

MABL Spring 2019 Board Meeting Minutes

Opening

Meeting occurred at 6pm on 16 January 2019 at MauiMeetingPlace in the Kai Ani Villages complex in Kihei.

Present at the Board Meeting:

M. Abercrombie (presiding as the new Commissioner)
J. Hamilton
J. Rigsby
R. Doster
G. Coulson
M. Newsome
B. Sparkman
C. Collins
R. Swindle (taking minutes)

Invited but not present:

A. Benigno
S. Mearriam

GC proposed that in recognition of his service to the league, the previous Commissioner, Tom Kowalick, have his dues covered from the Spring 2019 season on. It was determined that this would be accomplished as a \$100 deduction from his team's league dues, with the difference to be split among the rest of the teams. This proposal was approved unanimously.

Commissioner's Outlook

MA offered his goals and outlook for his time as MABL Commissioner:

- Maintain the good relation with the county, umpires, etc. that have been built by previous Commissioners of the league
- Look for ways to increase the excitement for the MABL ("If we don't make this a big deal, no one else is going to")
- Interested in maintaining the parity that exists in the league (6 champs in the past 6 seasons)
- Emphasis on transparent league decisions. As a first step recording Board Meeting minutes and publishing to the website.
- In favor of Tom's suggestion of a two year Commissioner term
- Requesting active participation from the Board in terms of helping to run the league.
 - The league can do much more if one person isn't responsible for all of it
 - Ownership of decisions will be spread across multiples individuals

- Want the Commissioner's job to seem less daunting in the future
 - Shared responsibilities will mean less of a burden on one person
 - Members of the Board (potential successors) will have already been involved in different aspects of the position
 - Will carefully document procedures for essential processes (building on the documentation that Tom put together for me)

GC made the point, which was well received, that keeping continuity as the league liaison to the County is important to fostering a good personal relationship in terms of securing field permits.

MABL Board

MA explained the structure of the Board:

- One Board member from each team:
 - J. Hamilton (WB)
 - R. Swindle (KC)
 - R. Doster (UD)
 - G. Coulson (PH)
 - J. Rigsby (LP)
 - B. Sparkman (CR)
 - C. Collins (MR)
 - M. Newsome (LW)
- Honorary Board comprised of league members with significant time in the league and offering valuable contributions:
 - A. Benigno
 - S. Mearriam
 - <VACANT SPOT>
- Board Voting Structure is as follows:
 - Each of the 11 Board Members gets a vote
 - The Commissioner does not vote but can veto any decision
 - An agreement of 6 of the 8 team representative Board Members overrules the Commissioner's veto
- R. Swindle and C. Collins are new Board Members as recently appointed Managers of their respective teams.
- Following a proposal by AB, MA appointed S. Mearriam to one of the Honorary Board positions.
- MA requested suggestions from the existing Board Members to fill the vacant position on the Honorary Board. Kory Takamura was suggested and approved as a member of the league with useful personal relationships and skills, as well as a strong commitment to the continued success of the league.
- BS obtained confirmation from Kory that he would accept the position.

Rules Clarification

Clarification of existing rules:

- MA expressed the opinion that the rules posted on the league website are incomplete and in some cases contradictory.
- MA plans to reorganize the existing rules into a comprehensive, well-organized resource that attempts to avoid ambiguous circumstances
- Clarification was requested for the following rules:
 - (MA) Alumni rule - which does not appear anywhere in the posted rules.
 - Accepted interpretation: Any ex-player of the MABL who has moved off-island may play in a regular season game for any team that they were previously a member of without being name on the team's current roster.
 - A key point of emphasis is that to qualify as an Alumnus of the league, the player must no longer have their place of residence on Maui. Otherwise they must appear on the team's roster, taking any measures necessary for adding a new player such as a new player fee and (if applicable) filling out a Player Waiver.
 - Any Alumni Player who is to appear in a game must be approved prior to appearing in the game by the Commissioner (request and approval must be in writing/email).
 - (CG) Pitching substitutions, see Section 18 - Substitutions
 - The concern was raised that a Pirates pitcher violated the posted Pitchers substitution rule during Game 1 of the Summer 2018 Championship Series by being removed and returning to pitch in the same inning.
 - Records show that A. Beesley was removed with no outs in the bottom of the 9th inning, with D. Morris replacing him and recording three outs. A. Beesley then returned to pitch the 10th inning onwards.
 - Rule 18.2 states that "Pitchers may leave the game and may only return to pitch in a different inning". Since this is what happened, no violation occurred.
 - (GC) Plays at the Plate, specifically the responsibilities of the runner and the catcher
 - In summary from Section 17 - Baserunning, the following points were made, along with the recommendation that all teams and umpires be advised of these conclusions to avoid future confusion:
 - The runner is not required to slide during a play at the plate
 - The runner must not initiate or seek contact with the catcher
 - The catcher must allow a clear lane to the plate while they are waiting without the ball
 - The responsibility of assessing a violations of the above points is a judgment call that lies with the umpire, the aim being to avoid collisions
 - (MA) Ex-Pros, see Section 22 - Professional Players
 - As posted online the rule does not appear to be followed (ex-MLB affiliated players are eligible to play after 4 years, non-MLB affiliated professional teams are eligible to player after 2 years), ie. K. Kahoolalahala has played with the South Maryland Blue Crabs of the independent Atlantic League as recently as 2018, while also playing with the Hurricanes of the MABL in 2018.

