



Baseball Ireland Newsletter

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PRESIDENTS REPORT SUMMER 2021

Play Ball!

Dia dhuit from Dublin, where the weather is warming up, the rains are holding off and the **2021 Irish leagues** are starting from 12 June. Irish society has been slowly climbing out of the national lockdown begun after Christmas. International travel is returning, restaurants and pubs are welcoming back customers and retail stores are now open. We are now able to travel across the country and this gives baseball the green light.

I would like to highlight the incredible work of our league coordinators: **Jose Santos**, our adult league coordinator, and **Rav Mphande**, who looks after youth competitions. **Jose and Rav** have busily set schedules, drafted new safety guidance, communicate updates with captains, and generated excitement for the coming season. This year we welcome two new teams to the adult **B division** – the **Ashbourne Titans** and the **Red Rox**.

The Cork Cosmos begin their second year with us as we continue to expand throughout the country. While adult membership surges, growth at the youth level is perhaps even more exciting. Irish children are drawn to the game as evidenced by the massive turnouts for training sessions. Due to the hard work of our youth coaches and leaders, we now have enough players this season to establish a formal **Cadet league** for the 12-15 year age group, an ambitious goal of the 10 x 10 strategic plan. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, **Baseball Ireland** is pressing ahead with gusto.

During the winter the **Baseball Ireland Board** and the **National Executive Committee** discussed two important issues: infrastructure grants to clubs and child safeguarding.

Baseball Ireland now has a process to offer funding to clubs in support of grounds and facility improvement, another goal of the 10 x 10 strategic plan. Thanks to the generous donations coming to us through our partnership with **Genesis Strategic Advisors**, Baseball Ireland has been able to grant awards to the Sutton Red Rox and to the Cork Cosmos for their field improvement works.

This grants process is a big step forward for the organisation and I encourage all clubs to engage with this process in the future.

Additionally **Baseball Ireland** made big advances in child protection, first by appointing **Karey Coughlan Lewis** as **National Children's Officer** and secondly by ratifying a robust set of child protection safeguarding policies now in effect for the 2021 season. We need to thank **Mike Kindle** for driving this project by bringing the organisation together to deliver these crucial protections to children playing our sport. Our safeguarding policies are now available on our website.

While growth is positive, it also brings challenges. As new teams emerge and children continue to take up the game, additional coaches are needed to lead and inspire and more umpires are required to officiate. These challenges are being met by **John Dillon**, our academy director and **Damiano Iacobelli**, **Baseball Ireland's** Chief Umpire. During the winter, John successfully lead an online coach training course attended by 60 people from 9 teams. This tremendous engagement will help in communicating **Baseball Ireland's** coaching philosophy to our members. Meanwhile **Damiano** has built a solid umpiring community by holding weekly meetings with his crew to discuss rules, mechanics and other various idiosyncrasies of the game.

Thank you to **John and Damiano** in addressing the challenges of growth.



Despite the pandemic, our **Senior National Team** will be traveling to Bratislava, Slovakia to compete in the **European Championship Qualifiers** in early July. If we win the group, Ireland will compete in the European Championships this September in Italy. **Baseball Ireland** made the difficult decision to withdraw our **18U National Team** from the **European Championships** to take place in Italy this summer due to the ongoing challenges of COVID-19 and international travel at this time. I wish our **Senior National Team** the best of luck in Slovakia.

Strike Zone, our indoor training facility will re-open in early June. This is great news as we invite youth players to join our academy programme.

Thank you again to all of our volunteers that make baseball in Ireland a reality. Best of luck to all of our clubs as the season gets underway. Stay safe. **Go raibh maith agat!**

Tom Kelley
President
Baseball Ireland



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JUNE 2021

NATIONAL TEAM CAMPAIGNS 2021

We never expected the pandemic to last so long but it has put its imprint firmly onto 2021 and has affected the plans for **National Team** campaigns. The Ashbourne tournament has been cancelled for the second year running. And Ireland has also had to pull out of the 18u European Championships which are going ahead in Italy in July.

