

MABL Spring 2020 Board Meeting Minutes

Opening

Meeting occurred at 6pm on 15 January 2020 at MauiMeetingPlace in the Kai Ani Villages complex in Kihei.

Present at the Board Meeting:

M. Abercrombie (presiding as the Commissioner)
J. Hamilton
J. Rigsby
R. Doster
G. Coulson
M. Newsome
C. Collins
R. Swindle
S. Mearriam
K. Takamura

Invited but not present:

A. Benigno
B. Sparkman

Commissioner's Outlook

MA offered his reflection of the goals and outlook for his time as MABL Commissioner (from Spring 2019 Board meeting) and an evaluation of the progress being made:

- 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
 - Regularly posted box scores and news stories
 - Player of the Month online polls
 - League HR Derby
- Interested in maintaining the parity that exists in the league
 - Player Waiver system to benefit lower seeded teams (from previous season) seems successful thus far
 - Reduction in Mercy Run games seems to be a good sign
- Emphasis on transparent league decisions. As a first step recording Board Meeting minutes and publishing to the website.
 - Manager feedback has been requested for scheduling decisions, when possible
 - Disciplinary actions and other rulings have been made primarily based on Board Member votes
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- Requesting active participation from the Board in terms of helping to run the league.
 - Calling rainouts has become a shared job
 - HR Derby and proposed Youth Clinic and MABL-hosted tournaments have been headed up by Board Members

MA offered an addendum to these goals:

- Strive to establish “cut and dry” rules that apply uniformly across all players and teams and recognize the competitive progression of the MABL (motivated in large part by situations that came up during the previous season)

MABL Board

The structure of the Board has remained unchanged since the previous meeting:

- 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
 - K. Takamura
- Board Voting Structure remains 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

Field Permit Situation for 2020

- Upon submitting permit requests for the Spring 2020 season, MA was notified by phone call from a County Permits office representative that Maehara would be closed through September 2020 for parking lot resurfacing in the War Memorial Stadium complex.
- The offer to split usage of the Maui High School baseball field with AJA on Sundays through March was presented, MA opted to use the fields in Lahaina, Kihei, and Makawao instead, leaving a more convenient scheduling situation for the AJA league.
- Information that has been gathered from other sources since that phone call regarding Maehara (Note: none of this is confirmed from an official of the Permits office, rather it’s from others involved in the local baseball community):
 - MIL HS games will be held there (with parking on the street?)
 - AJA state tournament games will be held there in April

- PONY and Little Leagues were informed that the Stadium won't be "as available" this year
- Kurt Suzuki is holding a clinic at Maehara later this month, after which AJA may be permitted to use the Stadium for a few weeks
- MA questions whether the MABL has been given the full explanation for the scheduling decision, and intends to further investigate. Our league requires far less parking space than some of the other users of the Stadium who seem to be using it this spring. An honest explanation is sought after, even if it is not in favor of the MABL.
- As a result of reduced Stadium availability, MA is expecting additional competition for fields this season
- In addition, the inability to use the Stadium for weeknight games will require games on either Easter, Mother's Day, or Memorial Day weekend to finish the season by the start of July.
 - It was decided after brief discussion that playing into July was preferred over playing on one of the above mentioned holidays
 - Rainouts may be difficult to reschedule, but, as with last season, MA will attempt to schedule double headers as needed to accommodate games that are cancelled due to weather.
- Currently for the Spring 2020 season
 - Permits are held for Lahaina, Kihei, and Makawao for weekends through April 15
 - Post April 15 dates have been requested with permits pending (expected late February to early March)
- MA noted that during the Summer 2019 season games were scheduled based on team preferences as much as possible
- During the playoffs, a number of additional efforts were made to accommodate
 - Many teams wanted to avoid Maui High
 - The Pirates had a strong preference for Makawao
 - However, this led to some additional issues
 - Umpires were unhappy with late notice of field location
 - Staff changes at the County Permit office has complicated the permit request process

The outcome of a discussion about these factors was an understanding that between the expected challenges in securing fields and the increased difficulty in the permitting process, specific location requests will be considered but should not be expected at this point.

Rules Clarification

- Forfeit conditions, raised after the Oct 13, 2019 game between the Dirtbags and Pirates where there was a misunderstanding about the conditions the game was played under. The game was played and the Pirates believed it was an official game, which they won in extra innings. The Dirtbags asserted that the forfeit was known, and the game was played "for fun". In October, the Board voted to uphold the forfeit by a vote of 6-5.

Rule 11.1: Teams must field at least 8 players to play an official MABL game. If a team fields less than 8 players, the game will be considered a forfeit.

From Jaime (Head Umpire): "The National Association of Sports Officials (NASO) is the insurance most of the guys have and it doesn't cover any issues on practice or unofficial games.

