



Season opens April 26

# Little League baseball is back!

By JOHN HOINSKI  
Staff Writer

The easiest way to gauge the success of an organization is by the number of people who want to get in on it. So, if you want to measure how successful Little League Baseball has been, consider that its participants can no longer exclusively be called, 'The Boys of Summer.'

Once considered a sacrilege to have girls play in a little boys game, Little League baseball has expanded to include all children, and not just for the sake of playing the game which has come to be known as our national pastime.

What the program has to offer extends beyond the foul lines and prepares youngsters for the competition they will face later on in all phases of life.

"I try to put across a number of things to my teams," said Len Dorrance, who has been a manager with the Back Mountain Baseball Organization for two

years. "The first thing I teach them is sportsmanship. Whether they win or lose, the first thing I tell them to do is to go over and shake hands with the players from the other team.

"We put across to them that you can't win all the time," Dorrance added. "You give it your best, but you're not going to win every time. In life, everybody experiences victory and defeats, and I'm not just talking about baseball. You experience that on all levels so we try and instill that at an early age."

Charlotte Slocum, who had been involved in Little League for 15 years and who now coaches the Misericordia women's softball team, also tries to instill a humanitarian attitude.

"We teach them fundamentals, fair play, leadership and personal pride," Slocum explained. "And there are two big things we try and stress. First, we teach them to be competitive and to be a good sport. We expect them to put out 100 percent effort, but we also expect them to act like ladies, too. I'm sure there are times when they get caught up in the emotion and

express their anger, but that's something we don't tolerate.

"Secondly, they must have discipline," Slocum added. "But you have to gear it to their age level. You can't expect a person to do more than they are capable of. And that goes for coaches as well. You can't have someone there who doesn't know the game or you're defeating your whole purpose."

Judging by the history of the Back Mountain Little League, players and coaches have proven they are among the most competitive in the valley.

In addition to a number of district titles, the BMLL boys also captured a state title in 1962 under the coaching of Jack Bestwick and Bill Sponseller before being eliminated by Pitman, New Jersey, in the Eastern Regionals in Massachusetts.

In 1979, the Back Mountain Nationals won the Northern Tier title, only to be stopped by York 2-1. Most recently, in 1984, the Nationals again fielded a superb team, going 7-0 in All-Star competition. They were defeated, however, by eventual state champ

Milton in sectionals.

To their credit, the girls have also had a lot to brag about and have earned a reputation over the last six or seven years as one of the finest teams in the district.

In fact, the girls have claimed five D-16 flags in the past six years. Last year the Back Mountain Nationals Girls Softball team barreled over the competition before they dropped a 5-3 decision at Shippensburg in sectional play. In 1984 they proved to be the class of the valley, once again, advancing to sectionals where their own mistakes played a major part in a 4-3 loss to West Union from Mifflinburg.

But, one of the finest moments for the BMLL came in 1984 when both the boys and girls claimed district titles on the same day. And they did it in style when Todd Sallo and Beth Finn both hurled no-hitters to defeat Nanticoke, 6-0 and Mountaintop, 11-0, respectively.

The organization, which has been chartered since 1950, will open its 1986 season on April 26.



Dallas Post/Ed Campbell

## Best foot forward

Eric Spear puts his best foot forward in fielding a groundball during tryouts for the Back Mountain Baseball Organization Saturday afternoon at the Back Mountain Little League Field.

## Rogers on sports

# Surviving the fitness crunch

I usually flee from commitment. When I hear that someone I know has gotten married, I say, with a sneer, "Good for him, the poor sucker. Better him than me."

When it comes time for New Year's resolutions, the most ambitious I get is when I resolve to be around for next New Year's eve, or that I won't miss last call for the rest of the year.

So, when I found myself sitting in my car at Kirby Park on the first day of spring, watching well-heeled joggers going through the motions and thinking seriously about joining them, I knew this was a turning point in my life and that I ought to take careful note.

That I had become doughy in the middle was only too kindly pointed out to me by my siblings. Younger brothers and sisters can be terribly cruel, especially when they are practicing cutting remarks that will carry them through adulthood.

With the thought of the latest assault on my pride still making pieces of my ego, I resolved, and the right word is 'resolved' to hit the cinders as soon as I finished the beer I was drinking.