On the positive side of things, the **Senior European Championships B-Pool Qualifier** tournament is going ahead in Bratislava, Slovakia from the 30th June – 3rd July. Ireland have confirmed our participation in that tournament and the all the squad at home and abroad have been training very hard through the lockdown to ensure that we compete hard.

The qualification tournaments are being played simultaneously at four different locations around Europe and the four winners of those tournament will take a place in the **European Championships Finals** in Italy in September.

Our draw has us facing off against Finland, Hungary, and Slovakia in Bratislava. And, if we happen to win the tournament, we would face off against the Netherlands, Sweden and the Czech Republic in September in the finals!

Congratulations to all the players who have made the squad for traveling to Bratislava:

Ireland Roster:

Leo Farrell, Alan Fox, Jamie Cuevas, Brendan Scott, Liam Shier, FionnGallahar-Hall, Ryan Wiebe, Feidhlim Deering, Patrick Mitchell, Tim Shea, David Casey, Matt Dutton, Mitch Hillert, Kealan Smithers, Brian McAuliffe, Ryan O'Rourke, David Gallagher, Brendan Power, JP Dolan, Mike McGee, Patrick Dillon, Sean Scanlon, Dillon Cleary



All in Baseball Ireland wish you the best of luck in Bratislava, we know you'll do us proud!

Sean Mitchell
Treasurer
Baseball Ireland





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STRIKE ZONE IS FINALLY OPENING!!!

It has been a long and frustrating wait. So many people worked so hard to get **Strike Zone** ready to open on the 2nd of January only to be hugely disappointed by the lock-down that has lasted until now.

But finally, the day has arrived! **Strike Zone** will open to all BI members on the 10th June. And we'll be doing a soft opening for this period of 10th June – 2nd July where access to Strike Zone for all teams will be free of charge.

Just contact Sean Mitchell (sean.mitchell02@gmail.com) to confirm your booking.

We haven't been idle during the lock-down, however.

We have used the facility for recording the content for the Level 1 Coach Certification Course and the response to that course has been fantastic. So far we've put 60 coaches through the Level 1 training.

We've also released the "**Baseball 101**" series of videos to introduce people to the basics and rules of the game. This was put together based on requests from the membership and we hope people find it informative and fun.

The final episode on "**The Tricky Rules of Baseball and Discussing with an Umpire**" is due to be released in the next couple of weeks.

On the 28th June the online booking system will open for bookings from the 3rd July onward.

We're using the **Bookapitch** system for online booking, customized for Strike Zone.

Members can go onto the system and can book any of resources of **Strike Zone** from individual batting cages and pitching areas to the entire facility and can pay with credit or debit card and the booking is confirmed. On the 28th we'll circulate the link that needs to be used for making bookings.





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JUNE 2021

BASEBALL IRELAND CLUB GRANT SCHEME

Baseball Ireland announced the **Club Grant Scheme** at last year's AGM. BI is pleased to be able to support clubs with grant finance towards projects aimed at building infrastructure and capacity in line with BI's strategic goals.

The Board of Baseball Ireland are very pleased to announce the first 2 awards under the scheme – one for the **Red Rox** baseball club based in Portmarnock, Dublin and the other for the **Cork Cosmos** baseball club.

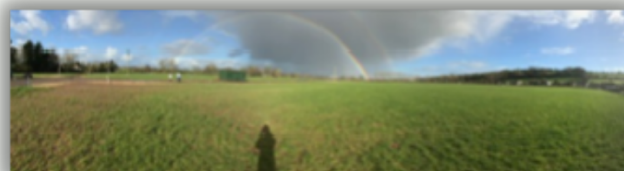
Both projects are aimed at field development and will enhance fields for the enjoyment of all the BI membership.

