

READING BASEBALL

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ALUMNI CLUB NEWSLETTER

October, 1999

Hello to All Alumni

I hope everyone had a great summer and is enjoying this nice New England autumn. When I began this letter, the Red Sox were quickly falling behind the Indians, two games to none. But, over the next few days, as I continued the letter, the Sox have staged an incredible comeback. Wasn't that the most exciting three games of Red Sox baseball we have seen in recent memory? I love the drama of it, the pitcher-hitter confrontations, the great defensive plays, etc. And I would gladly pay good money to watch Roberto Alomar play 2nd base every day. Yet among all the tremendous clutch play, there were still some bonehead plays. How about Darren Lewis jogging from 2nd to 3rd on ball four, with nobody on first? And then the Indians throwing the ball away! Even worse was Manny Ramirez not advancing from 1st to 2nd on a passed ball because he *thought* Thome had fouled off the pitch. Just unforgivable. I would have him running every foul pole, telephone pole, and Totem Pole in Cleveland for that one! Well, let's see how the Sox do vs. the Yankees. Maybe by the time this letter is done, the Sox will have won the World Series. Sure, and maybe Elvis will show up our Alumni Dinner.

We have a lot to report since our last letter, including three big Alumni Club events and another outstanding season for Reading Baseball.

Alumni Game: May 1999

As the 1999 high school season was winding down, alumni were gearing up for our annual Alumni Game at Morton Field. Of all our events, the game is my favorite, as we all get to put on the cleats and show our stuff (although some of us don't have much stuff left). This year, the weather was perfect and we had a large contingent of players from three decades (yikes - I can't believe we are about to produce our **4th decade** of alumni this year; some of you guys are getting old!). I must say that the older guys put on a show that made the younger alumni quite envious. One of the highlights, although as rare as George Costanza picking up the lunch tab at Monks, was **Jim Lucci's** ('85) long homerun over the left field fence. **Steve Langone** ('96) hit one, too, but that did not surprise anyone. Despite Jim's display of power, the game MVP was presented to Jim's brother, **Bob Lucci** ('87). Bobby was essentially given the award just to aggravate Jim.

It was good to see some alumni who were making their first Alumni Game appearance. A special treat was to see **Keith Richards**, outstanding hitter and pitcher who graduated in '89. Keith showed us that he can still swing the bat from the left side. Keith has been in Minneapolis, working in advertising, before recently returning to this area. Keith, at the postgame cookout, told us that he and his girlfriend, Kelly, were soon leaving for Europe to travel for a month or so.

Alumni Dinner: January 1999

Our Alumni Club kicked off the new year with our annual Alumni Dinner, again held at *On The Border*, which is still the official restaurant of Reading

Baseball. We had another good turnout (30 players) of alumni old and new and had fun sharing stories (mostly exaggerated) about Reading Baseball. My very first teams, those of the late '70's, were represented by **Mike Moscariello** ('77), **George Fennelly** ('78), and **Jack Marlin** ('79). **Joe Picano** ('81), **Dave Powers** ('81), and **Joe Hagan** ('82) who played on championship teams in 1980 and/or 1981 were on hand and **Scott Farris** ('85), Jim Lucci ('85), **Gary d'Entremont**, and **Tom Zaya** ('87) rounded out the '80's group. All the above players were presented with their old red game shirts that we wore prior to 1990. Amazingly some of them still fit! I think those guys should wear them to the Alumni Game this spring.

The next group of guys were players who are recent college grads or nearing the end of their college careers. **Jon Cignetti** ('93), **Tom Fratto** ('94), **Matt Stinson** ('94), **Dave Zaya** ('94), **Jon Whalen** ('95), **Anthony Caporale** ('95), and **John Feudo** ('95) are all entering the "real world" of work. We are proud of our college graduates and wish them the best of luck in their professional careers (over the next *forty* years!)

Finally, the youngest group of players included those who have left RMHS in just the past three years. Steve Langone, **Chris Smith**, **Dave Pizzotti**, and **Mike Thompson**, all from '96, were there, as well as '97 grads **Jim Gray**, **Dan Farnham**, **Erik Olson**, and **Jamie Severance**. All of the above, plus **Ryan Fitzgerald** ('98) played on our state championship team in 1996. Last, but not least, **Dan Foley**, tri-captain from 1998, was our youngest alumnus in attendance.