- RD stated that the version of the rule that appears online is outdated, and general agreement among the board was that the current talent level of the league has risen since these rules were in place.
- The consensus among those present was that being inclusive to some of the top players on Maui would be a benefit to the league, with the understanding that there is a desire to maintain balance in the league.
- The following update to Section 22 on Professional Players was suggested and approved unanimously:
 - The following applies to any player who has played for a Major League Baseball (MLB) affiliated team, hereafter an "ex-Pro":
 - Two years after their final appearance in a MLB-affiliated game, a ex-Pro is eligible to play in the MABL, without restriction
 - An ex-Pro is eligible to play in the MABL immediately on either of the last two place teams from the previous season. After two seasons with this team, they are no longer restricted to one of the last two place teams and are eligible to switch teams if they so desire (for the sake of this rule, a "season" is defined as meeting requirements to be eligible for playoffs)
 - No restrictions exist for players who have played for non-MLB affiliated professional baseball teams.

Distributing New Players

The next topic on the agenda was to approve a clearly defined system for distributing new players recruited through the league (ie. not recruited by a specific team).

MA proposed a Waiver System based on each team's:

1. Standing at the end of the previous season
2. (Playoff eligible) returners from the previous season

RD expressed concern that determining the number of eligible returners from a previous season would be difficult, and GC pushed for priority for lower seeded teams above all else.

The suggested and approved system is as follows:

- At the end of each season teams will be placed on the Waiver List in reverse order of the final regular season standings.
- As a new prospective player contacts the league they will be offered to first team on the Waiver List. The team Manager will be provided information such as provided name, age, previous experience, position(s), and location.
- A team that has been offered a player has two weeks to either:
 1. Fulfill all requirements to add the new player to their roster.
 - At this point, the team moves to the end of the Waiver List
 2. Release their rights to the new player
 - In this case the prospective player's information is released to the Managers of all teams and any team is able to add the player to their roster
 - If a team adds this player via this route, they maintain their current spot in the Waiver List
 - A team that releases their rights to the new player rather than adding them to their roster maintains their current position in the Waiver List.

Practicing this system, the initial Waiver Order is:

1. Hurricanes
2. Warriors
3. Royals
4. Dirtbags
5. Centipedes
6. Pirates
7. Rays
8. Brewers

Information (first name, age, previous experience, positions, and location) for three prospective players who had contacted the league prior to the Board Meeting was presented. GC, the Manager of the Hurricanes, selected a player, MN, acting on behalf of the Warriors, opted to pass, CC, Manager of the Royals, selected a player. The third player was opened up to any team interested. At the conclusion of this process, the current Waiver Order is as follows:

1. Warriors
2. Dirtbags
3. Centipedes
4. Pirates
5. Rays
6. Brewers
7. Hurricanes
8. Royals

MABL Advertising

The next topic, which was raised by RS, was the ways in which advertising for the league might be accomplished as a means to increase the presence of the league and in particular the number of prospective players.

Potential mediums proposed included a paid radio ad with KAOI, placing flyers at Hitters' Paradise, and advertising through digital means such as Maui Times, Maui Now, craigslist, Facebook, reddit, etc...

The adopted plan of action is that MA and RS will work to submit articles to Maui Times and Maui Now about the start of the MABL season with a short recruitment plug at the end. Additional means of advertising may be explored in the future.

BS proposed the idea of putting on a "Community Day", perhaps one a year, prior to the Spring season All Star Game, which might involve a free youth clinic hosted by members of the league

- Good way to give back to the community and make use of the league's collective knowledge
- Positive effort for the league's image
- Maybe including a bounce house? Other kid-friendly ideas?
- BS offered to head up this effort, will be discussed further in a couple months

Homerun Derby

The next topic, also raised by RS, was the addition of a Homerun Derby, likely in conjunction with the end of season All Star Game.

At this point many details need to be hashed out, but ideas include:

- 1 participant per team
 - Auctioning off spots was also suggested, to act as a fundraiser
 - MA expressed interest in attracting the top power hitters in the league for the event, rather than appealing to those who were willing to pay to enter
 - There is also a need to limit participation, to avoid an excessively long event
- Each participant supplies their own pitcher
- Timed rounds
- Maybe use metal bats?
 - Concern raised about lack a of metal bat among members of the league
- New wood bat as a prize, or a trophy?
 - Suggestion was made that winner's player fees be waived the following season
- MA suggested a farthest ball recognition, perhaps holding a league-wide barbecue simultaneously

Currently, RS is planning on heading this up the organization of this event. The league will supply baseballs for the event and any necessary financial support for the event.

