pre-season practice due to rain and stormy conditions. The whole month of May wasn't much different, as close to half of the scheduled games continued to be rained out right up into June. The decision was made at the end of May to extend the season one extra week in October to give the boys a few additional games to make up for lost time.

The MCSSL's summer season finally kicked off with the same set-up as the previous year, eight teams in the White Division and four teams in the Blue Division. Blue Division games again were all scheduled for Mondays and Wednesdays in the 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. time slots; White Division games were again scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 12 noon, and Wednesdays at 12 noon and 1:30 p.m.; Red Division play was again scheduled for Mondays at 12 noon and 1:30 p.m.

The Red Division entered its third year of competition. This season, Red Division Director George Schreader set up the division differently. Eligible players (only from the White Division) were asked their preference to play either regular or as an extra player. With forty-eight indicating to play on a regular basis, four teams of twelve per roster were set up and scheduled. There were seventeen players on the extra list. This season, Wayne Bailey was appointed as the Manager Extra List, whose task was to fill in team vacancies. Team managers were required to contact Wayne for substitute players, thereby creating more equal opportunity for extra players to participate.

The Red Division schedule was set at twenty-one games, which allowed for each team to play their opponents seven times over the course of the season. Because of the 2018 calendar, there were two Mondays (July 2nd and October 15th) left open as "TBD" dates. On July 2nd, the boys were scheduled to play a new brand of competition softball developed by Director Schreader called "Four-Man Team, One-Pitch Tournament." The trial competition never got off the ground. Unfortunately, once again, Mother Nature refused to cooperate, as the July tournament had to be cancelled due to excessive heat.

Overall, the summer season lasted from the second week of April through to the end of October. Mother Nature wasn't cooperative for Red Division play either, as seven Monday dates were cancelled due to the inclement weather. The season ended on a positive note, with the Red Division capping off regular season play on October 15th with an end-of-season One-Pitch Tournament (double elimination) that pitted the regular teams against each other.

THE TRAVEL TEAM MARAUDERS

Gordy Detweiler was focused right from the start to improve on last year's record of 13 wins and 11 losses. The travel season kicked off once again in early February with a traditional trip to Palmyra to play a doubleheader against the Harrisburg gang. Unfortunately, the bats hadn't unfrozen yet from the recent arctic conditions in the North Penn area. The Marauders couldn't get it going and lost two games to the Burgers. A few weeks later, Gordy arranged for a rematch and headed out to Palmyra again, only to be handed another two defeats. Because of the horrible weather throughout the course of the winter, no more travel games were scheduled.

It wasn't until early May that the Marauders next played a travel game. Traveling to West Chester to play longtime friends and competitors, the Marauders were met by a very formidable team, handing Gordy a trouncing in both games. Rainy weather kept the Marauders from playing any more games during the month of May. Finally, by mid-June, the weather broke and West Chester came to Sellersville for a doubleheader rematch. The Marauders easily handed the West Chester gang two defeats. But the rest of the season did not go as well for the Marauders, due both to the continual rain cancellations and some sounding defeats from West Chester, Lyons, Philadelphia, and Allentown. Overall, the Travel Team Marauders came away from another fun-filled winter and summer season with a combined record of 7 wins and 11 losses.

THE SOCIAL SCENE

Manny London, the league's legendary social director, wasted no time in organizing yet another spectacular annual holiday party at the beginning of December, 2017. The event was again held at the Church of the Messiah on Route 202 in North Wales. The 2017 party was one

huge event, as the turnout of members and their dates was the biggest ever in the history of league social parties. The feast, as always, was spectacular, with plenty of food and drinks. Manny arranged this year for a yet a different kind of entertainment. A musical tribute group, “The Beat Tells”, were on stage to perform a variety of Beatles songs to everyone’s delight. Following their show, the group continued playing for an evening of dancing and fun. One of the highlights of the event was the attendance of several very special guests who were invited along with their significant others. These special guests all hold a place of honor in the history of the MCSSL. Attending was league founder Vic Zoldy, and four other gentlemen who helped build this league in the early years: Tom Boyd, Joe Smith, Chuck Trautwein, and Dave Pacewicz. It was a great gathering that sparked a lot of memories, and a great way to bring the 2017 season to an end.

Moving into the spring and summer months for 2018, the league held the first outdoor social event of the season in May. But again, due to inclement weather, the original date for the activity had to be postponed until the following week. On Friday, May 25th, the event was held, which again combined team photo day with a great picnic. Manny London once again put together a great feast. Manny was happy to announce that the attendance at this year’s gathering set a record for attendees at 132, which included quite a few of the league’s new “rookies”, all of whom certainly enjoyed the extravagant spread. Among the new players introduced were twin brothers Frank Kling (Marvels) and Jack Kling (Magics), the first time in the league’s history that twin siblings graced the ranks of league membership. One of the highlights of the picnic was the official announcement that Tommy Corcoran, Mike DeStefano, Jim Marple, Dave Speelhoffer, and Bob Weaver were the new members to be inducted into the Hall of Fame in June.