Alumni Golf Tournament

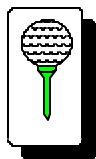
The much anticipated and long awaited Reading Baseball Golf Tournament became a reality on August 23 thanks to the great work of **Dan Robinson** ('94). As you know, just a year ago, Dan faced possible

club impeachment for failing to make good on his promise to create this tournament. Well, Dan earned his lifetime club membership and exemption from impeachment with the job he did putting together this tournament. Forty-two players, including 13 alumni, 2 current coaches, and 4 fathers of former players all participated. We had a beautiful day for golf at the Colonial Golf Club, followed by a cookout on the premises.

Such golf had never been seen before in this area and rivaled the Ryder Cup for pure excitement and suspense. The winning team, led by alumnus **Bobby D'Ambrosio** ('84), captured first place at 6 under par. They received a nice pro shop gift certificate for their performance. An aside regarding Bobby D'A: he is our only player to hit a homerun against a future major league pitcher. In 1984, we were in a tie ballgame with Burlington at Morton Field when, in the 5th inning, they brought in Pete Smith in relief. After mowing us down for a few outs, we got one man on base (by walk or error) which brought our #9 hitter, Bobby, to the plate. He launched an absolute bomb into the softball field (the area formerly known as Mimville), for a two-run homer. Technically, it was not a homerun because Bob was called out for missing third base - oops. Nevertheless, it was a memorable, game-winning blast against an overpowering pitcher who went on to pitch for the Braves, Mets, and others. To continue this digression, I think Pete Smith and Joe Vitiello are the only recent Middlesex League graduates to play in the big leagues. Prior to them, the last ML grad to play in the majors was Reading's **John Doherty**. The Merrimack Valley has had two players from Billerica, Tom Glavine and Gary DiSarcina, and Jason Bere from Wilmington. I believe that Steve Bedrosian (Expos and other teams) is from that league, too (Methuen). Okay, back to golf. The only team comprised of all alumni, **Steve Tomasello** ('90), Tom Zaya, **Jeff Donovan** ('90), and **Steve Donovan** ('85) tied for second at 3 under. Dick Gillis, from RMHS, won the closest to the pin contest, and non-alumnus person, Eric Everton, had the longest drive. They each received gift certificates from The Brearley Collection, which produces classic baseball photographs. **Tim**

Stanton ('85) won a nice fleece jacket in the alumni raffle, courtesy of RTS Enterprises. We asked Tim what he wanted embroidered on the jacket, since RTS said they would provide that free service. Tim said probably his wife's name, because she would claim the jacket for herself. Other alumni golfers were **Mike Spurr** ('82), **E.J. Stanton** ('82), **Josh Martin** ('95), Scott Farris, Joe Picano, and Tournament Director, Dan Robinson. Of course, **Coach Bryson**, who is an excellent golfer, played, too. I, on the other hand, was true to my baseball philosophy out on the course: I took lots of swings, hit the ball hard on the ground, and hit the ball to all fields. And I only swung and missed once!

Many thanks to those who sponsored a hole and made a \$100 contribution to our program: Mike Spurr, Bobby D'Ambrosio, Steve Tomasello, and Joe Picano. And, of course, thanks to Dan for making this a success. We think that the golf tournament will grow significantly in the next few years and hope to at least double the participation. According to Dan, future tournaments will be held at a site other than the Colonial, who was less than gracious and cooperative. Anyone who would like to help Dan with future tournament plans should let me know and I'll put you in touch with Danny.



