



The Zeeland Little League Season is coming to a close, but it's not over yet! We still have our 11U All-Star Softball Team in action this week as they compete in the District Tournament. This month's newsletter will recap the season, recognize some highlights of the 2019 season, discuss the "off-season", and present opportunities for 2020!

2019 Season Recap

Everyone should have received emails from Zeeland Recreation about an end of the season survey. Please fill those out at your earliest convenience. Our board will be reviewing these as we plan for the 2020 season, and your feedback means a whole to us as we figure out what has worked well and what hasn't. Although you are more than welcome to leave the survey anonymous, please feel free to leave your name and contact information so that we can follow up with any comments or suggestions you have. Some of the better ideas on ways to improve have come from the feedback of parents and coaches, so it does help us to be able to contact you when you have great ideas! If you did not receive the survey, please email ZeelandLittleLeague@gmail.com and we will get one to you ASAP!

2019 Highlights – Kaat Kids Day and Girls Night Out



Kaat Kids Day and Girls Night Out were a blast this year! I really believe events like these get our players excited about the game, and I hope to grow these events each year. We will continue to work on making these events fun for all of our Little League players and their families, and also find a way to get everyone involved. Planning and organizing these events can be tricky, but ultimately when we can get kids more excited about the game, then we are doing something right! If you have any suggestions, or are willing to help next year, please let us know!

I would also like to recognize some baseball players who competed in the T-Mobile Home Run Derby and were finalists in Zeeland. Congrats to Home Run Derby Champion Khi Anderson (14) and finalists Jakson Keeler (12), Clay Fredricks (8), Keagan Louwerse (7), and Jose Acevedo (2). Khi walked away with \$100 Dicks Sporting Goods cash and a new equipment bag, and all of our finalists won some Dicks Sporting Goods cash as well!





2019 Highlights – Post-Season Tournaments

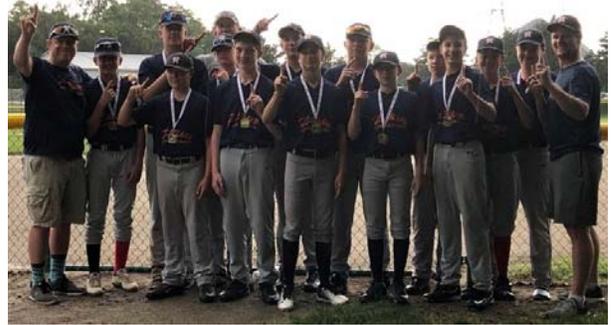
I would also like to recognize some teams that did especially well in their post-season tournaments. For AAA Baseball, the Pirates won the National League by defeating the Padres, and the Tigers won the American League by defeating the Rays. Both games were a lot of fun to watch and all of the teams competed hard!



Our Majors, 50/70, and Juniors teams all competed in the District 9 Team Tournaments. Each ZLL team is placed in a bracket with teams from other local leagues to play in a double elimination tournament. The following teams made some noise in their tournaments:

- Scrap Yard Dawgs – Reached Majors Softball Semi-Final - Pool C
- Yankees – Majors Baseball Runner-Up – Pool C
- Orioles – Reached Majors Baseball Semi-Final – Pool D
- Athletics – Majors Baseball 3rd Place – Pool F
- Tigers – Reached Majors Baseball Semi-Final – Pool G
- Dodgers – 50/70 Baseball CHAMPION – Pool A
- Cubs – 50/70 Baseball Runner-Up – Pool B
- Astros – Juniors Baseball CHAMPION – Pool A
- Tigers – Reached Juniors Baseball Semi-Final – Pool D

It is a fun experience to compete against teams from other local leagues, and all of our teams should be very proud for how they competed. That goes for not only how the players handled things between the lines, but also how our coaches, parents, and volunteers handled themselves during the tournaments. Although the competition (and temperature) goes up a notch during the post-season, it is essential that we represent our league with respect and uphold the values we are instilling in the players. Our behavior and decisions will always be based on what is best for the players, and we will not take shortcuts or behave rudely for the sole purpose of winning.