On Tuesday, May 29th, the MCSSL’s night at the Phillies AAA team Iron Pigs’ game saw 131 attendees – the most ever! – as league and family members enjoyed a minor league baseball game on a perfect weather evening in Bethlehem. The league was among the groupings of attendees to throw out a ceremonial first pitch before the game. This year, the “pitching ace” on the mound from the MCSSL was Mike Dent, who threw the pitch, “... *right on the corner for a perfect strike!*” ... or so was claimed when interviewed by his league-mates after the game. We’re sure Mike did, as all MCSSL softballers always throw strikes!

The focal activity of the season was the family picnic held on Saturday, June 16th, which was featured as the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the MCSSL. The weather was perfect! The event was combined with the Travel Team Marauders playing a charity double header against the Phillies Ball Girls (the fourth year in a row) and the induction of five new members into the MCSSL Hall of Fame. The charity game event was open to the public, sponsors were invited to attend, and entertainment was provided. Thanks to the super efforts of Dennis Lapin, Howard Schwartz, John Frantz, Manny London, Bud Hyndman and others, the event was heavily publicized in the weeks prior to the event. The league experienced some great news media exposure prior to the event that included an WNPV radio interview of John Frantz, and news articles in both the Intelligencer and the Reporter. On the day of the event, we had a great turnout of members, families, public supporters, and a significant number of sponsor tables, all that culminated in a very successful community event. Hatfield featured their ladder fire truck, and entertainment and snack stations were set up for the kids and parents. The doubleheader charity game between the league's Marauders and the Phillies Ball Girls highlighted the day, again raising over a thousand dollars for the charity. In the afternoon, the MCSSL family enjoyed yet another spectacular picnic social orchestrated by Manny London and his special entourage of MCSSL "family" members. Five league members were newly inducted into the MCSSL Hall of Fame. Later in June, the league's 20th year in existence was recognized by Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick on the floor of the House of Representatives in Washington, DC, and both Ray Forlano and Angelo Malizia were mentioned as original members. The 20th Anniversary event certainly put the MCSSL in a special limelight that all the league members, past and present, can certainly be proud of for years to come.

Even though this is a league of senior softballers, what has become an annual event is every bit as much fun. The annual MCSSL Golf Outing was held on Thursday, June 21st again at Skippack Golf Course. This year Jimmy Flynn assumed the duties of the golf organizing committee comprised of himself, Vince Torno, Mike DeStefano, Ben Fiore, and Steve Czyzewicz. Forty members of the league were in competition for the prestigious prize of... bragging rights! Again, it was a weather-friendly day as the gang played a fun round of scramble golf. Winners this year were as follows. Low Score (61): Ron Pratowski, Jim Flynn, Jim Hagopian, Enzo Vassalluzzo; Low Net Score (47): Steve Mallozzi, Billy Mallozzi, Ray Forlano, Steve Alligood; Longest Drive: Fred Walker; Closest to Pin: Jerry Kratz, Dan Brady, Fred

Walker, Steve Czyzewicz. Many league members donated prizes, including an anonymous donation of “Juba Balls” (a rather humorous novelty donation of a dozen golf balls embossed with the face of Hall-of-Famer Joe Juba). The four lucky winners of a sleeve of the coveted “Juba Balls” were Joe Howe, John Frantz, Roger Rosenberger, and Joe Bruckler.

The end of October saw another fun-filled end-of-season picnic. It might have been chilly and overcast, but the boys came out in a record number to enjoy another spectacular feast arranged by Manny and Mrs. London. Manny’s theme this year was a pig roast, and all agreed it was just as good as any Hawaiian luau, better yet since it was done in Manny’s own MCSSL style. The give-away gifts on the table contributed by members were aplenty, and the 50-50 give-away saw an additional three members winning a prize.

Following the feast, a very, very special presentation was made that exemplifies the generosity of the MCSSL organization. Earlier in the season, the league membership supported *Assistant Commissioner* Mike DeStefano’s proposal to select the Pennsylvania Veterans Foundation as this year’s designated charity. Mike was the organizing force behind the effort. This fine all-volunteer organization assists ALL eras of Pennsylvania veterans from WWII to those currently serving, including spouses and children, who are in need of financial help. At the kick-off meeting in April, the league officers and members overwhelmingly agreed with Mike’s proposal to honor the military service of past commissioner Stan Schwartz, who was not only a U.S. Navy veteran, but who was also a strong supporter of our nation’s military personnel. Upon Stan’s passing, his family requested contributions be given to veterans’ organizations. In honor of Stan, the league contributed to the Pennsylvania Veterans Foundation. In attendance at the presentation were Mrs. Ellen Schwartz and daughter, Ivy (Schwartz) Pearlsatin, and the league membership expressed how proud it was to have had Stan as one of its brothers. Prior to the presentation, Manny London delivered a very poignant speech on his memories of his friend Stan, and all that Stan achieved in helping to make the MCSSL into what it has become today. The highlight of the speech was Manny’s reading of the letter received by his family from the Department of the Navy recounting the honorable ceremony of Stan Schwartz’s cremation burial at sea the previous April on the USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81). Following Manny’s tribute, John Lancaster – himself a veteran and very active in veterans’ activities – was given the honor to present the amount of \$2,000 to representative Angie Curran of the foundation. Ms.

