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Justin Orenduff, USPBL
Executive Director of Baseball
Operations

High-tech world

USPBL separates itself from other old-school leagues

By Mike Scott

If more baseball players get signed from the United Shore Professional Baseball League (USPBL) in the coming years, chances are it will be the detailed metrics on its players that the league will make available to any organization.

Now in its third year, USPBL management has sought to improve the data it compiles on each player every year, which this year has included an investment in FlightScope, a tracking radar for baseball and softball employing direct distance measurement to provide accurate positions, speeds, and angles of pitched and hit ball trajectories. This proliferation of data might be what will separate the league apart from others, according to Executive Director of Baseball Operations Justin Orenduff.

“As a group we can more effectively recruit future players as we achieve success,” said Orenduff. “What we provide is a true developmental program for our players throughout the year. We market them to the professional franchises.”

The reality is that independent baseball leagues, or leagues where teams are not affiliated with any professional franchise, have come and gone over the years. Few have achieved long-term success, and the competition for players has only increased as many undrafted college players or those who were released by other organizations seek a place to play. So it is up to these independent leagues to prove their value to survive.

That proof can be measured in part by the number of players who get signed to organizational contracts. Orenduff

said he hopes to have an average of two players signed per club, which would be eight overall, by major league franchises each year. “If we get 12-15 signed on a yearly basis we would really be hitting our stride.”

A total of 20 former USPBL players had their contracts purchased by affiliated minor league clubs between the 2016 and 2017 seasons.

Personal data is also available to the player himself, allowing him to make improvements where needed throughout the year. During the final days of USPBL tryouts in late April, players that did not make one of the league’s four teams were provided with detailed information on areas for improvement.

“There is a chance that some of these players may come back next year and have an opportunity to make one of our teams, so we provide them with objective information about their swing, spin rates on their pitches and more,” Orenduff said. “That is what is going to help us grow and attract college players who may not have been drafted but believe they can continue their careers professionally.”

In turn, this attention to player development and providing detailed metrics could help grow the USPBL to other communities. One of the league’s long-term goals is to establish stadiums in other communities around the Midwest that will host a minimum of two teams in the league.

“People are hearing about our league and we have to continue to find ways to be different,” Orenduff said. ♦

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The CEO of fun

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I could not have hoped for a better start to the United Shore Professional Baseball League (USPBL) and our first ballpark - Jimmy John's Field — and I want to thank the fans and all of our fantastic partners. The USPBL's first two seasons at Jimmy John's Field have seen hundreds of thousands of fans pass through the gates to enjoy the fun and excitement of high-quality professional baseball and affordable family entertainment under the stars from mid-May through mid-September.

In 2017, there were 60 sellouts out of 75 games. We also nearly tripled our company summer picnic outings to 764 — as the USPBL's four teams — the Utica Unicorns, Eastside Diamond Hoppers, Birmingham Bloomfield Beavers, and Westside Woolly Mammoths faced off. After falling just short in 2016, the Birmingham Bloomfield Beavers won the USPBL championship in 2017.

With the USPBL designed as a developmental finishing school for players trying



Andy Appleby, Commissioner, Chairman and Founder, USPBL

to make it to the Majors, the league has been an unqualified success, as 20 USPBL players have been signed to contracts by Major League Baseball organizations in the USPBL's first two years of operation. Our skilled baseball staff utilizes unique tools and technology such as our

Delivery Value System (DVS) to help develop our pitchers, with three pitchers throwing at or near 100 mph, and FlightScope to help develop our hitters.

When the USPBL was created, we had goals of not only developing players into Major League prospects, but of creating the cleanest, safest, and friendliest ballpark in America with triple the service levels to provide a premium family entertainment experience at an affordable price. While we will work to improve continually in all of these areas, I am pleased to say that fans who have attended games at Jimmy John's Field have given us high marks on achieving those goals.

Our fans also enjoyed the introduction of our first series of valued USPBL Baseball Cards and our



first USPBL Collector's Stamp Book. As the USPBL grows, we will continue to implement more features to educate our fans about the great young players in the USPBL.

Jimmy John's Field and the USPBL also have become important community assets in Macomb County and Detroit over the past two years. In 2017, more than 600 charities leveraged the USPBL and Jimmy John's Field for various fundraising endeavors. We held 5K runs, Boy Scout and Girl Scout campouts overnight on the field, movie nights with families on blankets in the outfield watching popular family films playing on the Scoreboard, our second annual Brew & Fall Fest, and a Halloween event for kids. The ballpark also has become a major regional venue for collegiate and high school baseball games,

tournaments, All-Star games and championships.

The 2018 baseball season began on May 11 and runs through Sept. 9, the best months for weather in Michigan. In 2018, the USPBL's four teams will again play out of Jimmy John's Field, as we continue to make progress on plans for the USPBL's second ballpark. In 2018, the USPBL players will be sharing the field with our very own bat dog — JJ, the Field General — who will be performing fun duties at every game. We will be one of only two or three ballparks in the whole country to have our own resident bat dog. Also making their debuts at the ballpark this year will be ESPN, with 10 featured games on ESPN3, USPBL Dance Crews, Short Hops Craft Beer Garden, and we will be joining Disney World as the only two places in

the country where fans can enjoy Dole Whip.

We look forward to seeing the ballpark bring families, friends and coworkers alike together to enjoy America's pastime. It is also a wonderful place to do business as in this day and age you have a much better likelihood of entertaining your best customers and employees if they can bring their family with them.

We believe this ballpark is a crown jewel and the place to be for families in Macomb and Oakland County. So let's Play Ball! I invite you to sit back and enjoy the game, and I thank you for being a part of the 2018 season at Jimmy John's Field.

*Andy Appleby
Commissioner, Chairman
and Founder
United Shore Professional
Baseball League*

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So you want to be a ballplayer?