8 Reasons Why the RBAC Golf Tournament was Better Than the Ryder Cup

8. Nobody in the RBAC tournament spit on anybody's wife.

7. They had Tiger Woods, but we had John Woods (father of current Reading Baseball captain, Jesse Woods)

6. Ryder Cup fans yelled "Olazabol"; RBAC players yelled "I lost my ball".

5. They wore those ugly shirts; we had the nice Reading Baseball golf shirts.

4. RBAC golfers don't get upset if anyone clicks a camera during our swing (nobody would want to take our picture).

3. Ryder Cup golfers yell "fore", our guys, out of habit, yelled "Cut - four!".

2. We didn't have a controversial celebration on the 17th green (we *would* have, but none of our guys made a 45' putt).

1. Colin Montgomerie's body makes all of us look like we're in really good shape.

Next Event: Alumni Dinner

Our next event will be another Alumni Dinner, which will be held in early January. As we did last year, we will send reminder postcards in December to tell you the exact date, time, and place (probably the first Friday after New Year's Day). As always, we hope to have lots of alumni show up so we can celebrate the Millennium, Reading Baseball style. What is that, you ask? That's when all the younger, single guys leave the restaurant while the night is still young with possibilities and the older, married guys stay much later because we don't want to go home.

1999 Season Summary

It was another banner year for our program, as all three Reading Baseball teams did well. **Duane Sigsbury**, in his first year as freshman coach, had an outstanding team that compiled a record of 15-3-2 (we don't have the new NHL overtime rule to try to eliminate ties). This was a talented group of freshman who should form the nucleus of good varsity teams in a couple years. Duane was assisted by volunteer coach Dave Zaya. Both coaches did a great job teaching young players the skills and attitudes they'll need to be successful in our program. **Jeff Nelson** did a remarkable job with the JV team and went 12-5. And, last but not least, the varsity had a truly great season, winning the Middlesex League Championship with a regular season record of 17-3 and advancing to the semifinals of the Division II North Tournament. I am, as always, indebted to Coach Bryson who again did a great job as our varsity assistant. Here is how the season went:

We had several key players back from our excellent '98 squad and we knew we were expected to

have another great season. However, we knew that Lexington, who beat us out for the title last year, had their entire pitching staff plus their catcher back. In fact, the entire league was made up of veteran teams, so we knew this would be a very tough league in '99. We opened the season with wins over Burlington and Melrose. Dennis stifled Burlington and Marc Cerasuolo beat a very good Melrose team that would beat us later in the season. Next up was defending champ Lexington, at Lexington. We anticipated a great duel between the league's two best pitchers, Gramolini for us and Mike McGirr for them, and we got it. McGirr held us to two hits and Lexington scored a run in the bottom of the eighth to beat us, 2-1. The good news was that we played well and with intensity and knew that if we continued to do so, we'd be okay. We were more than okay, as we ripped off eight consecutive wins. The first of those, vs. Belmont, was a critical point for us. We were down, 3-0, and sort of doubting ourselves, when we finally got a couple runs in the 4th and then exploded for six runs in the 5th. That was the first of several big innings we would have on the year. Next we beat Woburn despite only getting three hits. The game was tied at 1-1 in the fifth and Woburn had a runner on 3rd with one out. Their batter hit a fly ball to right which Scott Severance caught and gunned down the runner tagging from third. This was one of *seven* assists from Severance, who had an incredible year in right field. In the bottom of the fifth, an RBI triple by Dave Polcari followed by a monster homerun by Jesse Woods, put us up, 4-1, and Gramolini did the rest, for a complete game win. Russell Hunt, our junior lefty, was on the mound at Wakefield, and pitched a great game. We had a 5-1 lead in the 7th until a couple wind-aided, freaky plays made it scary. The game ended 5-4 with the tying run on second and a line out to left field. That was a big win for us, as it kept us one game behind Lexington. As it turned out, we would battle both Wakefield and Lexington for first place the entire season.

We had another 5-4 nail-biter against Winchester. They were an exceptional hitting team and very dangerous. The game again ended with the tying run on second, as Marc Cerasuolo earned a save in relief on winning pitcher, Gramolini. We traveled to

