

AIWFA – COLLEGE FASTBALL IN ALBERTA REPORT – November 2006

The completion of Year 4 in League operation reflects a consistency in college fastball for Alberta and Canada. Across Canada there are in excess of 30 teams beyond Alberta in British Columbia (1), Ontario (19), Quebec (1) and New Brunswick (4). Athlete dedication to competition and representing their institution is strong. Their dedication and that of the coaches approaches ACAC and CIS standards. Future growth in our league is contained by acceptance standards. The latest entrant, the University of Regina brought strong support from the Campus recreation Director and Athletic Director. Travel issues were managed by sending teams which because of geography were able to travel together. An increase in games was also managed for those weekends.

The repeat champions for this year, the University of Alberta Green, and Silver medalist U of A Gold were congratulated by University Board Chairman (Brian Heidecker) who in turn made a point of information to President (Dr. Indira Samarasekera) and Provost (Dr. Carl Amrhein). The Athletic Director in turn has expressed support for Women's Fastball as a future college and university sport. The University of Regina were Bronze medalists.

A real success story was the performance of our teams against teams from United States Colleges namely, University of Wyoming (NAIA), Dawson College (NJCAA2), and University of Montana (NAIA). Of 10 games played on 2 separate weekends AIWFA teams had a won-loss-tie record of 7-2-1. At the feature weekend in Regina Mount Royal College (MRC) went through the tournament undefeated. University of Regina was also undefeated only to lose the final game to MRC. Similarly, our teams went undefeated in 6 games against the Regina High School All-stars. Clearly there has been a growth in the caliber of our teams.

Ongoing discussions with college and university teams across Canada have resulted in the first National University Championship hosted by the University of Calgary Lady Dinos in 2007 – this, being a “structured invitational event”. Four teams are expected from Ontario (OIWFA) plus teams from the Universities of Regina, Lethbridge, Calgary and Alberta. The event occurs on Thanksgiving weekend. A similar National College Championship was originally planned concurrently but has since been postponed until 2008 likely to be held in Ontario (Durham College).

Notable is an awareness and growing interest among Athletic Directors. As we mature in organization Athletic Directors have been complimentary, advisory and forthright about the future for College Fastball. Comments include, “excellent work that very well promotes women's fastball within the Alberta school sport system,” and, “December, 2006 Fastball Paper to be discussed within our December strategic planning meetings.” **With the ACAC moratorium lifted on expansion to include new league sports AIWFA is poised to make a case for acceptance of Women's Fastball.** It is notable that five teams are anxious for this development to mature. Of relevance there is interest expressed by the University of Alberta to explore the model followed by the University of Calgary to maintain their women's hockey program in ACAC.

The 2007 season will mark the introduction of a scholarship program for academically suitable worthy athletes based on successful league fund-raising. A large part of the funding will come from a casino held during the second quarter of the year. Scholarship standards and guidelines are being explored as we examine established models from ACAC and Jimmy Condon programs among others.

Successful camps for minor community softball players are being conducted by some of the teams toward fostering growth of a strong base in future college fastball players. These camps are also most significant as fund-raisers. Discussions around promoting the development of high school fastball programs are gaining momentum.

AIWFA meets annually in the post-season to review its operating rules, discuss new concepts, review its critical path, examine initiatives toward marketing college fastball and steps toward ACAC (and, possibly CIS) acceptance of fastball. Noteworthy is our attempt to design our rules closely to the standards and expectations of ACAC including academic standings. We believe that the directions taken have put us on the correct path, and that fastball is ready for ACAC status (and, CIS status as well) in the near future when deemed acceptable by the member institutions.

At this time we wish to commend the work of Barry Johnson who has resigned as AIWFA President due to the demands of work. Of particular note is his collaborative approach in working with the Executive Director to bring about this association, to manage the league, and approaches at meetings to further college fastball development. Thank you so much, Barry. At the same time we welcome our new President, Shawn Denstedt who brings many assets to our program.

It is gratifying to acknowledge success stories. The quality of coaching bears mention and we honour the following people:

University of Lethbridge – Glen Novak.

University of Calgary – Trish Aasen, Dawn Woodefield, Shannon Rhodes, Stacy Johnson, .

Mount Royal College – Brad Martin, Terry Fukami.

SAIT – Wade Weatherbee, Walter Krochak, George Edwards, Jarred Archambault.

Red Deer College – Aaron Clements, Tina Neilsen, Dick Feser.

University of Alberta Green – Ron Heck, Al Schwartz, Bill Summerton.

University of Alberta Gold – Gary Shelley, Brian Digby, Robert Avveduti.

Olds College – Glen Fox, Doug Gans, Shirley Lupino.

University of Regina – Mike Smith, Rob Wilder.

In recognition, our greatest supporters have been the softball organizations in Alberta: namely, Softball Alberta, Softball Alberta Umpires Association (both are well represented on the AIWFA Board of Directors), Softball Saskatchewan; the adult and minor organizations (leagues) in each center throughout Alberta and Saskatchewan, the Regina High Schools' program and the public in general. Public school students are talking with excitement about playing fastball at their chosen colleges and universities when they graduate from high school! High School softball programs and Provincial Midget "A" and Junior "A" leagues are topics of interest surfacing in discussions among people!

Check our website for additional news and information at www.aiwfa.com. (currently under revision)

Yours in Fastball,

Len Trottier

Executive Director and League Convenor