Curran graciously accepted the donation and thanked the membership for its generosity and thoughtfulness.

THE TOURNAMENT SCENE

The summer weather continued with a vengeance, but only this time it wasn't rain, but rather the heat. The annual one-pitch tournament was originally scheduled for June 18th but had to be cancelled. The tournament was rescheduled for August 10th. The preparation committee of Bruce Williams and Jimmy Marple did a super job of organizing the teams while Manny London and Cheryl Marple kept the tournament moving and did the scorekeeping for the ranking system. Tom Lane and the field prep team once more did a superb job of field preparation. It was another great turnout of players, as six teams were assembled through the standard draft system. The teams were managed this year by Steve Alligood, Dale Bishop, John McCann, Bob Gaugler, Howie Schwartz, and Pete Perez.

The tournament started bright and early Friday morning at 8:20 a.m. and the warm weather cooperated all day. The format remained the same as in previous years, each team playing two five-inning games. The field would then be pared down to three teams for the semi-final round based upon wins/losses, runs scored for/against. A system of tie-breakers is used to determine the winners. The first three teams to be eliminated were Team McCann, Team Gaugler, and Team Bishop. In the championship game, Team Schwartz (2 wins, 1 loss) played against top-ranked Team Alligood (2 wins, 0 losses) for the title. Team Schwartz won the game by a 9 – 4 score and claimed the coveted league tournament trophy. Congratulations went out to the winning team consisting of Howie Schwartz (manager), Dan Brady, Steve Czyzewicz, Don Dennis, Mike DeStefano, Scott Kowit, Terry Leach, John McCullough, Scott Norris, John Packel, and Nick Silveri.

The tournament again this year also served as a charity event. Helping worthwhile causes in the Hatfield area has become a mission of the league's business activities. The money raised this year went to the previously mentioned Pennsylvania Veterans Foundation in memory and honor of the late Stan Schwartz. Donations collected during the event this year initially totaled over a thousand dollars, with additional later donations being made by non-attending league

members and their families. Long time league member, Ben Fiore, for the third year in a row sent out a call to all the golfers in the league asking them to “clean out the garage” of all used golf balls. Ben collected the balls, sold them to a local driving range, and donated the money back to the charity event. At the end of the season, the very generous amount totaled the \$2,000 that was donated to the attending representative of the foundation at the end-of-season picnic. Special thanks went out to all those league members and supporters who generously contributed to this worthy cause.

The MCSSL’s ASA Liaison Officer, Lew Hoffman, added yet another tournament to the season’s repertoire. Lew organized an ASA-sanctioned “70 and Over” tournament and assembled three teams of players from the league’s membership. Players in the league who were 70 years old and over (or who turned 70 in CY2018) were eligible to participate. Money collected from each player went to the ASA treasury for the entrance fee for each team, which is a requirement to be recognized as an official ASA event. Establishing ASA-sanctioned events adds credibility to any organized league and shows strong support of the ASA organization, especially at the senior level.

The double-elimination tournament started at 9:30 a.m. under sunny blue skies and warm weather. Under ASA tournament rules, a few of our league’s modifications were disallowed. Runners are not allowed to overrun the bases and runners must be tagged out when there is no force play. To speed up the game, batters went up to the plate with a 2-1 count. The three teams were arbitrarily designated as Red, White, and Blue. In the first game, Red played White, with the White team winning. In the second game, the Blue team defeated the White team. The third game was the loser’s bracket, with Red and White playing again. This time the Red team won, thereby eliminating the White team. The fourth game was all prepared to commence around 1:00 p.m. when Mother Nature, yet again this season, arrived with her summer fury. Gray skies rolled in with thunder and lightning and then the rains came. The remaining games, unfortunately, had to be cancelled and the tournament came to a disappointing early end with no clear winner. But as always, everybody won because everybody all had fun.

ANOTHER FUN-FILLED SEASON COMES TO AN END

To say it was a unique year overall for the MCSSL is an understatement. All agreed that it was the worst weather year in the twenty-year history of the league. One team reported that they had one-third of their scheduled games canceled due to inclement weather and heat. That statistic was mostly indicative of the entire league. But despite the setbacks, the 2018 season was another terrific success for the MCSSL. Tommy Lane's field maintenance team turned in another super effort to keep the field playable despite the weather-related obstacles.

The 2018 season closed with the end-of-season picnic, and despite the chill, the turnout was high. The talk of the day was about how fast the summer season seemed to zip by this year and how often the boys had to dodge the raindrops. But it didn't seem to "dampen their spirits" in the least as they talked about the coming winter softball season. And, of course, next year's summer season, which the boys all assured each other is going to be weather-friendly. There wasn't a doubt in anyone's mind. The 2019 season is just around the corner...