Watertown and won easily. In the meantime, Lexington dropped two in a row, so we moved into first place at 7-1, a game ahead of Lexington and Wakefield. However, our prosperity was short-lived, as we lost two of our best players at this point and would play without them for six games. Therefore, our next game, at Stoneham, would be a real test of how well we would respond. It didn't take long to answer that question, as Russell Hunt led off the game with a homerun. Stoneham came right back with three runs in the bottom of the first, but that is all the runs Gramolini would yield on the day. We started to pound the ball, as Cerasuolo, Gramolini, Tyler Worden, and Kevin Phinney hit doubles to put us ahead for good. Jamie Cerretani had a big day with three hits and two stolen bases. Cerretani stayed hot against Burlington, as his two-run homer over the right field wall broke a 2-2 tie in the third inning. He later tripled and hit a sacrifice fly. Cerasuolo settled down after a slow start, and pitched a complete game 3-hitter in the 8-2 win. This set up a big, big game vs. Lexington at Doubleday Field in Cooperstown. For the first time, we went out there in May (in fact we played on Mother's Day) mid-spring atmosphere was great. It had rained hard overnight, so there was a question whether we would play on time or even at all. Alumni Scott Farris and Jim Lucci convinced the bus driver to drive them into town to see the field conditions and talk to the groundskeeper. They found that the game would be played, but delayed. This was important to know, so we could time our preparation and arrival. In fact, we went out behind the Deer Run to the tennis courts and did some intensive hitting drills. I really think this helped us get up for the challenge of facing McGirr. Let's call a time out here to talk about the Deer Run Motel. We have stayed at "the Run" (that's what us regular customers call it) four times and all four times we have won the game at Doubleday and then won the league title. In the other three years, we are 0-2-1 staying at other hotels and we have not won the league in those years. Guess where we want to stay next year? By the way, a couple players brought their fishing rods and actually caught a nice bass in the pond behind the motel. Anyway, back at Doubleday, the weather cleared

and we were ready to go. We had Gramolini on the mound, making this the 4th time McGirr and Gramolini had gone head-to-head in two years. Lexington scored a run in the top of the first, and almost two, but leftfielder Chris Condon gunned out a runner at the plate. We tied it in the third, as Hunt's double scored Gramolini, who had singled. Gramolini continued to pitch well and held Lexington off the board to keep the game at 1-1. In the bottom of the fifth, Gus Saggese reached base on an error and advanced to third on a groundout and pickoff error. With two outs, Cerretani ripped a single to score Saggese. Cerretani got to 2nd on a wild pitch and scored on a bullet to center by Jesse Woods. We held the 3-1 lead, aided by a great diving catch in the sixth inning by right fielder, Scott Severance (he made as many great catches as he had assists). Lexington got two guys on in the seventh, but a ground ball ended the threat. This was as intense a regular season game as I can remember. Both teams played hard and well and I was proud of how well we swung against McGirr. This win put us at 10-1, ahead of Wakefield (9-2) and Lexington (9-3). Next was Melrose, who had been playing well lately and they pounded us, 9-1. This was the worst margin of defeat and the most runs we had given up in a long, long time. So now we were back in a tie for first place. We bounced back against Belmont as Hunt stuck out ten batters in a 7-2 win. Wakefield and Lexington each lost, so we were back in first by a game. But, again, we could not handle prosperity and we lost a heartbreaker at Woburn. We cruised to a 4-0 lead off their best pitcher, who was 5-0 on the season. But then we stopped playing and Woburn got back into the game with a 3-run homer in the fifth. In the bottom of the seventh, a single, two hit batsman, and a two-out bloop single got Woburn two runs and a walk-off win. Not good. So with four games left to play, we were tied with Wakefield at 11-3 and one game up on 10-4 Lexington. And guess who we were to play next? That's right, a first-place showdown with Wakefield. The good news is that we would now be at full strength (we had gone 4-2 while missing our two players). Wakefield was the surprise team of the league, doing much better than anyone expected.

They had an excellent pitcher, Forster, who was 5-1 with very good ERA. We countered with Russell Hunt, who had beaten them back in our first meeting. Wakefield went ahead, 1-0, in the third (we had a lot of games when we fell behind early and then had to come back), and then scored another run in the fourth. In the bottom of the fourth, we mounted the big inning, scoring six runs with two outs. Jamie Gath's bases-loaded, two strike single tied the game at 2-2, and Cerretani's single drove in the third run. Polcari blasted a long double to score two more and Jesse Woods followed with a bomb to center for a triple and an RBI. In the sixth, Kevin Phinney put the game away with a 2-run homer, and we won 8-3. An amazing thing about this team is that, on several occasions, we managed to string together a bunch of hits in a row. The thing is they weren't just little singles, they were extra base hits.

