



The All-Star

Official Newsletter of the Illinois High School Baseball Coaches Association

Fall 2012

News and Notes

More players in dug-outs for play-offs

At the August meeting of the IHSA Advisory Committee for baseball, the members voted to recommend to the IHSA that the number of uniformed players allowed on the bench during play-off games be increased to 27. The rationale, according to the committee, is that since the bench limit is 30 individuals (all team personnel) already, the coach should be able to decide how many of those 30 are players in uniform. Therefore, the committee feels "the last players on a roster would not have to be singled out by being allowed in the bench area but not in uniform."

Milestone win?

The IHSBCA would like to recognize high school and college head coaches who have recently reached a milestone in career wins (ie 100, 200, 300, etc). The names of these individuals will be published in the winter newsletter. If you reached a milestone in the spring of 2012, please e-mail Don Erickson at derickson@d220.org. Please include the following information: name, school, number of wins, and number of years coaching.

Ushela making his mark with L.T. program

Taking over the reins of an established athletic program from a veteran coach who has experienced great success can be a daunting assignment for a new coach. It can be difficult to work your way out of the shadow of the legendary coach who preceded you, your teams will constantly be compared to the program's storied squads of the past, and making any changes to the culture or philosophy of the team may be met with resistance ("After all, Coach, if it ain't broke, don't fix it!"). For these reasons, along with a myriad of others, coaches who follow legends often fade away like the Pittsburgh Pirates in August.

Just ask Tim Floyd who lasted only three years and posted an awful .205 winning percentage with the Bulls after he took over for Phil Jackson, or Jimmy Dykes who replaced the legendary Philadelphia Athletics manager Connie Mack and proceeded to finish 28 games out of first place in his rookie season of 1951.

If this is true, then Lyons Township skipper George Ushela should have faded into the woodwork a decade ago. The LT baseball program has a rich history and its former head coach Terry Sullivan put together a storied career, including six regional titles and a third place finish in State in 1996. Ushela didn't go the way of Floyd or Dykes, however; he began



his head coaching career with a bang. In 2001, his first year at the helm, Ushela and the Lions posted a 30-13 record and finished fourth in the State!

Since then he has arguably been the most successful high school baseball coach in Illinois. Now a 12-year veteran, Ushela's teams have garnered 348 victories, seven conference championships, eight regional titles, six

sectional championships, five Elite Eight appearances, two spring IHSA State Championships (2003 and 2011), and four summer IHSBCA State Championships (2002, 2004, 2006, 2012).

This past season's IHSBCA Summer State Championship certainly puts Ushela in rare company. Only legendary Oak Park-River Forest coach Jack Kaiser has won more summer titles. "We had a great run this year, finishing second in state in the spring and then winning it all in the summer," said Ushela.

After wins in the opening rounds over Morton and York, the Lions played St. Joseph who had beaten them in the summer play-offs the previous two years. "It was great to get the monkey off our back with a 3-1 victory over St. Joe's," commented Ushela. "They really had our number the last couple years."

With a fourth round win over Maine West, Ushela and Lyons Township punched yet another ticket to Summer State. In the first game of pool play, they defeated Joliet Catholic Academy 6-2 and then played a great game against Maine South and won 2-1. Senior left-

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Another Summer State Title for Ushela, LT

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handler Alex Vannucci threw a complete game two-hitter and University of Michigan-bound Keith Lehmann hit a two-run single in the sixth inning to spark the Lions.

Things looked great for LT in the next game against Jacobs when they jumped out to a 4-0 lead, but then the wheels fell off late in the game. Multiple Lions' errors in the sixth inning allowed Jacobs to tie the game and the usually potent LT offense suddenly grew anemic. One hitter in particular, Sam Cybulski, was so cold at the plate that Ushela benched him for a pinch hitter after he struck out three times in a row earlier in the game. "I felt really bad for Sam because I knew how much he wanted to help the team win, but I also had a feeling if I gave him a chance, he would come through for us." That chance came for Cybulski when Ushela re-entered him in the game in the eighth inning with the game-winning run on base. "I told him you are only as good or bad as your next AB and to not dwell on the past. All he needed was a little confidence." Ushela's talk must have worked with Cybulski, because he singled home the run giving the Lions the 5-4 victory.