As I was thinking and drinking, I grew indignant about my lot. Who started this insanity that cajoles perfectly normal mothers to run upon muddy cinder tracks in 20 degree weather?

What makes young overweight Yankee overachievers (yo-yos for short) do windprints until they feel like prime candidates for a double by-pass?

What ever happened to the strong silent types, the ones that smoked and drank and got all the women? Did Humphrey Bogart ever run a mile in his life? Can you picture John Wayne, Clark Gable and Robert Mitchum doing windprints? I can't!

That was it. I decided then that the physical fitness craze we are in the middle of is nothing more than a nasty plot to make every one of us conform to some one else's twisted idea of what should be what; and furthermore, that I didn't care how many health-spa, fitness-machine, diet-pill-low-calorie-frozen-food commercials I had to endure, I would not be corrupted.

I knew that the course I had selected was fraught with untold peril and unspeakable ridicule. But, darn it, it was for my country, and it was worth it.

As I drove out of Kirby Park that (See ROGERS, page 12)



Dallas Post/Ed Campbell

## Eyes straight

Tommy Adams isn't about to take his eyes off the ball as he prepares to snag a flyball during tryouts for the Back Mountain Baseball Organization held Saturday at the Back Mountain Little League Field.

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## League president

# Baseball is in his blood

By CHARLOT M. DENMON  
Staff Correspondent

It was 38 years ago that the newly-elected president of Back Mountain Baseball, Inc. became interested in Little League — an interest he never lost.

In 1948, George Poynton, current president of Back Mountain Baseball, Inc. got his first taste of Little League when he became a playing member of the first Shavertown Little League team — the Shavertown Shavers.

His dad, Cecil G. Poynton, Laing Coolbaugh and Bill Thomas were three adult volunteers Poynton remembers as being in charge of the team. He is not sure whether they designated themselves as coaches and assistants or coach, assistant coach and manager, but Poynton remembers that the three men taught the younger boys the important basics of playing as a team.

Among those he remembers as being members of the team are Lee Eckert, Bill Thomas, Peter Lukasavage, Ray Balut, Steve Balut, and maybe (he's not sure) Ralph Ell, also John Baur.

Poynton very definitely remembers that at that time their uniform consisted of only a cap and a tee shirt with the name in flock letters on the back of the shirt.

"We were real proud of those caps and shirts," he said.

George Poynton pitched for that first Shavertown team which played its games on the former Kingston Township High School field, now the field adjacent to Westmoreland Elementary School. It was the high school's field at the time and the Little League merely shortened the base distance and the outer limit of the outfield for their games.

Practices? Most of their practices were pickup field games anywhere in the neighborhood.

"We rode our bikes," said Poynton. "Between Dallas and Shavertown and wherever there were enough kids around, we'd stop and have a 'scrimmage' game. It gave us a lot of prac-

tice."

Poynton is not certain of the exact number of teams in Little League at that time, but he believes there were teams in Shavertown, Fernbrook, Dallas Dairy, Lehman, Trucksville and Westmoreland. Later, these teams became the Dodgers, Giants, Tigers, Yankees, Orioles and Indians.

In 1950, the Little League field was moved to the site where Burger King is now located. The Wilkes-Barre Barons' ground-keepers came out to take care of the new field on a volunteer basis and were helped by several adult volunteers from the Back Mountain including Charles Steinhauer, now moved from this area.