Okay, back in first place, a game ahead of the other two teams. We took care of business against Watertown, with Jamie Lynch picking up the win on the mound. Now at 14-3 we could clinch at least a tie for the title vs. Stoneham. The Spartans were having a down year, but playing tough with a lot of underclassmen. As we had been doing all season, we fell behind early, as Stoneham scored a run in the first inning. We tied it in the second and the game stayed at 1-1 through five and one-half. That was due to some excellent defense. In the fourth, we got a 6U-3 double play and in the sixth, a Severance to Polcari to Phinney cutoff snuffed out a potential run at the plate. In the bottom of the sixth, Polcari led off with a single and moved two third on a ground out and fly out. Gramolini, who was also pitching a great game, beat out a ground ball to score Polcari. Phinney doubled to right to score Gramolini for a big insurance run. One more great defensive play in the seventh (Cerretani made a diving backhand stab of a hard groundball and threw the batter out at first from his knees) and we had the 3-1 win and a guaranteed piece of the title. This was very satisfying because we had narrowly lost out on the title last year and that had motivated us to win in this year. We now had a chance to win the title outright, but we would have to do it against a tough Winchester team, at their park.

This was a make-up; in fact our attempt to play them had been rained out two or three times. To make matters worse, this was to be played the day after the Senior Banquet and All-Night Party. I would not have been surprised if we came out a little sluggish, but that was not the case at all. This time we jumped ahead, 2-0, on an RBI double by Woods and a sac fly by Saggese. We continued to pound the ball all day, building our lead until a big 5-run seventh put the game out of reach. All together, we had 19 hits, led by Jesse Woods', who had four hits, including two doubles and a homer. Gath, Polcari, and Gramolini each had three hits. The final score was 13-3, and the Middlesex League title was ours! We finished at 15-3 in the league, one game ahead of Lexington.

I think our record and title are even more impressive considering that we played at full strength for only 13 of our 25 games. Despite our difficulties, this team had the ability to pull together and rise to the occasion. It seemed that we had to win the title multiple times before we could claim it as ours. We had big games against Lexington, Wakefield, Stoneham, and Winchester which all had major impact on our chances. A loss in any of those games could have done us in, but this team wouldn't let that happen. Much of the credit goes to the depth and toughness we had, but also the leadership, particularly from Kevin Phinney. He was the guy that held us together day after day. He practiced every day like it was the World Series and he played every game like it was his last. Without his energy and tenacity, we would not have reached our goals.

But we had more baseball to play. Our non-league games were vs. Westford and Malden Catholic, in the Wilmington Invitational Tournament . We continued our hot hitting vs. Westford, beating them 13-2. Jason Zervas had two hits, including a double, Gath had two doubles, and Gramolini hit a homerun. Marc Cerasuolo earned his third victory on the mound and added three hits of his own. Then we faced Malden Catholic, who always plays us tough. We beat them, 2-0, behind brilliant 3-hit pitching by Jamie Lynch, who changed speeds and had command of his pitches. The only runs of the game were driven in by Phinney's bases loaded, 2-out single in the sixth.

We finished our regular season at 17-3 and now awaited our tournament opponent.

We were the #4 seed and faced East Boston in the first round. They were not a strong team and we continued to hit the ball well, to the tune of 17 hits and a 15-2 win. Cerasuolo got the win and again helped his cause with three hits. We had another of our big innings (11 runs) which included nine consecutive hits. Next we would play Tewksbury in a rematch of last year's classic 12-inning win. Tewksbury was Merrimack Valley champs and a good, experienced team. And we knew they would be hungry after last year's defeat. We had Gramolini on the mound and they started their #2 pitcher (their ace had pitched a couple innings in their first-round win). The game was tied, 1-1, when Chris Condon blasted a 2-run homer to right. A couple hits followed and then Cerretani tripled and Woods homered (they had brought in their #1 in this inning, but it made no difference. This 7-run, 7-hit inning was probably the most impressive of all our rallies, as we had 2 singles, 1 double, 2 triples, and 2 homeruns in that inning. I've never seen anything like it; our guys were just crushing the ball into the trees or Mimville. The final score was 14-5 and we were on to the Division II North Semifinals for the sixth consecutive year! We certainly were playing our most impressive baseball at this time, as the last five games we had outscored our opponents 57-12 and were hitting about .450. You guys from the '94 team will say that's doesn't compare to what you did. Some of our alumni may not know that the '94 team opened the season with six wins by the combined score of 74-0. That's right, six straight shutouts and an average of 12+ runs per game. That club went on to a 19-1 record and league co-championship.

