

Double duty, triple plays in rec baseball leagues

ALEX SATOR
HERE AND THERE



When opportunity knocked at a recent age 12-and-under Northmont Amateur Baseball League game against Tipp City at Kyle Park, Derrick McGowen knew exactly what he had to do.

"The dude hit a line drive right at me and I caught it," the third baseman said. "Then I stepped on third and threw the ball to second. I didn't know it was such a big deal. I mean, we lost the game!"

Most baseball fans never get to see a live triple play. You might have one a year in the majors, so triple plays turned by — typically error-prone — 12-year-olds are worthy of note.

His cognitive dissonance can be attributed to the fact his team was run-ruled, 11-0, despite his efforts.

"Derrick told me that they lost, but he never said anything about any triple play," his shocked grandmother, LaJewel Fitten, laughed. "He was real upset because they lost. He didn't say a word."

McGowen will be an eighth-grader at the New City School on Salem Avenue this fall.

"These kids already understand some of the subtle differences between winning and losing," his coach and NABL president Chuck Wehrman said. "And that's what recre-

ational baseball is all about."

"Tammy (Thorn) approached me after a meeting," Wehrman recalled. "She said that she would run the concession stands if I would become NABL president. Eight years later, her kids are 'aged-out', my wife has taken over the concession stand, and I am still in-charge."

Softball teams good too

BTW, the NABL does softball, too.

"Our girls play slow-pitch and they compete in quad-district leagues, comprised of teams from Brookville, Phillipsburg, Tri-County North, Northridge and North Riverdale," Wehrman said. "The younger boys leagues do something similar. At the end of the season everybody holds tournaments. For example, my 19-U team came in third place in their quad tournament. It was my first year coaching softball. I learned a lot from the girls and had a great time to boot. It was worth all of the time invested."

The older NABL boys (13-U and older) belong to the North Miami Valley Baseball League. None of this should be confused with entities like the Little League or even Hardscrabble.

NABL is sanctioned instead through the United States Specialty Sports Association.

Englewood Storm

In a fair world there would be recreational sports for everyone that wants to enjoy them and more advanced teams for those who need elite competition in order to improve their games.

In Englewood, one such select baseball program is called the Storm. They field 13-U, 10-U, and 9-U traveling squads.

"We play in the Midwestern Ohio Baseball League," head coach Randy Sherman (13-U Storm) said. "There are 22 teams from places like Centerville, Springboro, Xenia, Richmond, Huber Heights and Troy.

"These programs have quality players throughout their rosters. Players are selected in competitive tryouts and they are prepared to work hard all summer. It's a better game."

Dan Tanto coaches the 10-U and 9-U squads and both made the MOBL playoffs. His 10-U kids also finished first in their division.

Considering that these leagues have completely different missions it should come as no surprise: the powers that be get along famously,

"I just got off the phone with Chuck," Sherman laughed. "We respect him and we respect NABL. They, in turn, let us play on their fields."

Wehrman moonlights as the treasurer of the NMVBL, too.

Our circle completes itself.

Contact this columnist at hotair@hotmail.com.