The Red Rox have had a vibrant baseball programme at youth levels since the club was established in 2013 in Sutton. They relocated to Portmarnock with a grounds at the Portmarnock Sports and Leisure Center in 2018. Last year the club developed a pitcher's mound at the new field in anticipation of establishing their adult team which has entered the B league for the first time this season.

The new project is to build a backstop at the field and the club have also secured support from Fingal County Council for the project. Construction is planned to take place in time for the start of the league and an official opening of the new field should take place soon.

The Board of Baseball Ireland would like to encourage clubs to apply for the Club Grant Scheme for development of capacity and infrastructure. All projects will be considered but need to be aligned with Baseball Ireland strategy and goals and commitment from the clubs either in terms of raising matching funding or contribution of other in-kind value will help in chances of being successfully awarded grant funding from Baseball Ireland.

It's very encouraging to see the first 2 projects already in motion and we hope to see more applications for next season. See you on the new field in Portmarnock and at the Showgrounds!



We wish the Red Rox the best of luck with the construction of the new backstop. Baseball Ireland are pleased to be associated with this project which will develop a new field for use in our adult and youth leagues and help to support a vibrant club which has been growing strongly at youth level and now introducing their first adult team. We have every confidence that the Red Rox will go from strength to strength and wish them the best of luck for the 2021 season with all their teams.

The second project is with the **Cork Cosmos** where they want to develop their field at the Cork Showgrounds. Their ambitious project includes construction of a backstop along with a portable pitching mound, anchored bases, and possibly even a batting cage! The team themselves will be contributing a lot of the labour and expertise to get the project completed and this shows a tremendous spirit of commitment from the Cosmos in only their second season in the league.

As with the Red Rox project, the Cosmos project is exactly the kind of project that Baseball Ireland wants to support with the Club Grant Scheme. It's building capacity and infrastructure and it's being done with a show of strong commitment from the club.

We also wish the Cosmos the best of luck with their construction project and look forward to lots of teams in Baseball Ireland enjoying their games at the Showgrounds for many years to come.

Sean Mitchell
Treasurer
Baseball Ireland



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BACK IN ACTION!!!

What a year we've all had and what a year we have to look forward to in 2021!

We've had more time with Covid than any of us would wish for or thought possible. We had to find ways to adjust our lives and how we play baseball. We've got used to hand gels, face masks, social distancing and the uncertainty. Many of the things we all enjoy like travel, pubs, restaurants, cinema trips are still a little bit way, but our beloved baseball is back.

Despite being locked down for an eternity the league has managed to use the time off wisely. This year will see the introduction of two new teams to the **B division** and the return of another after a year away.
B League Division

The **Portmarnock Redrox** who've been doing great things with their Little League teams for several years now have formed an adult side that'll play their inaugural season in the B Division. The team who've been working tirelessly for some time to obtain a field, have developed a diamond in the north county Dublin seaside town.

Already they've created a fantastic social media presence with some great posts over the last few months. If the standard of their play is half as good as the quality of their photography and social media posts, they will certainly be ones to watch.

All of us look forward to the trip to Portmarnock and the chance to play on a new field.

Ashbourne the league's biggest club have also been busy over the break with the formation of a third B division team.

The Titans are the most significant development in the club since the creation of **the Stags** over three years ago. With growing adult membership year on year and the passage of several little league players through the ranks, the club has been forced to expand. The fourth adult team will ensure those turning out are guaranteed game time and new members will continue to be welcomed.

The Titans will be decked out in a regal looking purple uniform and like their neighbors the Redrox, will be looking to shake up the division with some upsets likely to occur when they meet other teams.

Belfast once again have two teams playing B division with the return of the **Northstars** following their break last year. The friendships and close bonds developed last season when they merged with the **Buccaneers** will be forgotten on game days when they become rivals again this season.

The rest of us will get to travel up enjoy their fabulous field and the leagues only BBQ but whether we'll leave with points is another matter.