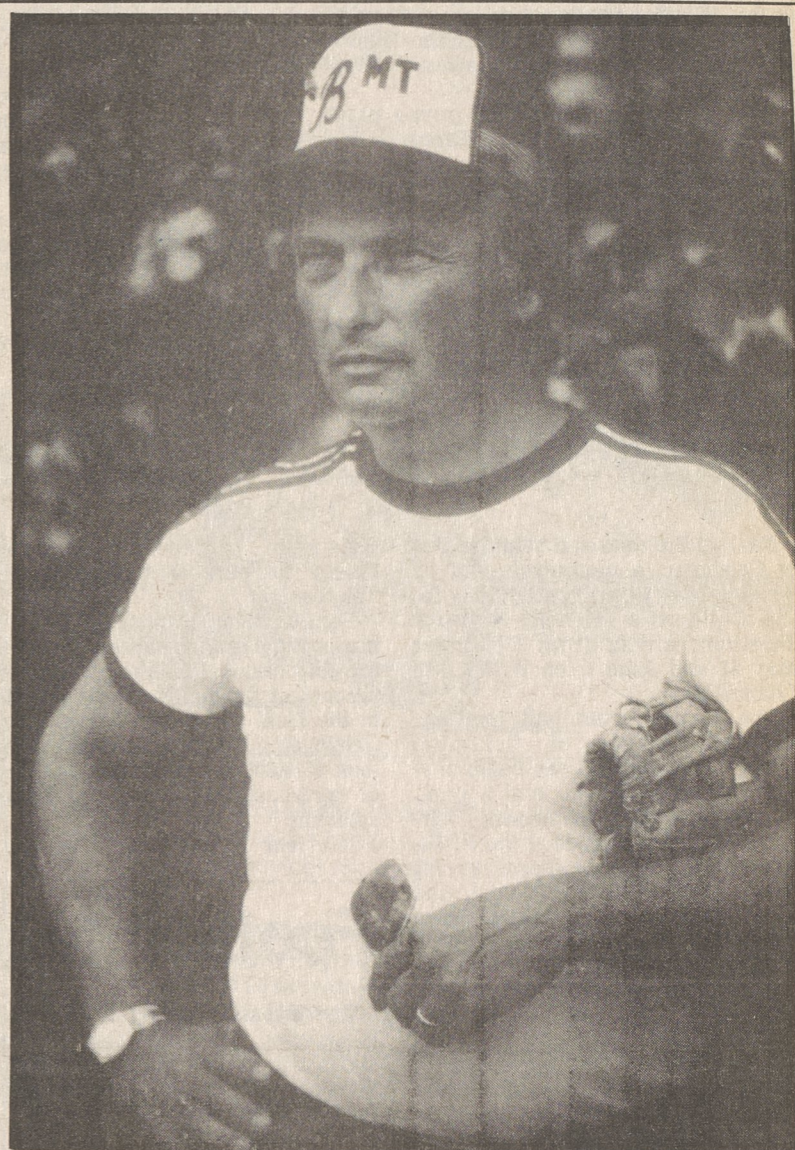
Poynton was a fast ball pitcher and many of the players he faced were unable to hit his pitches. Seldom were they able to put the ball out of the infield. He played on the team one year because of the limit on age. Because there was no Teeners team at that time, Poynton was unable to play until he reached high school where he played as both a junior and senior high student. Around that same time, he became a member of the American Legion team which played during the summer months.

Following graduation from high school, George Poynton enlisted in the U.S. Navy where he served for two years. After he was discharged, he returned home and pitched for the Jenks team in the then Bi-County League.

George Poynton married the former Margaret Weigel and, for a number of years after that, although he did not lose interest in Little League activities, had little interest to become involved since his two older daughters were not interested in playing on a softball team.

It was not until his youngest daughter, Laura, said to him one day, "Dad, I want to go out for Little League."

"Okay, I'll find out who is coaching a softball team," George told his daughter. "No, said Laura. "I want to play



GEORGE POYNTON

Rygel Studio photo

hardball."

That was the new beginning. The first year out, Laura played on the Dallas Reds Minor League team. The second year, George Poynton took over as coach of the team and Laura remained as a member of the team until she was 12 years of age in 1984. In 1983, the Dallas Reds won the Minor League title, a feat in which Laura played a key role.

Since that time, Poynton has become increasingly involved in the hardball teams until this year when he was elected president of Back Mountain Baseball Inc., succeeding former president Frank Joyce. It was Joyce whom Poynton credits for influencing his (Poynton's) involvement in the league activities. Prior to becoming president, Poynton served as safety officer for two years, in charge of insurance and making certain all members abide by the rules. He also umpired in the Minor League last season.

While coaching the Dallas Reds, Poynton also spent hours

and hours with his daughter outside of the league, teaching her how to pitch, catch and hit.

He enjoyed coaching the team because he had the full support of the entire families of the team members.

"Parents' support is a key factor in the success of the team, both at team practice and at games as well as at home," said Poynton. "It is important that the parents support the coaches and managers as well as the kids. This year, parental support is crucial if managers and other officials are to be successful. Fewer kids are signing up and parents need to encourage them to get out to register."

As president of the Back Mountain Baseball Inc., Poynton is responsible for a correct interpretation of communication between Williamsport (sport headquarters) and the local board of directors, and making recommendations for running the league successfully. He is also responsible for all coaches, managers and adult volunteers.

