

History of Softball in Mount Pearl

The softball lovers in Mount Pearl were delighted with Mount Pearl Sports Hall of Fame member Brian Maloney in 1969 when he took it upon himself to approach the Mount Pearl Recreational Director and plea a case for a softball league. Though the fields in Mount Pearl were scarce, a league was started. The men started playing softball in St. David's baseball field.

Brian states that this was difficult for softball players to play on a baseball field because the distancing in baseball is very different from what it is in softball; "Now St. David's had the [pitching] mound 60 feet out [and] we had to pitch from 45. Bases were 90 [feet] out at first, all of the bases, and we only [play with them] at 60". When Brian got the green light for his softball league he jumped into action. The first thing he did was put an ad in the local newspaper, hoping to grab the attention of some interested locals, and he did; "we got three teams with enough players, 12 to a team [and] formulated three teams. The Lions Club came on, the Kinsmen came on and the Legion. Now at that time the Legion [players] were not sure [about joining the league], but there was a bunch of guys called The Rebels, Tommy Walsh (a Hall of Fame member) player for them, who mounted up as a third team. We, [those who initiated the creation of the league], were looking for fourteen men [to play for our own team]. I had just built a house on Smallwood Drive at that time and went around knocking on doors on Smallwood Drive and rounded up a dozen guys [who were willing to play]. We called ourselves 'Mortgage Avenue' because we all had mortgages right!"

Thus, there was the start of softball in Mount Pearl. The Mortgage Avenue Team, The Rebels, The Kinsmen Club and the Lion's Club played in a league together at no cost to the players. All the players had to do was show up and play. With no cost to the players, there was no funding for equipment. Once again, Brian returned to plea with the Recreational Officer who only had minor baseball bats to offer the teams. Brian respectively, and with an uncontainable chuckle in his throat answered; "Well by, can I borrow them?". And so the equipment issue was resolved. The time slot on the field that was available for the softball league was a Sunday time slot from 10 to 12. Indeed, Brian remembers a lot of games going over the time limit; "the games were slow-pitch games and went well over an hour". The St. David's field served the softball league well for a year. In 1970 Pete Murphy was in charge of Softball Newfoundland and wanted the Mount Pearl league to affiliate so that they could get involved with tournaments. Eventually the team moved to play in Squires Field.

Brian speaks of his softball team with such praise; "from 1969 to 1972 we were runners up in the quarter finals in Grand Falls, we lost in Lab City 2-1". In 1973 though, that was the year for Mount Pearl softball, Brian's team won the All Newfoundland!; "They opened up the Legion, *for us*, which was unprecedented. We were given jackets with crests on them...just for a game of ball!". It was a tremendous triumph for the Mount Pearl Softball players. From 1969 to 1972 they struggled to compete with the practiced and better equipped teams from St. John's. In fact, they used to bring pitchers in from St. John's just to get used to that kind of pitching.

What some players are mostly fond of was the convenience of having a league in their own community. There were no more hurried commutes to St. John's after work, no more having to change into your uniform in the car on the way to the game so you could get as much daylight as you could out of the evening, and the players could finally represent their community. Brian, and no doubt the entire community of Mount Pearl who witnessed the men winning the All Newfoundland for the tiny town of Mount Pearl, will never forget that feeling of pride they felt that day and continue to feel today with expansion of softball in Mount Pearl.

Source:

Brian Maloney- A Mount Pearl Sports Hall of Fame member who assisted in starting softball in Mount Pearl.