All of us have filled our time over the winter with food, binging on tv boxsets and wondering when all the Covid doom and gloom will end. The fact we've practically a full season of our sport to look forward to is a sign that things are looking up.

Baseball Ireland have been working hard on schedules, protocols, contingency plans, guidelines, development plans, plan Bs in case things go wrong throughout the winter. All this volunteer work is carried out so we can have a season playing a sport that brings us all so much enjoyment. It's imperative we get behind our teams and show support for our local clubs. We know games can burn a lot of time but it is rare any of us go to one that isn't exciting to watch.

The Monaghan based **Comets Baseball** team are gearing up for another B League campaign. They have some new faces in the lineup and are well settled at their new home at state of the art **Peace Link Sports Facility in Clones**. They ran a very competitive campaign in 2020 and will be hoping to push on this season for a playoff spot.



A Division

We've an A division that delivers a quality product week on week without fail. The rivalry between the teams and the ability of each of them to beat each other means there's drama every time they meet. With games taking place on Sunday mornings there are plenty of chances for you to get down and check them out.

A summer of meeting people outdoors is the public health advice so why not catch up with friends at a game? Bringing friends along is a surefire way to grow our sport and the more people playing mean the better it becomes for us all. If you are at games take pictures, tag people, check in and generally spread the word about our sport if you can.

There'll be game reports and features once again this year in **DublinLive** and I hope with clubs cooperation to ensure every single player in both leagues gets a mention over the course of the season. It'll be something to show the grandkids in years to come when they're looking at Irish teams in the Olympics or playing MLB, well that's the plan anyway!

Sean McCormack
PRO Ashbourne Baseball



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BILL BREAKS THE INTERNET!!!

We're always looking for ways to promote baseball in Ireland and let people know we're here. This isn't easy in sport mad Ireland, when you're competing with **GAA, Rugby and Soccer**.

On 1st April, deep in lockdown, we decided to take advantage of the one day a year when you can have a little fun with your PR. Things, however, got a little crazy!!

We had made sure to warn the **Cork Cosmos**, who were in on the gag and thought we'd give them a little PR exposure, along the way.

The post went out in early morning (Irish time) and by lunch time had over **10,000 views**. In the early afternoon with engagement from our much valued US based supporters likes, views and shares exploded.

After calls from radio stations for interviews about the **Bill Murray** post we decided to clarify the joke which many had already noticed. **Friday las polos Limited** or **April Fools Day** ... folks.

We thanked everyone for their engagement and asked for forgiveness for those that got overexcited. Anyway, the net result was just under **24,000 views** and 73 shares.

Thanks again to everyone who played along, as they say, it was a bit of craic!!!

Check out the post here:

[https://www.facebook.com/baseballireland/photos/a.559029964141805/4076065669104866/?__cft__\[0\]=AZWg1JQzszyYirowLrzOYx2kSLDPnysWlQXLx9qs1BwcE_UryLYh3_INxkFzsxcPliNpH4olqohkgQwJjo_22_uoiasExBzTUPjSRW6PTFwyRAqyzXXed-aJUyejXSQeY1VjJGeBVdoj3s1npVgvrP4Dbn_GtQJeeK7TokyPJJklkRupkhWg2OoDJ26Gkt11umk&__tn__=EH-R](https://www.facebook.com/baseballireland/photos/a.559029964141805/4076065669104866/?__cft__[0]=AZWg1JQzszyYirowLrzOYx2kSLDPnysWlQXLx9qs1BwcE_UryLYh3_INxkFzsxcPliNpH4olqohkgQwJjo_22_uoiasExBzTUPjSRW6PTFwyRAqyzXXed-aJUyejXSQeY1VjJGeBVdoj3s1npVgvrP4Dbn_GtQJeeK7TokyPJJklkRupkhWg2OoDJ26Gkt11umk&__tn__=EH-R)

P.S. we also did some of the radio interviews about the gag anyway – sure why not!!

Adrian Kelly, PRO Baseball Ireland