# Phils' pitching coach is optimistic

By STEVE SVETOVICH  
Special to The Dallas Post

We have a good enough club to be competitive and be a contender. If we can get some consistency out of our pitching staff, I think we'll be a contender all year long," observed Philadelphia Phillies pitching coach Claude Osteen during a recent visit to the first Steamtown Coaches Clinic at the Hilton at Lackawanna Station in Scranton.

Osteen, a crafty lefthander, won 196 games and lost 195 in his 18 year career in the Big Leagues. He spent nine of those seasons with the Los Angeles Dodgers where he won 147 games while losing 126. He fashioned a 3.30 career ERA and won 20 games in 1969 and 1972.

Osteen, the Phils' pitching coach for the past five years feels that the Phillies starting rotation is not quite set. "We have some puzzles to solve in spring training with our starting pitching," he said. "We need one more starter and possibly two, depending on what Steve Carlton does."

Osteen talked about the Phillies off-season trades in which they acquired outfielder Gary Redus and relief pitcher Tom Hume from the Cincinnati Reds for starting pitcher John Denny, and relief pitcher Steve Bedrosian and centerfielder Milt Thompson from the Atlanta

Braves for catcher Ozzie Virgil. "We did add to our ballclub by getting a good short man in Bedrosian and a couple of good players in Redus and Thompson. The potential for these guys adding to our offensive destiny is great."

The 46-year old Osteen also commented on the controversial trade of popular catcher Ozzie Virgil.

"The biggest chance our club has taken is giving up Ozzie Virgil. I question whether Darren Daulton can catch a full season. He's never done that. There's no question we're going to miss Virgil's 19 home-runs. I don't think Daulton can replace that, at least not right away. Our other catcher, John Russell has power, but he must learn the strike zone."

On the condition of Steve Carlton:

"The biggest thing that happened to Carlton last year is being able to get back and get a couple of starts under his belt after his injury. It wasn't the results we were looking for in terms of winning or losing as it was in giving him peace of mind in knowing that his shoulder was okay. I think he found that out. Knowing 'Lefty' the way I know him, I think he'll be fired up and ready to go this year. I don't think you'll see a power Steve Carlton by any means, but this guy can still pitch...and still win."

The Phillies' starting rotation going into the season consists of Carlton, Shane Rawley, Charles Hudson, and Kevin Gross. Gross quietly emerged as the club's stopper last year.

"Kevin worked hard last year,"

n said. "We spent a lot of hours in the bullpen working and talking. He has some bad habits and tags hung on him in the minor leagues. He's always had the stuff and the pitches. He'll continue to improve. He's already good. I'm looking for big things from him this year," the polite Osteen revealed.

Osteen began his big league career in 1957 with the Cincinnati Reds, but pitched in only 26 games for them in 1957-59-60-61. He was traded to the Washington Senators in 1961 and won his first big league game that season. He toiled there until he was traded to the Dodgers in 1965 after going 15-13 in the 1964 season.

(Steve Svetovich, a resident of Scranton, is a freelance writer.)

## Final baseball tryout dates scheduled

Boys and Girls Little League Hardball and Girls Softball will hold final tryouts on Saturday, April 5 (raindate April 6).

Hardball-Dallas, Shavertown and Trucksville hardball tryouts will be held at the complex on the upper fields at East Center Hill Road and Church St. Any player wishing to move-up must attend at least one tryout and all 10, 11 and 12 year olds not on a major league roster must

tryout this year.

Players 12 years old report at 9 a.m., 11 years at 10 a.m., 10 years at 11 a.m. 9 years at 1 p.m. and 8 year olds at 2 p.m. In case of rain, 12's report the following day at 1 p.m., 11's at 2, 10's at 3 and 8's and 9's at 4 p.m.

Hardball-Lehman area, tryouts will take place on same date as above at the Lehman Junior High with 12's and 11's reporting at 10

a.m. and 10's, 9's, and 8's at 11 a.m. (Raindate) 12 and 11's report the following day at 1 p.m. and others report at 2 p.m.

Girls Softball-All girls softball players, except Lehman 9 to 12 years old, report to Dallas Junior High on the same date at 10 a.m. Lehman 9 to 12's report to Lehman Senior High at 10 a.m. on same date. (Raindate) All girls report to their fields the following day at 1 p.m.