2019 Highlights – All-Stars

As mentioned before, our 11U Softball All-Star team is in action this week in the District Tournament. We also just received an invitation to the State Tournament as well, regardless of the results of the District Tournament. Byron Township is hosting the tournament this year, so this is a great opportunity for our girls to play in a State Tournament without worrying about extended travel and expenses. The State Tournament begins Friday, July 26. We will continue to post their schedule on the front of the website, so if you are able to support the team at any point please come out and do so!

Our 12U Baseball All-Star team also deserves some praise! They swept through the first round defeating Hamilton, Northeastern, Caledonia, and Northeastern again for a perfect 4-0 record. In the District Finals, they lost the first game to Western but stormed back to defeat Allendale and win the rematch against Western to reach the District Championship. Unfortunately, they lost to Rockford in the championship game, but this team played hard and showed some heart by powering through the losers bracket and not laying down after that first loss.





The Off-Season

One of the common questions we receive relates to Little League Fall Ball. Zeeland does not offer Little League Baseball or Softball in the Fall. Instead, our philosophy is to promote playing other sports and getting involved in other activities outside of baseball/softball. Zeeland Recreation has a wide range of programs to get your son and/or daughter involved in. You can view all of their programs here: <https://www.zps.org/z-recreation/youth/>

One of the concerns many parents have is that if their son or daughter stop playing baseball/softball after the Spring, then they will get left behind by the kids who play year-round. Although there is some truth to the concept that year-round players are getting more sport-specific training, there are also many benefits that come from playing multiple sports. From an athleticism perspective, kids playing soccer, volleyball, basketball, etc. are training their bodies and developing physically in ways that will help them be successful in baseball/softball. Playing in other sports will also continue to build upon teamwork, while also providing new challenges outside of the diamond. Finally, playing multiple sports helps prevent burnout. I highly suggest reading this article from ESPN regarding youth basketball players and some data behind kids who are playing ultra-competitively all year long: https://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/27125793/these-kids-ticking-bombs-threat-youth-basketball

Just as playing Little League is a choice parents make, the decision to play baseball or softball outside of the Spring is also a decision that each family makes on a case by case basis. I can tell you that I personally was a “travel-ball kid” and played baseball year round. Every family should do what they feel is best for their kids. Although we do not affiliate with any travel teams in the area, there are some great programs out there to get involved with. If you are undecided on what to do in the “off-season”, I am happy to talk with you and individually! Just shoot me an email and we can set something up!

What 2020 Brings

With 2019 coming to a close, we are already starting to look ahead to 2020. Some of the larger things in store are the new Huizenga Park complex, which will be the new home of Zeeland Little League softball! Construction is slated to begin this fall to have everything complete for the beginning of 2020. We are also evaluating the new baseball structure that was rolled out this season, and looking into what worked well with that structure. The softball structure is another area we will spend a lot of time, and we will be particularly looking into the possibility of creating the softball structure to be the same as baseball with the entire regular season being played in-house.

Along with those new items, we will also be working on the events we have every year. This includes how we conduct Showcase Day (player evaluations), the team selection process (draft), the All-Star coach selection process and player selection process, along with post-season opportunities for our younger age divisions. Other projects we will be working on is training videos



and guides for our coaches in each division, along with an umpire recruitment and training strategy to help build our umpire base and facilitate quality officiating.

With all of those items, I know there are a lot of people in our community that have great ideas and would be valuable assets to help with these behind-the-scenes items. If you, or someone you know, feels motivated and passionate to help our Little League program, please complete this form: <http://leagueathletics.com/UserForm.asp?RegID=179104&org=ZEELANDLITTLELEAGUE>
After completing the questionnaire, I will follow up with you to see how we can get you involved with the Zeeland Little League Board!

As the 2019 season is coming to an end, I can happily say I had a fantastic first year as President. I am very motivated to continue working towards providing the best experience possible for our players, coaches, and parents. I hope that you finished this season with a feeling of wanting to play more and excitement for the future. I hope everyone enjoys their summer, and don't forget to come out and support the Softball Team as they compete in the District and State Tournament!

Brandon LaRosa
ZLL President
616-403-5754