What baseball scouts look for in a rising star

By Mike Scott

Remember the movie “Moneyball?” Metrics in baseball continues to evolve as the primary way to evaluate a player’s skill set, changing the role of how players are scouted today.

For example, organizations put less emphasis on seeing a prospect in person, according to United Shore Professional Baseball League Executive Director of Baseball Operations Justin Orenduff.

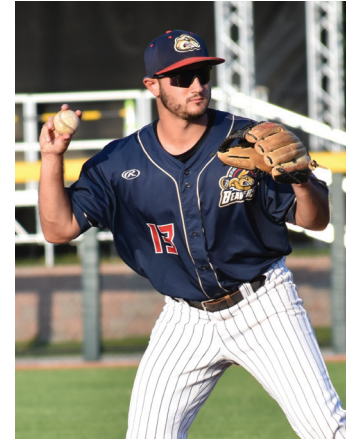
“Many teams have taken a lot of their scouts off the road

because they can get the majority of what they need from data and by speaking with managers and coaches,” Orenduff said.

Certainly this proliferation of data has created a new batch of baseball metrics that provide more information than standard statistics like batting average, WHIP, ERAs and even on-base percentage provide. Spin rates for pitchers, and launch angles and exit velocity for hitters, for example, are among the underlying factors that can help predict a player’s impact on a game.

For pitchers, miles per hour is important but velocity is far from the only predictor of success, Orenduff said. It is much harder for young pitchers to learn the art of pitching and execute a plan rather than just throwing. If they have that awareness on the mound and throw strikes, coaches can often find mechanical tweaks to add a couple of miles per hour.

“There’s an emphasis on pitchers to be able to throw hard from an earlier age and that is (a sentiment) often culturally forced by coaches (in youth baseball),” Orenduff said. “I really wish more young pitchers would take the time to learn how to be a pitcher. For us as coaches and scouts, it’s easy to identify a guy who walks to the mound, throws strikes and has a plan.”



Part of the challenge for pitchers is to “finish” each pitch, Orenduff added. He referenced the success of former USPBL pitchers Evan Piechota in 2016 and Randy Dobnak in 2017. Piechota has pitched to a 2.41 ERA in two minor league seasons since leaving the USPBL through May 1, including a 1-0 mark and 0.90 ERA through his first four games of Single-A ball in West Virginia this year. Dobnak was signed at the end of 2017 by the Minnesota Twins after being one of the most consistent performers in the USPBL.

“Those guys don’t throw mid-90s necessarily but they know how to manage a game,” Orenduff said.

Speed remains an important factor for positional players, but at a certain point it only matters if a player can handle the bat. “We can work with them on jumps and reads whether they are in the field or on the bases,” Orenduff said. “Speed plays but they need to be able to have consistent contact (at the plate) for it to matter.”

Another skill that can be difficult to teach a positional player is how to draw walks, which is why the USPBL has brought in expert instructors to work with its players to improve their walk rates and identify pitches out of the strike zone earlier.

Despite fewer scouts going on the road, knowing the makeup of a player still matters, Orenduff said. If an



organization is interested in a player, scouts will still ask about his composure, makeup, whether he’s coachable and more.

“Teams still want players who will work hard and take instruction. They want good people and players that can make adjustments and thrive under pressure,” Orenduff said. “That will always matter – it never changes.” ♦

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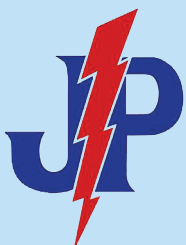
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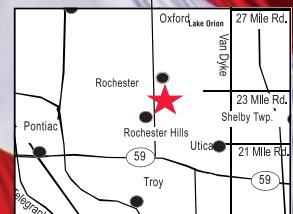
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Family fun

More to see than just quality baseball

By Mike Scott

When attending a United Shore Professional Baseball League game at Jimmy John's Field in downtown Utica this year, fans will see a bat dog, talented dancers and more along with great baseball.

As the third season of the USPBL moves on in 2018, fans will be treated to an array of new features, entertainment and conveniences from dancers to a bat dog, said League Owner and CEO Andy Appleby. He anticipates these additions will further improve the experience for the tens of thousands of fans who helped sell out 60 of 75 home dates in 2017.

"It's hard to believe but the league is only two years old at the end of May," said Appleby. "We want to make sure that every game has the feel of a World Series and that we are giving a World Series type of experience from our staff to our players. We're building the league one family at a time and the best is yet to come."

One of the highlights will be the arrival of JJ the Field General, a Golden Retriever "bat dog" who has been trained to pick up bats from players on the field, but with his handlers will also be visiting groups and other parties at the ballpark throughout the year. He will be available at times in the concourse to interact with fans. J.J. is modeled after Jake the Diamond Dog, who has served in a similar role while entertaining fans at minor league ballparks around the U.S. for several years.

Also new in 2018 is a league dance team comprised of 200 young men and women. These dancers will also be performing on the field and around the stadium and will meet and sign autographs for fans. "They will throw some of our free gear from the field at times as well, whether it's shirts, hats and more," Appleby said.

A new, more realistic "pitch speed" machine with life-like



pitchers and catchers will give fans down the right-field line an opportunity to see how fast they can hurl a baseball. There will also be a right-field deck or patio added later in the summer for group gatherings up to 300 people.

“Virtually every day since the league first opened on May 30, 2016 we have been trying to improve the game day experience for our fans,” Appleby said.

The league will once again make its USPBL Reading Program available to area elementary school students during the year, after more than 50,000 students participated in 2017. Students from schools and districts around the area can read up to 20 books to qualify for a free ticket to a league game and the opportunity to run around the bases at Jimmy John’s Field.

Local charities continue to flock to the ballpark throughout the year. Appleby said that more than 600 charities have utilized Jimmy John’s Field for events, many of which are held on off-days or even during the offseason.