In the State finals game, Lyons

played a rematch with JCA who worked its way back through the losers' bracket. LT took a 7-3 lead into the seventh inning, largely in part due to the bat of the Jack Kaiser MVP Mike Lorenz who collected three hits in the game and hit .580 for the tournament. JCA threatened in the final inning, before Lehmann came in to close the game. "He was throwing 91-92 MPH and it was lights out," said Ushela. "Both he and Mike had a great tournament, but I thought it was pretty nice that Mike won the MVP because his brother Brian won it for us in 2006."

Ushela feels there are many factors playing a role in the success of his teams. One reason is the continuity of the staff. "This is my 28th year on the Lyons staff and my assistant Kurt Engel has been here for 27 years," said Ushela. "He's a great hitting instructor and I handle the pitchers; we really work well together." Ushela also feels that hiring former Lions players like Dan Powers, Andy Miller, Chris Cabaj, and Marty Dykas is a good thing. "These coaches bring youth to the program and it also helps build tradition. These guys were around when we were establishing ourselves as a great program and they often speak to the kids from first-hand experience what it takes to get to the elite

level." Other guys like freshman coach Chuck Witt round out what Ushela feels is one of the best staffs a head coach can ask for. "We have a very sound progression of what is being taught at each level. We tend to know our jobs, are on the same page with behavioral expectations of players and support each other in performing those jobs."

Ushela is also very grateful to Coach Sullivan. "He was a tremendous mentor and is still a major part of my program as he has been a drop-in guest speaker that always provides excellent insights from the perspective of what the next levels (college and pro ball) are looking for."

Coach has definitely put his own stamp on the Lyons Township program, though. For instance, he began a tradition at LT practices called Unity Day when the entire program practices together. "We are a split campus, so we needed something where the young teams got to work with our varsity guys. It gives our freshmen and sophomores something to dream about; where they can watch the seniors' work ethic and what it takes to win."

If nothing else, Ushela certainly has taught his players that—what it takes to win.

2012 IHSBCA Phil Lawler All-Tournament Team

INF	Mike Kornacker	St. Laurence
INF	Brock Pluth	Joliet Catholic Academy
INF	Stewart Nelson	Lyons Township
INF	Brad Wood	St. Laurence
C	Aaron Meciej	Jacobs
DH	Chris Tschida	Joliet Catholic Academy
OF	Bobby Pennington	Maine South
OF	Nick DeLasandro	Joliet Catholic Academy
OF	Max Larsen	Lyons Township
P	Keith Lehmann	Lyons Township
P	Alex Vannucci	Lyons Township
P	Matt Testa	Joliet Catholic Academy

2012 Jack Kaiser Most Valuable Player Award

Mike Lorenz Lyons Township



2012 All-State Teams

CLASS 1A

Ryan Bailey	P	Pawnee
Joey Coonrod	P	Carrollton
Cole Logemann	3B	Lena Winslow
Blake Uhlman	P/SS	Tremont
Ben Hecht	P/SS	Effingham (St. Anthony)
Adam Pennington	P	Shawnee
Marcus Wargel	C	Gallatin County
Nick Schranck	C/3B	Alton (Marquette)
Nick Lonergan	P/IF	Jacksonville Routh
Ryan Olson	P	Newman Central Cath.
Curtis Johnson	C	Ottawa (Marquette)
Josh Tonozzi	P/1B	Putnam County
Dillon Hoel	P/SS	Tuscola
Brad Burton	P/SS	Illini Bluffs
Alec Neal	P/2B	Danville (Schlarman)