Calling Rainouts

The next topic covered was calling rainouts.

- MA would like to avoid "guessing" at field conditions the night before, except when rainout is completely inevitable
- Need to make the call early enough to avoid inconveniencing umpires.
 - Belief that at least 2 hours before game time is adequate, will verify with head umpire Jaime Perez
- MA would like to delegate this responsibility to (1) the home team of the first game? (2) a board member who lives nearby?
 - Support was given to the idea of board members being responsible for helping with this.
 - RD offered to make calls for Makawao, BS, Steve Mearriam, and Josh Meier were suggested for Maui High, JH agreed to make calls for Lahaina
 - The conclusion is that MA will send out a Rainout Name List for all fields with the goal of enlisting 1-2 individuals responsible for each field
- MA noted that the Stadium must be handled with extra caution regarding inclement weather

Proposed Rule Changes

Courtesy Runners

- JH brought up the concern that the current unlimited courtesy runner rule is abused for competitive purposes, not in the spirit of why it was instituted
 - Multiple teams acknowledged abuse of this rule
- MA offered the perspective that more stolen bases lead to more runs
 - MABL scores tend to be on the higher side, and cutting down on runs is likely to lead to closer games
 - Less competitive teams are often less successful at throwing out base stealers, are not well suited to compete against teams that abuse the current runner rule
- MA proposed adopting the Men's Senior Baseball League (MSBL) rule of designating 2 players who can be run for, denoted prior to the first pitch on the lineup card given to the opposing team.
- After an extended discussion it was suggested and unanimously approved to adopt the following policy:
 - Courtesy runners are allowed for the pitcher, catcher, and one additional player to be denoted on the lineup given to the opposing team prior to the first pitch.
 - The courtesy runner must be the last batted out, unless no outs have been recorded in the game, in which case the last batter in the lineup will be deemed the courtesy runner.
 - If the last batted out happens to be a player eligible to receive a courtesy runner, the next the last batted out is the courtesy runner.
- In game injuries will require additional allowances, although the concern was raised about "strategically timed" injuries.

Forfeits

- (MA) Currently, forfeit goes as a 12-6 decision, propose 9-0 instead (consistent with MLB and most leagues) as 12-6 seems overly generous. This was unanimously approved.
- MA proposed making forfeits the first playoff seeding tie-breaker. This was unanimously approved.
- JH proposed instituting a financial penalty.
 - Forfeiting team must pay for umpires, whether or not they are the home team, with the argument that the umpires are "employees" of ours and should be compensated either way
 - RD mentioned that currently, a team that is the home team, and suspects that they are going to lose could decide to forfeit in order to save themselves from paying for umpires.
 - It was unanimously agreed upon that for any game that is forfeited, the forfeiting team is required to pay the umpires, regardless of whether they are scheduled as the home or away team.

Long-term topics for discussion

RS proposed a discussion about switching from two 14 game seasons to one long season each year.

- As permits have already been submitted and approved for this season, it was acknowledged that this is not possible any sooner than 2020
- MA and RD expressed resistance to this proposal
- Due to the length of the meeting and the long term scope of this topic, RD proposed that MA send an email to Board Members requesting Pros and Cons to this suggestion, tabling the topic until the next Board Meeting

AB (not present) had submitted for discussion the addition of a 16-24 year old league.

- His talking points included:
 - Run separately from the MABL
 - Opportunity to give back to the community and bringing people closer and fostering a positive approach to the sport
 - Means for the MABL to become a greater priority and asset to the local baseball community
 - Possibility of "mixed" tournaments under the MABL name
 - AB has offered to lead a committee towards this effort
- Board Members present at the meeting were generally supportive of the idea but expressed the consensus that this effort is a separate matter outside the scope of the MABL Board.

MABL Board Roles

In keeping with the direction expressed earlier on in the Meeting, MA listed several proposed roles that Board Members could help fill.

- Head of the Board
- Secretary
- Treasurer (?)
- Field Committee (corresponding to each of the fields)
- League Outreach/Advertising
- HR Derby/ASG Organizer

Due to the length of the meeting, a final list of roles will be sent out to Board Members in an email after the meeting.

Closing

MA closed with an announcement of the Managers Meeting for the Spring 2019 season

- Wednesday, January 23 at 6pm held in the same location
- Team Rosters and \$800 League Dues due
- Managers will receive baseballs and scorebooks
- An overview of rule changes and emphasis on key policies will be presented

The Board Meeting concluded at 8pm. Thank you to RS for keeping Meeting Minutes.