Outside of JJ of course, the most compelling game day experience is the players themselves, who are getting the opportunity to play baseball and impress professional scouts. Appleby said that the individual stories of the roughly 90 players who will be a part of the USPBL is the most human element of attending a game.

“If everyone knew what these players go through to get to this point, all our fans would be hanging on every pitch thrown during a game,” Appleby said. “This is reality television times 100. It’s about as real-life as you can get.” ♦

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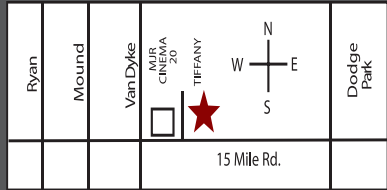
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Welcome to Jimmy John's Field

Home of the USPBL in historic downtown Utica



Opened in May of 2016, Jimmy John's Field is home to the United Shore Professional Baseball League which features the Birmingham Bloomfield Beavers, Eastside Diamond Hoppers, Utica Unicorns and Westside Woolly Mammoths.

The stadium has also hosted select college and high school games as well as concerts and other community events. ♦



Moving on

15 questions with Taylor Grzelakowski, one of 20 proud USPBL graduates

Taylor played for the Utica Unicorns and was signed by the Minnesota Twins organization in 2017.

1 *How do you say your last name correctly?*
Gel-a-cow-ski

2 *What is the one thing that you love to do that may surprise everyone?*

I love to do CrossFit workouts. Interval based

training in the offseason.

3 *What teams recruited you while you were at Fraser High School and how did you end up choosing Madonna?*

I had three opportunities to play college baseball. Albion College, Hillsdale College, and Madonna University.

I ended up at Madonna because of the coaches, the rich history of winning and

success, and the location.

4 *Why did you decide to sign with the Unicorns in the USPBL?*

I didn't talk to any professional scouts during college ball or around draft time. Skip Johnson showed some interest and I was not going to pass up playing professional baseball ten minutes from my house under a legend of the game.

5 *What did you learn during your time in the USPBL that led to you getting signed by the Twins?*

I can't even put the amount that I learned into words. Ray Ortega, Skip Johnson, Cedrick Landrum, and Justin Orenduff all made a huge impact on me as a

player transitioning from outfield/first base to catcher. Skip Johnson caught for 16 years in the big leagues and Ray Ortega became a great friend of mine. He would show up to practice an hour early every day to help me develop. I learned how to call an effective game, receive the ball not just catch it, and block decently well in just a few weeks.

I also want to thank Billy Milos, the scout that signed me and I am very thankful for that opportunity that he gave me!

6 *Describe what it has been like to be playing in the Twins organization?*

An absolute dream. Every game that I play in right now is in the Major League

spring training fields. To have Twins across the front of my chest every day is the most amazing feeling ever.

7 *Is there anything you picked up in the USPBL that has contributed to your early success in Single-A?*

Justin Orenduff assisted me with my throwing mechanics over the offseason. When I am going to throw someone out at second, I need my arm to be up and ready to fire the second that my front foot strikes the ground. Mastering my throwing is one of the goals that the Twins gave me in the offseason.

8 *How did you come up with the idea to propose to your fiancée Sarah Kijek on the day you were signed by the Twins?*

I've known that I was going to marry Sarah for a very long time. We have been dating since freshman year of high school and everyday is better than the last. I was originally planning to propose to her on the field on Aug. 11, which would've been our nine-year anniversary. I got the call late July so it was no longer possible to make Aug. 11 to work. It was actually perfect because I didn't have to think of an excuse to get her out on the field because she was already going out their with me for the announcement.

9 *What was it like when you first joined the Twins organization and what was the experience like when you*



first got there?

At first, it was extremely tough. Walking into a completely different atmosphere twenty hours from home was not easy. It was extremely hot every day, over 100 degrees with humidity. It took me a little while to get going because I thought I had to go down there and hit a home run every at bat to stick around when in reality they wanted me to play for them with what I had shown in the USPBL so that was the biggest adjustment.

10 *When did you start to recognize that you could be a professional baseball player?*

The day that Skip Johnson put me in a Unicorns shirt and let me hit bp before a few games before signing me. As far as playing affiliated professional baseball, the moment I got the call.

11 *If you didn't play baseball for a living, what else would you be doing?*

I would be working at Team Sports Inc. In Bloomfield Hills. I had a job there while playing in the USPBL and had to give it up when I got signed. It is a sports equipment sales company.

12 *How did you get involved with baseball and who is the most influential person in your career?*

I've played baseball since the day that I could walk. On my street I grew up with 15+ boys all around the same age. We played baseball from sun up to sun down every single day. I can't narrow it down to one person because I have had multiple people make a significant impact on my career. Of course my mother and my grandfather. My fiancé Sarah and her family. My college coach Ted

Falkner and my Unicorns coaches Jim Essian (Skip Johnson) and Cedrick Landrum, because without them my career would be over.

13 *If you had just one last meal, it would be?*

BD's Mongolian BBQ without question.

14 *When you are not playing or working on baseball, what are you doing?*

Watching Netflix, playing Fortnite, trying to be the best fiancé I can be, and listening to music.

15 *Your favorite memory of Jimmy John's Field is?*

Besides signing and proposing I would have to say All-Star Weekend. Being a part of the home run derby and all of the festivities with my brothers was a moment I will never forget. ♦

STARS OF THE FUTURE

These USPBL players have signed contracts with Major League organizations.



