

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2020 COMBINED SEASONS

This edition of highlights is different from years before. No one could have possibly predicted that an entire year of senior activities would get interrupted like it did. But... we persevered. As we all know, the MCSSL does not keep individual statistics. However, we do recognize the outstanding accomplishments and notable events that keep us all brimming with pride. Here are just a few of the things that occurred or that were accomplished by players and teams that make for fond memories in this crazy year that has just passed.

The 2020 Winter Season

- The MCSSL Winter League restructuring was one of the new highlights of the early season. A total of 111 players were signed up for the seasonal indoor play. This year, the league was split into two divisions, the White Division consisting of six teams, and the Blue Division consisting of four teams. All agreed that the restructuring made the competition even more fun than previous years.
- One big highlight of the season was the full cooperation of Mother Nature, who in years past, caused many games to be either postponed or cancelled because of inclement weather. How about that ground hog? This year, Puxatony Phil seemed to get it right. Snow and ice weren't in Mother Nature's equation for the senior softballers, who went through the season's schedule right into early March with no games interrupted by inclement weather. However...
- ... One of the biggest highlights of the year wasn't Mother Nature, but rather Mother Gaia (the mythical goddess who inhabits the earth giving it life nourishment, and who occasionally takes it away when necessary). With only one week remaining in the season, the historical coronavirus pandemic hit home here in Pennsylvania. The XL sports facility closed its doors, but the MCSSL had already responded to the safety and health concerns for the league's members by officially cancelling the remainder of the winter indoor season.

- Quite a feat of hitting while the season lasted! Hats off to the four guys who managed to hit a home run off the back wall at the XL Indoor Sports Center: Bob Miller of the White Shirt Team (1); Steve Dimitry of the Black Shirt Team (1); Tom Levins of the Gray Shirt Team (1); Jack Hart of the Gold Shirt Team (1).

The 2020 Shortened Summer Season

Here are two highlights from our re-constituted summer season that we never thought was going to happen.

- Tuesday, August 18th, 2020: Magicians vs. Monarchs. It was the first triple play of the season, a real classic pulled off by the Magicians. Runners on first and second. A hard-hit grounder to Gerry Hoffius, who stepped on third, fired a strike to Jim Albrecht at second, who relayed the turn to Dave Marovich at first to complete the tailor-made triple play. Always a treat to see... except for the opposing team, of course.
- Quite a feat of hitting! Hats off to the four guys who managed to hit home runs over the fence at School Road Park: Ron Geib of the White Division Magicians Team (5); Ted Hoffman of the Red Division Musials Team (2) and the White Division Magicians Team (1); Bob Miller of Red Division Musials Team (1); Joe Kelly of the Red Division Musials Team (1).

“It ain’t over ‘til it’s over!” – Yogi Berra

Here is one memorable game from our winter season that demonstrates why we have so much fun playing senior softball.

- Thursday, February 12th, 2020: The Black Shirt Team held a solid 6-3 lead over the Blue Shirt Team going onto the top of the seventh inning. Then the bottom fell out, as only it could happen in the senior league. The Blue Shirts, combining some timely and solid hitting plus a few mis-played balls by the Black Shirts, jumped out scoring six runs to

take a comfortable 9-6 lead going into the bottom of the seventh. The Black Shirts, however, weren't out of it yet. Pounding out a few key hits, they scored two more runs. The tying run was on second with two down. Ron Clemens, playing for the Blue Shirts, snagged a hard-hit grounder up the middle and gunned down the runner at the plate for the final out, giving the Blue Shirts a come-from-behind seventh inning 9-8 win.

Here are several memorable games from our summer season that demonstrate why we have so much fun playing senior softball. Seems like the Musketeers team was either a wrecking ball or a piñata throughout the season as you shall read.

- Tuesday, August 11th, 2020: The Musketeers held a two-run lead over the Magicians going onto the bottom of the seventh inning. The first two Magicians batters were retired on routine outs. Two strikes on the third batter, one pitch away from a Musketeer victory. The immortal words of Yogi... a routine grounder resulted in an error, followed by another error repeat on the next batter. Runners on first and second, Ron Geib at the bat. A long drive into the gap scored the tying runs. Extra innings. The Musketeers failed to score in the top of the eight, but the determined Magicians pushed across the winning run for an unbelievable come-from-behind victory.
- Tuesday, August 18th, 2020: The Mountaineers had the scheduled doubleheader and easily dispatched their opponent in the first game. In the second game against the Mystics, they continued their run, holding a five-run lead going into the top of the seventh inning, looking for sure to sweep the doubleheader. But it ain't the way the game often goes. The Mystics exploded for 13 runs in the top of the seventh, then totally shut down the Mountaineers in the bottom of the inning for the big win. For certain, Yogi had to be watching this game.
- Wednesday, August 26th, 2020: It happened against the Musketeers earlier in the season, but now it was theirs to turn the tide. This time it was against the Missiles, who had totally dominated the game thus far. Down by two runs going into the top of the seventh inning, the first Musketeer batter grounded out. Things looked pretty glum. Then

suddenly the bats exploded. When the dust had finally settled on the third out, the Musketeers has scored six runs to pull ahead to a four-run lead. The Missiles' bats were silenced in the bottom of the seventh, giving the Musketeers a well-played come-from-behind victory.