Our opponent was the #1 seed Danvers, who came in at 22-0. But they had won close games vs. Westford and Melrose. In fact, they had a miracle comeback to beat Melrose (10-9 in 9 innings). So we thought we had a very good chance. The scouting reports I got was that Danvers was very much like us in that they had good pitching, hitting, and defense and didn't make mistakes. The game was under the lights at Alumni Field in Lowell. There was a good

crowd, especially a large vocal contingent from Danvers. We had Cerasuolo on the mound (by the way, we again were missing a key player for the tournament) and they had their #3 pitcher. They had no clear-cut ace, but all three of their starters were undefeated, obviously, we good ERAs. It was a good pitcher's duel. Cerasuolo pitched well, and gave up hits in only two innings. But Danvers was able to put those hits in bunches to score three runs. We, on the other hand, could not. We had only five hits and Danvers took away four or five more with some truly spectacular defensive play. Their pitcher changed speeds and knew what he was doing and kept us off balance. In the end, it was a 3-0 Danvers win.

So it was an exciting, challenging year in many regards. I was pleased to see the seniors who had worked so hard for us get a title they deserved. They all came through with outstanding seasons. Here's a little bit about each senior. Dennis Gramolini was a great pitcher for us for two years, and this year he added a phenomenal offensive season. Dennis went 7-2 on the mound with a 1.56 ERA. In 63 innings he struck out 48 and walked just 8 batters. He pitched his best in the tough games; always prepared himself well and faced every challenge like the ace he was. In addition, he batted .435 with 2 homers. Marc Cerasuolo was a steady, reliable, and versatile player who excelled for two years. Including the tournament, he batted .390 with 23 hits and 10 RBI. He also went 3-0 as a pitcher with a 1.15 ERA in the regular season and added another win in the tournament. Gus Saggese played 2nd, 3rd, and DH for us and was our hottest hitter in the early part of the season as he was a catalyst for our offense. He batted .310 with 12 RBI. We already mentioned Scott Severance's defensive ability; he also hit .339 with 20 hits and 13 RBI. Jamie Lynch was 2-0 on the mound with an ERA of 0.70. Tyler Worden and Jason Zerfas both hit very well when given the opportunity. In fact Lynch, Worden, and Zerfas were unselfish team players who combined for a .438 batting average in 32 at bats. Finally, our three captains, all of whom were with the varsity for three years, all had great seasons. Our catcher, Kevin Phinney, batted .407 with 2 homers

and 16 RBI. He was even more valuable defensively, handling 138 chances with no errors. Opponents stole only four bases against us all year. And we already mentioned his exemplary leadership and character. Dave Polcari batted .420 with 13 RBI in our #3 slot. For two years he gave us tough, clutch at bats in key situations. When the game was on the line, he always seemed to come through. He also was a superb defensive player at first base. Finally, Jamie Gath completed a remarkable career and was certainly among the very best all-around players in Reading Baseball history. For two years, he has been a great shortstop/2nd baseman/hitter/baserunner. Last year, he led the team in seven offensive categories. This year, he led the team in batting average, slugging average, on base average, doubles, and triples. His on base average (.620) is the all-time RBB single season record, and he set the record for triples in a season (5). His slugging average (.829) is second all-time for a single season and his batting average is fourth (.463). Jamie batted .636 in the tournament, so his overall batting average was an even .500. And he is a superb infielder who made great play after great play for us. As if that's not enough, Jamie's *career* batting average of .432 is #1 all-time! He ranks second in career doubles, fourth in runs, and fourth in triples. We will certainly miss his play and his personality.