Mitch Aker
P - Unicorns
ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS
ORGANIZATION



Aaron Bossi
2B - Beavers
NEW YORK YANKEES
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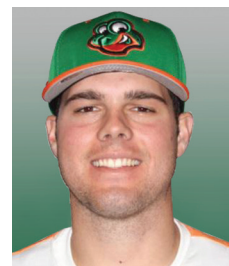
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PITTSBURGH PIRATES
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Alex Santana
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WASHINGTON NATIONALS
ORGANIZATION



Ross Vance
P - Beavers
ST. LOUIS CARDINALS
ORGANIZATION

Wildcat changes stripes

Fuessel makes the switch from football to baseball

By Dakota Brecht

Thomas (Tommy) Fuessel has always been a stellar athlete and after high school received an offer to play football at Northwestern University. Fuessel was a wide receiver for the Wildcats for during his freshman year and had high hopes for his football career after college.

Head injuries, however, began to plague Fuessel over the course of his season and he received a staggering three concussions in one year.

During an MRI after his third concussion, the doctors found that he had Arteriovenous Malformation (AMV) and needed brain surgery.

“They called it a ticking time bomb and I had brain surgery at 19,” Fuessel said.

After surgery, Fuessel was at a crossroads in his life and had to make a decision on which career path to take.

He knew his football days were over, but knowing that he was gifted with such athletic ability, he did not want it to go to waste and decided to make the transition to baseball.

“After the injuries I kinda waived the white towel and just went to school,” Fuessel said. “After some time off, I still wanted to compete and I knew I was a good athlete so I wanted to try baseball.”

Fuessel started his baseball career and transferred to the University of St. Francis to pursue a baseball career. He spent a few seasons patrolling the outfield for the Cougars. St. Francis is less than a half hour from his hometown of Mokena, Illinois.

During the offseason, a freak accident occurred in the batting cage and gave Fuessel another concussion. The doctors recommended that Fuessel take a medical leave after this and after some time off, he decided that he wanted to go pro instead, try and make a professional team.

“When I got back into baseball, I went and played in a California winter league and everyone was talking about this new league forming (USPBL),” Fuessel said. “Everyone in the league got a free tryout so I gave it a shot and actually got cut the first day.”

After being cut from tryouts in year one, Fuessel played for a semi-pro team for one season. When tryouts came back around for the USPBL in 2017, he was determined to make a team.



Fuessel was picked up by the Westside Woolly Mammoths in the 2017 tryouts by Manager Shane McCatty.

Fuessel made great strides and continued to improve day after day. His hard work and improvement of his own game did not go unnoticed as he was named USPBL Developmental Player of the Year last season.

In the 2017 campaign, Fuessel put up good numbers at the plate and played solid defense across the outfield. At the end of the season, he finished with a .282 batting average along with a home run and five RBI. It was a very productive first season for Fuessel and he looks to build on those numbers in 2018.

“I always have high expectations for myself and during the offseason I worked incredibly hard,” Fuessel said.

With the 2018 season underway at Jimmy John’s Field, Fuessel continues to overcome adversity and chase his dreams.

“You never know when you’re going to see a breakthrough, a lot of people work really hard at something and then just get burned out,” Fuessel said. “Sometimes you don’t even know it, but your breakthrough is right there. If you’re feeling burnt out, just keep pushing.” ♦



“I’m pretty superstitious. I wear the same undershirt, I always put my right sock on first, that kind of stuff.”

*Josh Mason, pitcher,
Westside Woolly Mammoths*

Throwing darts

Josh Mason relies on routine for success on the mound

By Justin Frommer

Westside Woolly Mammoths pitcher Josh Mason is an up and coming pitcher in the United Shore Professional Baseball League this season. That was evident in his first start of the 2018 season when he threw five innings of four-hit baseball, allowing just one run.

Pitch after pitch Mason’s mechanics mimicked each other never changing a beat. His consistency was canny.

Major League pitchers are creatures of habit. Their lifestyle, the way they throw the ball, and the way they prepare to take the mound every fifth day is centered around consistency and repetitiveness. That is no different for Mason who relies on his repetitive lifestyle to prepare for his team’s games in the USPBL.

“It’s obviously different for every pitcher, and every guy has a routine that is different but what you try to do is get into a routine that you can repeat every time you are going,” said Mason. “Just something consistent.”

Every part of Mason’s daily routines, whether for games he is scheduled to pitch or off days, relies on repetition.

“Once you get to the professional level everything becomes routines,” Mason said.

For days that Mason is scheduled to pitch, like on Tuesday,

his pre-game routine is set in stone.

“For me, personally, I would try to sleep in as best as I can,” he said. “I’ll get something to eat maybe, around 2 p.m. I will usually have some eggs, something that isn’t too heavy on the stomach.”

For Mason, the most important part of his pre-game routine however does not have much to do with the baseball. It is instead when he talks to his parents back in Chesapeake, Va., his hometown.

“I like to give them a call and see how they are doing and they will wish me luck,” he said. “You do miss your families, so it is nice to have that time and talk to family that you know loves you back at home so it keeps you centered.”

By 5 p.m. he arrives at Jimmy John’s Field ready to focus and get dressed. Mason has a consistent way to do that as well.

“I’m pretty superstitious,” he said. “I wear the same undershirt, I always put my right sock on first, that kind of stuff. I also have to do my stretches in a specific order.”

Between starts, Mason continues his weekly routine of lifts and runs to prepare himself for his next outing. But he also values the time he takes away from the game.

“It is very important to take some time away from the game,” he said. “It allows you to reset and recenter yourself. If your mind is always on baseball every second of the day, it becomes hard.”

Come this weekend, Mason’s mind and focus will be back on baseball when he makes his next start. His routine, unchanged. With his consistencies in the way he prepares and pitches, Mason will put himself in a position to potentially land a deal with a Major League ball club.

If there, his routine will become ever more important. ♦



A superstitious deed

Utica Unicorns' Nicco Lollo turns superstition into donation

By Scott MacDonald

Baseball players will do just about anything to keep a hot streak rolling along. If you have a 3-for-4 day at the plate, you do the same thing the next game that you did previously. If you threw a complete game, or a strong inning in relief, you wear the same socks, hat, underwear, whatever it is that led you to have that strong outing.