- Thursday, September 3rd, 2020: What a classic game! The kind that senior softball in the MCSSL is all about! The Musketeers vs. the Monarchs. On the mounds were two of the MCSSL's Hall-of-Famers and top "deliverers", octogenarians Ray Forlano of the Musketeers and John Packel of the Monarchs. And "deliver" they did! The game saw more "one-seam" six-foot fastballs, "two-seam" twelve-foot change-ups, and in-between "sliders" and "curveballs" than senior softballers thought possible. Through the first six complete innings, John was pitching a masterpiece and held the Musketeers scoreless. Ray was throwing a great game himself, holding the Monarchs to only two earned runs. The Monarchs went scoreless in the top of the seventh. In the bottom of the seventh, John got the first batter out. Two outs to go to complete the shutout. But as the Musketeers had been doing all season, the bats suddenly came alive. Four hits in a row tied the score at 2-all. With the bases still loaded and two outs, Don Petrille drove a single into center field to score the winning run and give the Musketeers a come-from-behind victory, and giving Ray Forlano a miracle win. Both John and Ray pitched super, super games! But like Yogi always said, "... it ain't over 'til it's over."
- Wednesday, October 7th & Thursday, October 8th, 2020: Two of the "craziest" back-to-back games of the season. Once again, the ubiquitous Musketeers were pitted against the Joe Sharp-shooting Mountaineers. In the first game (a long-delayed make-up), the Musketeers exploded and held a 13-4 lead going into the top of the sixth. The Mountaineers were dispatched in the sixth, and being down nine runs, requested to "flip" and just continue to bat the seventh inning. All hell broke loose. It was the Mountaineers turn to explode, as they scored eight runs before the Musketeers managed to get the third out, somehow holding onto a 13-12 victory. The very next day, the Mountaineers were out for revenge. By the fifth inning, they held an 8-1 lead, pitchers Tom Holland and Joe Sharp combining to silence the Musketeer's bats. Then in the bottom of the sixth, the

Musketeers managed to pull to an 8-4 score, and held the Mountaineers scoreless in the seventh. But like the day before, all hell broke loose again. In the bottom of the seventh, the Musketeers pushed four runs across to tie the score. The bases were loaded with two outs, the winning run on third. Unfortunately, mighty Casey was at the bat and struck out. Into an extra inning. Musketeers pitcher Ray Forlano went to work, backed by some nifty defense. The Mountaineers were shut down in the eighth. In the Musketeers' eighth, a base running error that could have won the game left the bases loaded. With one out, the runner was thrown out at home for two down, then a pop-up ended the inning. The Mountaineers were shut down in the ninth. Finally, in the bottom of the ninth, the Musketeers once again loaded the bases, but this time a line drive hit to the outfield by Greg Cole pushed the winning run across the plate, giving the Musketeers an unbelievable come-from-behind 9-8 victory. Yogi, it is said, really enjoyed this game!

The Best Highlights of the 2020 Combined Seasons

We were all disappointed beyond belief that the entire season might be cancelled. That we managed to start up play at all at the end of July was a blessing to everyone, but the fact that we managed to maintain continual activities through October is more of a mini-miracle. Here is how it all happened in 2020:

- *The Covid-19 Task Group Initiative:* Outstanding leadership has always been an integral part of the MCSSL, and this year proved it. As most of America was in the midst of a shutdown, *Commissioner* John Frantz took the initiative in late May to assemble a task group comprised of league members recognized for their expertise to investigate not only what could be done to resume senior play, but how it could be done to maximize the health and safety of the league membership.
- *The Start-up of the 2020 Summer Season:* Thanks to the most remarkable job done by the task group, the resulting *Covid-19 Safety & Operating Plan* was accepted by Hatfield Township, and the MCSSL was given permission to start up the league activities

contingent upon adherence to the plan. The season was allowed to start the last week of July.

- *The Continuance of League Play:* The season started, and it went off with spectacular results. We made it through the entire period from the last week of July to the end of October without a single coronavirus health-related incident. The boys not only accepted the restrictions, but with only a few minor “burps”, changed the way we needed to continue to play some ball. We even got in some re-scheduled games due to weather cancellations, a first for the league.

... And the Number One Highlight of the 2020 Season ...

- *NOBODY TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19!* Call it fate, call it an answer to the prayers of all that was prayed for, call it a statistical revelation, or call it whatever you want. The members of the Montgomery County Senior Softball League banded together to follow the directive of our league trustees, who collectively devised the best and safest plan imaginable to get us oldsters back onto the field of play that we might recapture a semblance of what senior life it supposed to be all about. How could there possibly be a better highlight than this?