Let me tell you, it was an absolute pleasure to watch this team perform every day. We had the balance of excellent hitting, pitching, and defense. I don't know about you guys, but I *enjoy* practice, and watching this team do infield drills or pre-game infield practice was pure fun and very satisfying. This was a group of players that I truly enjoyed being with every day and for whom I have great fondness. I will always remember their ability to overcome adversity and their mental toughness.

As a further comment, we had, I want to describe in more detail what I consider our best hitting team ever. In fact, the team set the all-time single season record in each of the following categories (regular season: 20 games): Most Runs (153), Most Hits (214), Most Doubles (38), Most Triples (14), Highest Batting Average (.371), Highest Slugging

Average (.527), and Most RBI (135). We combined that offense with great defense, and set all-time records for Least Errors (17), Highest Fielding Pct. (.970), and Least Stolen Bases Allowed (4).

You can't amass that kind of team stats with one or two great hitters, you need a strong lineup from leadoff to #9. A *team* batting average of .371 is unheard of; we've had some years where our *leading* hitter didn't hit that high. All together, we had five players bat over .400: and four more bat over .300. Eight players attained double figures in runs scored and five players had at least 20 hits. Seven guys drove in at least 10 runs and five different players hit homeruns (and 2 additional players homered in the tournament). And we already talked about the big innings that we had all year along, and they came in key ballgames, under pressure. That is some awesome team offense.

Post Season Awards

Several of our players were recognized for their accomplishments this season. Gramolini was chosen as an all-league pitcher for the second year in a row. Kevin Phinney was also named to the Middlesex League All-Star Team, as a catcher. Jesse Woods also made the team as a utility player, as he played leftfield, first base, and DH. He is among the best hitters we've ever had, combining consistency and power. Jesse hit .448 with 4 homers, 25 RBI, and a .739 slugging average.

In addition, Dennis Gramolini was the *Daily Times Chronicle* Pitcher of the Year and Jesse Woods the Player of the Year. Jamie Gath was honored by his selection to the *Boston Herald* All Scholastic Team.

In June, we had the usual great time at the post season cookout where we honored the team and its players. In addition to my traditional side-splitting stand-up comedy routine, we gave out several important awards. Jason Zervas received the Olson Memorial Scholarship/Award, given in the name of Erik Olson's grandparents. Jamie Lynch the Edwin d'Entremont Memorial Award, and Kevin Phinney the

Reading Baseball Coaches Award. These players were all excellent choices because they all possessed great attitudes and exemplary character.

I was pleased to present a new award, The Reading Baseball Contributor Award, to my father for his 22 years of support and contribution to Reading Baseball. You guys know how much he has done: besides taking thousands of photographs, he has also built our wagons (he just built us a second one), stride boards, balance boards, coaches lockers, nail drag, and more. And he has spent countless hours repairing batting cages and draining puddles on game days. It was a special moment for me and I hope to continue to give that award each year. I would also like to give an award to a distinguished alumnus each year. We could call it the Reading Baseball Alumnus Award. We certainly have many good candidates for that one. If you would like to be considered for that award, no bribe is too small.

Finally, we announced the results of the players' vote for captains. Once again we will have tri-captains: Jesse Woods, Connor Hardy, and Jamie Cerretani.

Summer Baseball

It was quite a summer for Reading's Legion, Summer Rockets, and Pony League teams. The Legion, coached by Dave Polcari (senior) had an excellent season. Mr. Polcari blended fine players from Reading, North Reading, and Wilmington into a very strong team and qualified for the playoffs. Coach Polcari, who previously was a coach and commissioner for the Pony League (as well as Medford High's coach) has decided to retire from coaching. We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to Mr. Polcari for his many years of coaching and guiding Reading's baseball players.

The Summer Rockets, under the direction of Dave Zaya, had a superb season. The Rockets amassed a league record of 12-1-1 and were South Division champions! Their first round opponent in the

best-of-three playoffs was Northeast League arch rival Chelmsford. Reading lost the first game, at home, and were faced with having to win two in a row. They traveled to Chelmsford and played a tough ballgame that ended in a tie. So, they had to go back to Chelmsford and start the game from scratch. The Rockets came through with a victory and then returned to Reading for the deciding game. Reading won the game, and series, and moved onto the finals. In the finals vs. Lowell, the teams split the first two games and the championship game was played at Alumni Field. Lowell won the game, 4-2, to win their second straight title. Congratulations and sincere thanks to Coach Zaya who has made a great commitment to our program and players. Also thanks to as well as to Tom Zaya, Matt Stinson, and Jamie Severance, all of whom helped Dave at various times throughout the season.