Sports and superstitions are synonymous. As a former collegiate baseball pitcher, I can tell you that I always jumped over the foul line when running out to the mound and off the field to the dugout. Nobody ever talks about a no-hitter, and position players typically stay away from pitchers in the dugout. There are rally caps, batting rituals, lucky shirts, necklaces, socks, you name it.

One of the best players in Major League Baseball, Barry Bonds, used to kiss his cross around his neck after each home run. David Ortiz spit in his batting gloves and clapped his hands before every pitch. Probably the strangest superstition on the record is former slugger Jason Giambi used to wear a gold thong under his uniform to help himself break out of a slump, according to an article in Bleacher Report written by Joel Reuter in April 2011.

Now we turn our attention to Unicorns' first baseman Nicco Lollo. No, he does not wear a purple thong to break out of a slump, but you may have noticed that he has long hair? Really long hair! That is because Lollo grows his hair

out until he falls into a hitting slump, and then he cuts it all off.

"I started this tradition when I was in college," said Lollo. "I always had a buzz cut when I was in high school, so I started growing it out in college until I had a bad streak, then I shaved it all off. I even said one time that I would shave it off my senior year if we lost a league series, which we did."

There has been no need to go back to the buzz cut here in the United Shore Professional Baseball League (USPBL). The Carleton native smashed six home runs last year and he already has two dingers in two games here in 2018.

"I have been growing it out for a long time now," said Lollo. "Now that it is long enough, I thought I could perhaps do something instead of just cut it all off."

That something is donate his hair to Locks of Love.

"I had a friend do that one time and I thought it was pretty cool," said Lollo. "So now that it is close to being long enough, I told myself I would donate for those that need it. If I can do something positive and help others, I am going to do that every time."

So he may not be jumping over the foul line, wearing a purple thong, or tying his shoes the same way every day, but he has quickly become the slugger with long hair at Jimmy John's Field. And nobody would want it any other way. ♦

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Let's dance

USPBL Dance Crews enhance gameday experience

By Dakota Brecht

There's no secret that the United Shore Professional Baseball League has been a huge success at Jimmy John's Field in its first two seasons. The USPBL and Jimmy John's Field were founded in 2015 by owner Andy Appleby and his company General Sports & Entertainment (GSE). The fan experience has always been the No. 1 goal for Appleby and Company.



As part of that mission, the USPBL continues to implement new and impressive ways to enhance that experience.

The USPBL Dance Crews have made their debut at Jimmy John's Field and are already a huge hit. It was an idea that sprung out of the minds of Appleby and USPBL Entertainment Manager Lesley Kay.

"What I was kind of looking for was a pep squad," Appleby said. "The gameday experience will be fantastic."

Once Kay heard of Appleby's plans, she couldn't wait to put the idea into action.

"I love it, it's just really great that I get to do what I love" Kay said. "I'm just so excited for these girls."

Tryout dance auditions were held in the spring and over 200 dancers gave it a go with ages ranging anywhere from 6-20 years old.

"I just put out an advertisement and we promoted it through our social media networks, dance dance is really huge in the metro Detroit area and they just kept walking through the doors" Kay said. "Andy agreed with me that we don't want to turn away that many people, so we had so many talented dancers that I just made it work with approximately 170 dancers."

Out of these 170-plus dancers, Kay was able to turn them into four separate dance teams, Senior Field Performance Crew, Junior Field Performance Crew, Elite Dance Crew and the Utica United Dance Crew. The Utica Dance Crew, or UDC for short, will be performing at every single game. The selection for these dance crews were based on age, style and skill level.

With a rotating schedule for all dancers, it has provided the USPBL fans with fresh new faces dancing and singing



night after night.

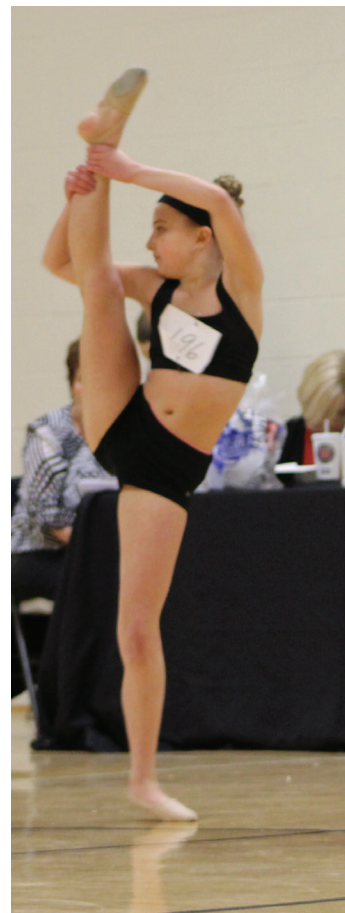
Another new thing you'll see at Jimmy John's Field this summer is the addition of team songs. Each of the four teams has its own song and these songs will be played after each team's respective victories.

The USPBL Dance Crews have a synchronized dance to go along with the songs and it is sure to get the fans on their feet post game.

Kay and the rest of her choreography team have spent countless hours prepping the dance team crews for the season and the squads couldn't ask for a better leader. Kay has been dancing and teaching dance in the metro Detroit since she was 11 years old.

"She (Kay) has a real accomplished career in choreography and dance," Appleby said.