Mercy Rule would fall under a completed game. Anything beyond that would be the Umpire taking a risk."

- After discussion it was decided that the league rules regarding forfeits stand, however, any game that is officiated by league umpires is official. No games will be played for fun, unless self-officiated.

- KT requested clarity regarding the Mercy Rule

Rule 10.5: MERCY RULE: Any team leading by 15 after 5 innings receives the victory. The game may continue until the 7th inning or 2 hours 45 minutes from the start of the game if both teams agree to continue. Score books are closed and stats do not count if the game continues past the 5th inning after the Mercy Rule.

No mention is made of additional circumstances, however the understanding is that 12 runs after 7 innings also denotes a Mercy Rule game.

- After brief discussion, the decision was made to amend the Mercy Rule to include a 10 runs after 7 innings stipulation. This is a change from the 12 run cutoff that has been used in the past.

- Pinch Runners for In-Game Injuries

After adopting Courtesy runner restrictions (Jan 2019), limiting Courtesy runners to the pitcher, catcher, and one additional player to be denoted on the lineup provided to the opposing team prior to the first pitch of the game, a note was made that additional allowances would be required for in-game injuries, with a concern about the handling of “strategically timed” injuries.

The closest precedent is from **Rule 16.1:** “...no pinch runners after the first pitch of the next batter except in case of an injury. If a player requires a pinch runner after the 1st pitch due to injury that player must sit out the following defensive inning before re-entering the game.” This is taken from previous Courtesy runner rule, which allowed unlimited usage.

The concern is that with the adoption of a more restrictive Courtesy runner rule, the injury rule should be revisited to avoid exploitation. A specific example was given when a player was lifted for a pinch runner during a Championship Series game after being hit in the shoulder (returning to the field for defense shortly thereafter).

After significant discussion, the topic was tabled for an electronic vote to be carried out after Board Members had more time to consider options:

- **Option 1:** A player who is not designated as needing a courtesy runner, but is injured may be removed for a pinch runner (last batted out), but he must sit out the next defensive inning.
- **Option 2:** A player who is not designated as needing a courtesy runner, but needs a runner due to injury must be removed for the remainder of the game.
- **Option 3:** A player who is not designated as needing a courtesy runner, but is injured may be removed for a pinch runner which is to be chosen by the opposing manager. This chosen runner may not be one of the guys who was previously designated as needing a courtesy runner. The injured player may then return after sitting out one defensive inning.
- **Option 4:** Each team gets one "pinch runner" to be used at will throughout the game (for injury or otherwise). If a player is injured after this pinch runner has been used, they must be removed for the remainder of the game.

The results of this vote were as follows:

- **Option 1:** 5 votes
- **Option 2:** 2 votes
- **Option 3:** 2 votes
- **Option 4:** 1 vote

with 1 Board member not submitting a vote.

MA concluded that the vote amounted to a 5 vs. 5 decision on whether to adopt the previous injury rule or to amend it. Citing previous abuse in close game situations and the restrictions in place with the Courtesy runner rule change from Jan 2019, MA vetoed the decision from the Board vote in favor of Option 2. For the Spring 2020 season the rule will be:

"A player who is not designated as needing a courtesy runner, but needs a runner due to injury must be removed for the remainder of the game."

This will be revisited before the next season starts. As a related point, RS mentioned the "bush league" practice of removing players from the bottom of one's lineup late in the game (for various, unspecific reasons) to get the top of the lineup an extra plate appearance at a critical point of the game. The concern is that this may offer a "legal" way to employ that tactic. This will also be watched for with a follow up at the next Board meeting.

- Playoff eligibility (revisited)

MA outlined his understanding of the history of the Playoff Eligibility rules over the course of league history

- Original MABL rule: 5 games to be eligible for playoffs
- Due to a lack of regular stat keeping, over time this became difficult to monitor, switched to: a player needs to appear on the roster for 5 games to be eligible for playoffs
- Jan 2019, Board voted to return to 5 game requirement
- July 2019, an exception was proposed: – A player with 50 career games must meet a 3 game minimum
- Following July 2019 meeting, MA proposed an alternative solution:
 - 5 game minimum remains
 - Exceptions may be granted by the Board (ratified 7 votes to 1)

The following options were presented for discussion:

- SM: revert to 3 game veteran rule
 - No vote (to eliminate league politics)
 - 50 games in the threshold, no exceptions
 - Exemption limited to 2 per player (ie. Oscar can use it one more time)
- MA: revert to 5 game minimum, no exceptions
 - If playoff participation is a must, attend games during the regular season
 - Sole focus on the playoffs with disregard for regular season not in the league's best interest (or a team's)...wouldn't you rather play "meaningful" games every week?
 - Which teams have the most veterans...and which teams don't need extra help?
 - Veteran status not necessarily best indicator of level of commitment
- MN: concerning on field injuries, if a serious injury happens on the field Board should consider allowing him into the playoffs

After a discussion in which it was pointed out that some teams have far more veteran players than others, it was decided that Playoff Eligibility requirements would revert to a minimum of 5 games with no exceptions. It was generally agreed that a universal limit without exceptions would be the fairest conditions possible. It was concluded that in the case of injury, it is generally possible to achieve the 5 game requirement via limited plate appearances, etc.

