



October 12, 2024

HABL Players,

Having just completed the 2024 HABL season, the league's 7th, I wanted to take a moment to thank all of you for participating in Hoosier Adult Baseball. The league is only as good as it's players, and I truly appreciate the quality of play you all bring, but more importantly, the way you go about it. The most notable thing to me is the fellowship and sportsmanship I see on a weekly basis from all of you.

Personally, being on the cusp of 55 years old, I have learned that having fun, and enjoying the people I am around is more important than the outcome of a game. We all want to do well and compete, and that is a major part of why we are all out there. We should never lose that. But you guys have made the environment so enjoyable in the batting cage, on the field, and in day-to-day life when we all discuss our games, that it makes it that much better. I always feel a little melancholy at the end of the season, because it means we have to wait several months before convening again to play the game we love, and to see the people we take the field with and against.

That sentiment very much came to mind recently when I learned of former HABL player, and an original member of the Fusion passing at just 60 years of age. Dale Miller is one of the first HABL players I met, and one of the first to set the tone for what I call our league's culture. He was always smiling and enjoying seeing others do well and enjoying themselves. That was a huge draw to me when the league began play in 2018. Dale made several friends in the HABL that stayed in touch, even after Dale left the Fusion to pursue other interests. His passing is a reminder of how special it is to have the opportunity to play baseball, and make new friends with a common interest.

I feel we have a community of quality men, and that is a credit to all of you. There have been, and are players in our league who are going through personal challenges right now. My message to anyone in that position is that you have our support and strength to help get you through. We may be competitors on the field, but I feel we are all teammates in life. Many things are more important than baseball, but baseball has brought this group of 80 plus people together, and whatever we as a group can do to help, I believe this group will do.

This year, 2024, was a terrific season in many respects. The six teams were very competitive. Even though my Black Sox squad had a record that was below our expectations, we felt we could win on any given night. I thoroughly enjoyed our group, and in spite of a disappointing season in the standings, they made it as much fun as any season for me. The Reds winning the title this season is a testament to what can be. In 2022 the Reds were 0-12. This year they stand atop the HABL mountain, and beat a terrific Rockies team in the final. They had to beat two other excellent teams to get there in the Fusion and the Monarchs. For the first time in the league's seven seasons, the Monarchs did not make the title game. They have been the standard of excellence, and this year fell just a bit short of getting back to the top for the fifth time. The Fusion made great strides in improving, and I would not have been surprised had they gone on to win the title themselves. The Clowns are always a threat, and I can say as much as anyone, that facing that line-up is extremely challenging. (Especially

after I personally gave up five runs in the bottom of the ninth to their murderer's row in our 15-14 loss back in early August. Ouch!)

I present all of this, because in terms of play on the field, our top priority on the HABL board, is to maintain a great competitive balance. We want everyone to feel they can win any game against any team. It is not an exact science, but it is something we consider each and every year when planning and helping to fill out rosters. It is something we consider in-season as well, if rosters experience attrition from injuries. The coaches and the board have all been great about understanding and promoting what is fair and in the league's best interest.

Regarding the board, Vice President Chris Kania, at large members Tom Hayes, Jeff Schmitt, Robert Newton, Darren George, and Rob Yeary, have all bought into that philosophy, and I truly appreciate their efforts. I may be the most vocal of the board, but this is a total group effort. I would like to thank each and every one of them for their time and commitment to helping us collectively run a baseball league. They all care very much about your experience on the field. Thank you very much gentlemen.

I feel very energized by what I saw from all of you this season. The double elimination tournament format will be reviewed, but it seemed to add something to the playoff chase. I will meet with the board next week to discuss how the season unfolded and how our plans were executed.

I want to hear from all of you as well. When I say that, I truly mean that I would like to speak with all of you to get your thoughts on what we did right and wrong in your mind, but more importantly, what you would like to see us do going forward.

I have some ambitious ideas for next year. I won't speak to those ideas just yet, but I feel we can take another step forward next season, and my goal is to make the baseball experience in the HABL as enjoyable as possible for everyone. I will post an off-season update in the near future after we discuss what we want to do next year. Please contact me to talk. I very much want your feedback and your ideas. I can be reached at 317-506-3346, or via email at [jdearth@spectrummtg.net](mailto:jdearth@spectrummtg.net).

I would like to personally thank the people at Bullpen Athletics and Grand Park. Josh Thorpe has been my contact for two seasons now, and he has been incredibly helpful, flexible, and accommodating. He is always there to work with us, and I sincerely appreciate his efforts. They give us an amazing place to play and we value their partnership.

I would like to thank United Umpires. Derek Whitfield is great to work with, and we appreciate his crew of guys that we have all come to know well over the years. They are out there for three hours each night for us and do a tremendous job.

Finally, I want to acknowledge our league founders Todd Eschmann and Dwight Podgurski. They started this league in 2018, providing us with an infrastructure and a path. Dwight and Todd, thank you both for giving us a place to play ball.

Have a wonderful off-season everyone. I hope to talk with you soon, and thanks again for being the best part of Hoosier Adult Baseball.

Gratefully,

John M. Dearth

HABL President