The USPBL Dance Crews are already a fan favorite at Jimmy John's Field and it is a great opportunity for these young dancers to get their names out there. ♦



MASCOTS



Buzz
Birmingham Bloomfield Beavers



Lancelot
Utica Unicorns



Rippi
Eastside Diamond Hoppers



Woolly
Westside Woolly Mammoths

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Furry friends take on a life of their own at Jimmy John's Field



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Busy Beaver

Newell looks to continue success as Birmingham/Bloomfield manager

By Dakota Brecht



Fresh off a 2017 USPBL championship, Manager Chris Newell of the Birmingham/Bloomfield Beavers couldn't wait to get his team back out on the field.

"Going into this year I've signed some guys that I think have that ability to win and get to the next level" Newell said.

Newell is a Michigan man and has a history of his own playing baseball in the mitten state. In 1991, Newell won a state championship playing for Waterford Our Lady of the Lakes.

After high school, Newell went on to play college baseball at Northwest Missouri State and then two years of professional baseball. In 1999, Newell began a scouting career for the Tampa Bay Rays and eventually the New York Yankees. He also spent time coaching at Oakland University as a hitting coach.

During and after his scouting career, Newell started his own private instructional school and has been doing that for 19 years. Over that period of time, Newell has trained over 40 players who have either been drafted or signed professionally. One of the biggest names to be trained under Newell was 2016 batting champion DJ LeMahieu of the Colorado Rockies.

Newell has now found a home at Jimmy John's Field in Utica and enjoys watching his players grow and develop in a different form than ever before. Newell says he set four goals ahead of last season that he's carrying into this year.

- Have the most guys signed to an MLB organization.
- Have the best record.
- Win the division.
- Win the USPBL championship

All of those goals were accomplished by the Beavers and Newell in 2017.

"I'm a big believer in setting your goals super high," Newell said. "Even if you fall a little short, it's still pretty special."

His returning players love to take the field for Newell because he gets results. Out of all four teams, the Beavers have sent the most players to MLB organizations over the first two seasons.

"He (Chris Newell) has been awesome, if it weren't for him I wouldn't be playing baseball," Beavers third baseman Thomas Roulis said. "He's definitely a players coach/manager, he comes out here and wants your best interest."

Newell preaches on the success of the league as a whole and is proud to be a part of such a successful organization.

"I think in year one we were almost a last resort, but now we're a desired location," Newell said. "That's a testament to everybody involved. Everyone's on board and going in the same direction."

With the third season underway, Newell is ready to lead his beloved Beavers to another

championship and continue the impressive development of USPBL as a whole. ♦

Homegrown coach

Woolly Mammoths manager Shane McCatty remembers his roots

By Mike Scott

Most days when Shane McCatty is driving to work as manager of the Westside Woolly Mammoths of the United Shore Baseball League in Utica, he passes his old high school, Lutheran Northwest just off M-59 in Rochester Hills.

“For a small school we had some great teams there,” said McCatty, who is starting his second season leading the Woolly Mammoths, and a few years removed from his own playing days. “Now I have some of my old high school friends yelling at me from the stands questioning my decisions in the dugout. But I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

The former Oakland University pitcher and Washington National farmhand, playing four years of minor league baseball, didn’t plan on going into coaching after his playing career ended. To the surprise of some, he didn’t necessarily want to follow in the footsteps of his father, Steve, who spent nine years as a pitcher in the majors for the Oakland A’s before spending the better part of the past three decades coaching baseball at various levels. He is now a pitching instructor with the Chicago White Sox organization.

“As a little kid you don’t dream of coaching – you dream of playing. And here I am.”

When McCatty decided to accept an offer to be an assistant coach the first year of the USPBL in 2016, he worked under Utica Unicorns manager Greg Grall. He expected that role to include being a pitching coach, but Grall surprised him by giving McCatty a full range of responsibilities, including coaching third base and working with players on their hitting. “He left so many decisions to me and I didn’t really know what I was doing,” McCatty said, laughing. “At first it freaked me out, but over time, I learned to trust my judgment.”

Last year, McCatty took over as manager for the Woolly Mammoths and led them to the championship game. Despite living in Grand Rapids with his new wife Ashleigh, McCatty didn’t look for any other job heading into 2018. He enjoys his role of helping a new group of players catch the eye of a professional scout so that they may be signed by another organization.

In fact, the average fan may be surprised by how often



McCatty and the other USBL managers and coaches speak with scouts from professional teams.

“The scouts give us recommendations about players who might be a good fit. They know it’s my job to provide them with instruction so they can develop,” McCatty said. “Our players just need a place to show what they can do and a field they can play on every day.”

For now, McCatty isn’t thinking about his next job in baseball. While he admits that most players, coaches and even umpires in the minors have aspirations of hitting the majors, his role is to focus on his players each day. And he enjoys being able to work close to where he grew up in Oxford, around friends and family, and in front of engaged crowds every weekend in the late spring and summer.

“Where we are you can’t look at the big picture,” McCatty said. “I grew up in Major League clubhouses and there are so many variances that can happen. Right now I am in the perfect place for me.” ♦



Been there, done that

Utica manager, Jim Essian,
has seen it all in
46-year baseball career

By Mike Scott

Utica Unicorns second-year manager Jim Essian has seen pretty much everything in baseball that you could possibly experience. Now near the end of his distinguished career, there's no place he would rather be than in the USPBL.

Essian started his 46-year professional baseball career in 1970 with the Philadelphia minor league system before breaking into Major League Baseball in 1973 with the Phillies. He played for five different organizations in 12 years, hitting .273 with 10 HRs and 44 RBI with the White Sox as part of his best season in 1977. Among his various coaching stops was a stint as manager of the Chicago Cubs in 1991.

When the concept for the USPBL was announced, Essian was on board, serving as an assistant coach for one year before managing the Unicorns in 2017. It's a homecoming of sorts for the local native who grew up in the Jefferson Chalmers neighborhood of Detroit.