CLASS 3A

Chad Johnson	C	Galesburg
Tanner Scott	C	Burlington Central
Alex Bee	C	Chatham-Glenwood
Chris Marras	C	Vernon Hills
Kyle Funkhouser	P	Oak Forest
Antwoine Brown	P	Simeon
Kevin Duchene	P	Joliet Catholic
Will Headean	P	Morton
David Jacob	P	Sacred Heart-Griffin
Mike Lynch	P	LaSalle-Peru
Mitch Gasbarro	IF	Glenbard South
Nathan Prindle	IF	Chatham Glenwood
Wes Serry	IF	Normal West
Jordan Smith	IF	Rich Central
Chris Tschida	IF	Joliet Catholic
Joba Ferrell	OF	Kenwood
Jeremiah Figueroa	OF	Clemente
Jordan Getzleman	OF	Prairie Ridge
Jon Gurchak	OF	Grayslake Central
Ray Hunnicut	OF	Burlington Central
Tyler Jay	OF	Lemont
Carter Pranger	OF	Sacred Heart-Griffin



Teutopolis's Mark Niebrugge

CLASS 2A

Bobby Kuntzendorf	P	Aurora Christian
Cody Sedlock	P/OF	Rock Island Alleman
E.J. Trapino	P	Richmond Burton
Brett Chappell	SS	Rock Falls
Trace Gingerich	IF	Sherrard
Jordan Ruckman	P/OF	Herscher
Ty Howell	1B	Lisle
Michael Kamp	P/IF	Chicago Christian
Aaron Michel	P	Decatur (St. Theresa)
Tyler Leffler	SS	Benton
Mark Niebrugge	P	Teutopolis
Brady Wright	SS	Anna Jonesboro
Jacob Hendren	P/1B	Normal U-High
Nick Roscetti	SS/P	Williamsville
Dominic Miles	C	Quincy (Notre Dame)
Ian Robinson	OF	Litchfield

CLASS 4A

Derek Bangert	C	Lockport
Jason Goldstein	C	Highland Park
Emmanuel Morris	C	Hinsdale South
Zach Stoner	C	Rockford Boylan
Nick Hedge	P	New Trier
Sam Hopkins	P	O'Fallon
Jack Landwehr	P	Prospect
Keith Lehman	P	Lyons Township
Dan Leitz	P	Homewood-Flossmoor
Brendan Miller	P	Plainfield North
Mike Miller	P	Lincoln-Way North
Matt Brancato	IF	Schaumburg
Dan Durkin	IF	Andrew
Zach Jones	IF	Glenbrook South
Anthony Mack	IF	Libertyville
Zach Reks	IF	Sandburg
Kevin Ross	IF	Niles West
Nick Solak	IF	Naperville North
Sam Beasley	OF	Hinsdale South
Mariano Long	OF	Naperville North
Jake Perlmutter	OF	New Trier
Ryan Kent	OF	Wheaton North
Jake Romano	OF	Dundee Crown
Zach Weigel	OF	Oak Park-River Forest



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Letter from the IHSBCA's new president

Dear IHSBCA Members,

I consider it a great honor to be the President of the IHSBCA. In 1978, I first became aware of the IHSBCA and attended the annual clinic with my father (who was an IHSBCA member) and listened to Ted Williams speak on hitting. I hadn't even graduated from college at that point, but was left with lasting impression of all the dedicated coaches that were in that gym that weekend in February. I was hired at Cary-Grove High in 1978 and became the Head Baseball Coach in 1987 and have attended most, if not all the IHSBCA clinics since then.

Seven years ago I met Jeff Bonebrake at the State Tournament at Kane County and Jeff asked me to join the IHSBCA board. As a board member for the past two presidents it will be a privilege to follow in the footsteps of Jeff Bonebrake and Dan Schoessling and continue to serve the state baseball coaches and players as we move forward. The current board members are dedicated baseball men with one goal in mind... to work to improve Illinois high school baseball; it is a pleasure to work with them. Our organization honors many players and coaches at the Hall of Fame dinner in January and even more with the selection of All-Area teams and All-State teams in May. I would like to add Academic All-State honors to our awards as well. Suggestions are always welcome. Do not hesitate to contact any board member or myself with ideas. Good luck this Spring, and on behalf of the board, we look forward to working with you to improve Illinois high school baseball.

Don Sutherland

Cary-Grove High School