New Proposals

- Pool Player Restrictions

MA and CC raised concerns about the abuse of the pool player rule and how it can be used to affect the outcome of games in a disproportionate way (ie. a team can benefit from being short players). A specific example was given from a game during the Summer 2019 season. The intent of the rule, to try to avoid a forfeit so that both teams get to play that day is at the heart of the restrictions that were proposed.

After a lengthy discussion, the topic was tabled for an electronic vote to be carried out after Board Members had more time to consider the proposed options:

- **Option 1:** Any team with less than 9 players must request permission to use a specified pool player from the opposing manager. The opposing manager reserves the right to deny or accept (either allowing the player, forcing the other team to play shorthanded, or winning by forfeit if applicable).
- **Option 2:** The team which is short must obtain free agent prospective players (obviously advance notice is needed here)
- **Option 3:** The team which is short must first request to borrow a player from the opposing team (therefore granting additional playing opportunity to someone who might readily accept it). If declined, or unable, any MABL player is acceptable.
- **Option 4:** Create an open pool of potential fill in players (anyone in the league may choose to enter this pool). If needed, a designated third-party pool coordinator will send an electronic request and the first received response will be accepted as the fill in player.
- **Option 5:** Pool player may be any MABL player of choice, but they are restricted to playing right field for the game (if applicable, a second pool player would play left field).

The results of this vote were as follows:

- **Option 1:** 1 vote
 - **Option 2:** 0 votes
 - **Option 3:** 5 votes
 - **Option 4:** 0 votes
 - **Option 5:** 4 votes
- with 1 Board Member not submitting a vote.

There the new rule on Pool Players will be:

"When a team has less than 9 players, they must first request to borrow players from the opposing team. If this request is declined (by choice or due to a lack of available players), any MABL player may be recruited to fill in."

Previous conditions on Pool Player usage remain:

- Pool Players may play anywhere on the field with the exception of pitcher
- Pool Players must hit at the bottom of the lineup

- Payment of umpires after games that require extra innings

The current umpire payment policy per game is as follows:

- The plate umpire makes \$80, the field umpire makes \$70
- Each umpire makes \$5 for each extra inning
- The home team is responsible for paying the umpire, regardless of game length (except during playoffs, when the league pays)

SM proposed that both teams split the additional cost incurred during extra inning games.

This proposal was accepted.

- Championship Series doubleheader game length

Currently game 1 of a doubleheader is 9 innings, while game 2 is 7 innings. The impression among the Board members is that this is in place to “save pitchers’ arms”.

SM proposed that all games during the Championship Series, including the second game of a potential doubleheader, be 9 innings in length.

KT raised some concerns, from the view point of a pitcher, but the general opinion was that teams that make the Championship Series generally have the pitching depth to handle two 9 inning games.

The proposal was passed 7 votes to 1 (with CC no longer in attendance).

Current Waiver Order

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

Calling Rainouts

The guys who have been acting as field checkers, with the authority to call rainouts:

Maehara: J. Meier, C. Collins, A. Benigno

Maui High: A. Benigno, C. Collins

Lahaina: J. Hamilton

Kihei: J. Rigsby

Makawao: R. Doster, R. Swindle

KT suggested that Jonah Abreu be considered as a field checker for Makawao. He received text confirmation that Jonah would be willing to do this moving forward.

It was noted that decisions on fields must be made at least two hours before the scheduled game time to allow for adequate time to notify umpires.

Additional Topics

The following points were mentioned, as a general awareness of league news:

- MABL hosted tournaments...
 - Previously KT and MA started discussion about a 6 team tournament in July. The plans have been halted due to the unavailability of Maehara this summer.
 - The Kauai Adult Baseball Club has expressed interest in visiting Maui to play a couple games. Dates have been discussed but are not finalized yet. They seem to be having a tough time getting a full team to commit to the travel.
- BS had put together an impression staff including MABL members Barry Takahashi and Nelson Okamura to host a free Youth Clinic last fall, however plans were halted due to delayed confirmation of approval to use Maehara Stadium. BS was not present to discuss plans moving forward.
- MA asked if there was interest in organizing advertising to help boost league recruitment efforts, however not much interest was expressed.

Closing

MA closed with an announcement of the Managers Meeting for the Spring 2020 season

- Wednesday, January 22 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 7:45pm.