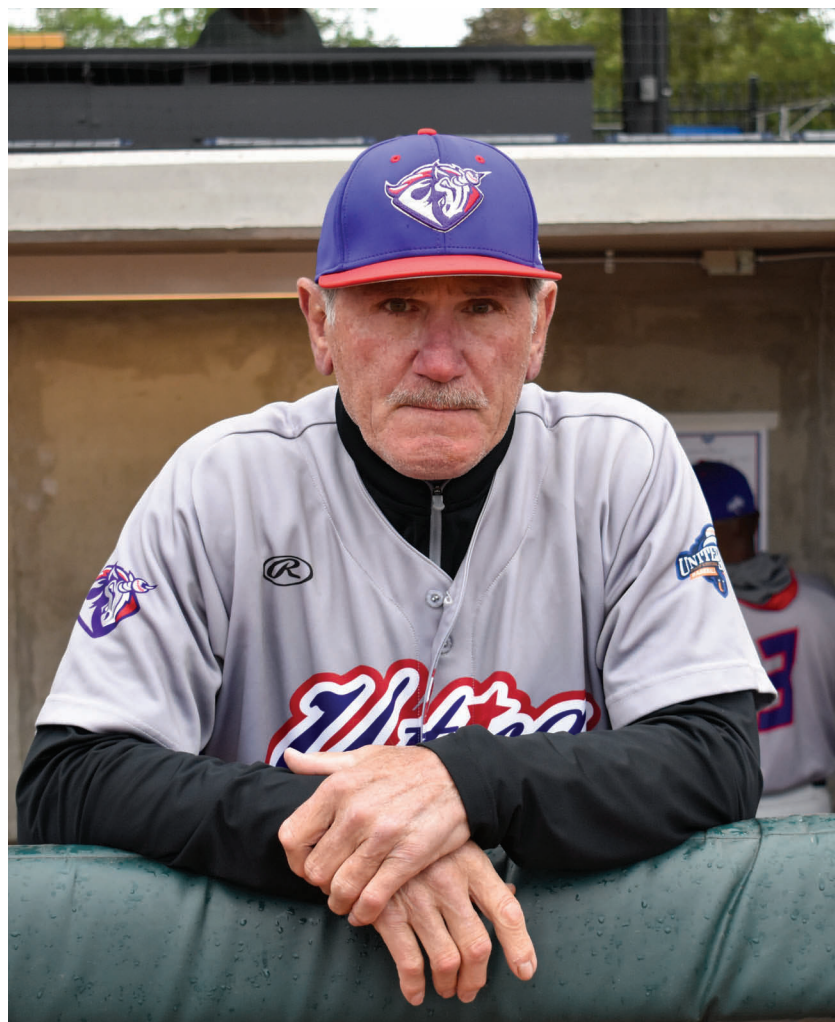
"It's an opportunity that I pursued because I believed strongly in what (USPBL Owner) Andy (Appleby) and his team were doing here," Essian said. "The ballpark has really led the way for some incredible improvements that have been made to downtown Utica. It's really a destination area now."

Essian said the use of objective data to help measure player performance is a key marketing tool to organizational scouts, and is something he works with on a daily basis along with the league's operational staff. Essian confirmed that such technology is used not just during games but in practice, giving the league virtually an unlimited number of data points to share.

"These metrics really matter to teams," Essian said.

His role is to find players who are most likely to appeal to scouts, and to work with them to pinpoint and improve marketable skills that will translate on the field. Yet despite the age difference, Essian is comfortable relating to his players in an informal way as well. He mentioned "laughing and dancing" with his players in the dugout and getting to learn more about them as individuals off the field.

Anytime a player is signed by an organizational scout from Essian's team he will be thrilled. But the longtime manager



and coach is looking forward to a specific day that will be a hallmark in the history of the league.

"In a few years, maybe sooner, one of our players will make it to the majors," Essian said. "I can't wait to see that. I am confident that will happen because of our focus on player development."

Essian has some interesting stories from his time in the game, and he may even share a quick story or two with fans before games at Jimmy John's Field this summer. He appreciates the interest in the league and wants to be a part of the effort to entertain all families who come through the gates.

"When you come to see us you're watching a professional baseball game that's easy to get to and is very fun and affordable," Essian said. "We love our (Detroit) Tigers, but I have fun when I come to (Jimmy John's Field) every day and I know our fans do, too." ♦



Experience matters

Diamond Hoppers manager brings experience, professionalism to USPBL

By Dakota Brecht

Manager Paul Noce has been at USPBL since it's inaugural season in 2016. From year one to year three, Noce has seen this league transform and continue to improve every season. With development and advancement being the main goal at Jimmy John's Field in Utica, Noce plays a major part in helping his guys make their name known.

"I try to bring a pro philosophy," Noce said. "How to go about your business correctly and how to act professionally?"

Noce's baseball days date back to the early 1980's with experience coming from playing and coaching. After playing collegiate baseball at Washington State University from 1979-81, Noce made his major Major league League Baseball debut for the Chicago Cubs on June 1, 1987. In 1990, he also had a short stint playing for that year's World Series champion Cincinnati Reds.

On the coaching side of things, Noce has been involved in many organizations professionally and on the collegiate level. Once his playing days were over, he spent two years as a coach/manager in the Pittsburgh Pirates' organization.

In 1994, Noce took the head coaching position at Hillsdale College and spent 20 years there as the head coach, where he won over 300 games.

This season will mark Noce's 25th season coaching baseball, but at Jimmy John's Field, he talks about coaching in a different perspective. He takes great pride in seeing his players move on to the next level.

"I don't want my guys here, I would love to have a whole new team next month," Noce said. "I guess you do have a little pride when you see a guy move up, we're giving him an environment to develop and grow and if someone comes and gets him you feel really good about it."

John Kraft has been an outfielder for the Eastside Diamond Hoppers since last season and he loves the professionalism that Noce brings to the league.

"He's brought a really professional vibe to the team," Kraft said. "Coming out of college I didn't know what to expect out of independent ball, but he (Noce) treats it like the big leagues."

In just two seasons, five players from the Diamond



Hoppers have been signed by MLB organizations.

"I would rather win 10 games the whole year and move 10 players, that's the objective," Noce said. "You feel really good because I know what it's like to get that chance."

After former Diamond Hopper Tanner Kiest was signed by the Twins organization last season, it marked the 20th player to be signed out of the USPBL as a whole.

"It's not about winning or losing" Noce said. "Our objective is to get kids to the next level. For us to be able to do that 20 times in two years is pretty amazing."

As Jimmy John's Field and the USPBL kick off their third season, Noce's return benefits not just his players but the league as a whole. ♦





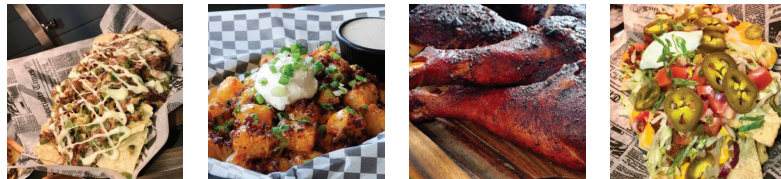
On the menu

Dole Whip makes its way to Jimmy John's Field

Michiganers annually make the trip by plane, train, or car to Florida to experience the thrills of the attractions as well as the

iconic desserts and treats at Walt Disney World.

However, this summer, part of the "Most Magical Place On Earth" will be right in Michigan's



backyard as the United Shore Professional Baseball League, centered in Utica, is set to feature the Dole Whip pineapple dessert amongst other new craveable cuisines at this year's baseball games.

"The Dole Whip is really a Disney fan favorite," said United Shore Pro Baseball League's Director of Food and Beverage David Parker. "Our C.O.O, Dana L. Schmitt, traveled to Hawai and Walt Disney World and those were essentially the only places she could find it. We just all kind of went back and forth on it as a product that we partnered with Dole Food Company to bring it in."

The dessert will feature crushed pineapple, crushed graham cracker, white topping, and a cherry on top of it and will be served in a pineapple souvenir cup.

"It's a nice summer treat," Parker said.

The sweet treat headlines a list of concessions found on the concourse of the stadium that suits every fan's wants and needs.

"We have everything from Street Tacos to our Philly Cheesesteak Nachos and we are adding a jumbo turkey leg as well," said Parker. "We have a barbeque stand which will be on the first base side and we are also adding our topped fries stand which will feature poutine loaded

french fries, chili cheese fries, sweet potato tater tots, and chicken tenders. You know there is just kind of a wide range and variety of everything and there is something for everyone."

Gluten free? Don't fret, there are options for fans as well including the boneless gluten free chicken bites.

Need a drink to wash it all down? Jimmy John's Field provides that as well, for the kids and the adults.

"We also have our official old fashioned which will be made with a brown sugar bourbon from our partner at Heritage Distilling," Parker said. "We are also adding a strawberry Tito's Lemonade."

Fans who will be taking in games from the AAA Clubhouse or the Founders Suites will get the chance to experience new renovated menus.

"Those menus will have more of a lighter and fresher affair," said Parker. "They will also have a lot more opportunities to change up the variety. We will have everything from chicken kabobs, to parmesan arancini, to street tacos, to a Michigan cherry chicken dish in the suites."

Whether fans come to the ballpark looking for a simple hot dog, cotton candy, or bites from the more elegant menu served in the suites, they surely won't be leaving hungry. ♦

PROMOTIONS



Fun day, every day

USPBL 2018 promotion schedule

The United Shore Professional Baseball League promotions this year are a strong balance of new innovative nights with a mix of fan favorites from seasons past. This marks the third season for the USPBL with the Birmingham Bloomfield Beavers, Eastside Diamond Hoppers, Utica Unicorns and Westside Woolly Mammoths competing at Jimmy John's Field in downtown Utica.

Making their debut this season will be JJ The Field General Bat Dog and the USPBL Dance Crews, which will perform at every game.

Ticket packages are now on sale through the ticket office at (248) 601-2400 ext. 2.

Below are some highlights for the remainder of the 2018 promotional calendar.

Top promotions of 2018 (kids run the bases after every game):

- June 28 - Human Cannonball
- July 4 - Fireworks Spectacular
- July 7 - Home Run Derby and All-Star Game
- July 22 - Lego Day
- Aug. 2 - Peanut Free Night
- Aug. 9 - JJ The Field General Bobblehead Giveaway
- Aug. 11 - ZOOperstars!, the top promotion in professional baseball
- Aug. 12 - ZOOperstars!, the top promotion in

professional baseball

Aug. 23 - Star Wars Night

Aug. 24 - Detroit Pistons Night

Aug. 30 - Upside Down Straight Jacket Escape featuring Anthony Grupido

Live music featuring:

June 16 -- Led Zepellin Tribute Band

June 23 -- Derek Winters Band

July 14 -- AC/DC Tribute Band

July 21 -- Boogie Dynamite (70's Night)

July 28 -- Cadillac Cowboys (salute to Garth Brooks)

Season long promotions:

Thirsty Thursdays featuring \$2 Budweiser and Bud light; \$5 Craft Beer Specials; Anyone with College ID will receive a free Koozie and \$2 off any grandstand ticket

Fireworks Friday will showcase a spectacular fireworks program immediately following the game

WCSX Classic Rock Saturdays and Country Music Saturday nights will feature pregame and in between inning performances from the Dana St. Clair Stage on the lawn in right center field

Sunday Fun Days featuring characters presented by Fairytale Entertainment:

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Paw Patrol, Superheros, Moana, Neverland, Frozen, Minions, Princesses and Pirates. ♦

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