Reading has had a team in the Suburban Pony League for many, many years. In fact, just as an aside, when I played Pony League, Reading had four teams: Dee's Pharmacy, Goodall Sanford, Allied Paints, and the Y's Men (YMCA). At that time (we're talking 1966), Stoneham had four teams, Wilmington had two, and North Reading had two, and that was the entire league. Let me tell you, the rivalry with Stoneham then was absolutely fierce. Coaches and player from the two towns just despised each other and the bench jockeying during games was nasty. But that was all part of the good, clean fun of youth sports back then. Anyway, Reading's long history of Pony League play was in jeopardy this year as it looked like Reading would not enter a team in the league. To the rescue came Duane Sigsbury who took over the role of commissioner and recruited two of our alumni to coach, and thus enter, a Reading team. Dan Foley and **Ryan Carroll**, both 1998 alumni, coached the team to an amazing 17-2 season, a first-place finish, and an ultimate championship. The final game, played at Alumni Field in Lowell, was a 1-0, 8-inning victory vs. Everett. These young coaches did a tremendous job investing their time and energy into their team and players and certainly got results. It makes me very proud when my former players take up coaching because I feel that

something that I (*we*) have taught them will be passed on to more young players. It's just another way in which our Reading Baseball family continues to support each other and help our program, and I am grateful for that.

What's New With Our Alumni?

Let's see what's going on of a non-baseball manner with our alumni. Congratulations are in order for the Curley family: **Chris** ('88) and his wife, Carol, just had their first child, Meghan, born on May 9. And best wishes to Chris' brother, **Rich** ('91), who was recently married to Krista Russo on May 29. Other wedding congratulations to **Mark Torrisi** ('91) who married Denise Giordano. Mark and his bride have a home in Tewksbury. Tom Zaya's wife, Claire, is expecting their second child at the end of February. Tom & Claire's first child, Connor, can often be seen at the ballpark with his dad or grandparents. Connor, who is 18 months old, has seen so many baseball games that his first words were "think opposite field" and "let's get an out".

I had the pleasure of an unexpected visit this summer. **Mark Angelo** ('78), his lovely wife, and two children, came by to visit. Mark, who lives in Orlando, Florida, played on my first teams in '77 and '78. He was a great lefthanded hitter who made the Middlesex League All Star and Globe All-Scholastic teams in his senior year. Mark hit .446 and is still the only lefty hitter we've had to hit a ball over the left field fence at Morton. Mark went on to Florida Southern College where he led his team to the Division II National Championship. He was an All-American who set several FSC all-time records. He is a member of the Florida Southern Hall of Fame. Mark played in the Cape League in the summer, where he led the league in home runs. After college, he signed a contract and played in the St. Louis Cardinal organization until injuries forced him to retire. It was great to see him and his beautiful family. Mark and his brother Bob are terrific guys for whom I have great fondness. Mark owns a 1930's-style Cuban cigar shop in bar in Universal Studios in Orlando, so if

you are there on vacation, stop in to see Mark and I'm sure you will receive the royal alumni treatment!

A few weeks ago, my brother Mike, Scott Farris, and a couple other (non-alumnus) guys, took a trip to the midwest where we saw a football game at Notre Dame and then, on the strong recommendation from Joe Picano, went to see the Cubs at Wrigley Field. In addition to enjoying the great atmosphere at both places, we were thrilled to be joined by alumnus **Mike Crispo** ('84) who has lived in Chicago for the past three years. Mike just got married in July and he and his beautiful wife, Lisa, showed us around the city. We had a terrific time and it was great to see Mike.

We had several alumni playing college baseball this past spring. Jon Whalen and Tom Fratto completed excellent careers at Williams College and UMass Lowell, respectively. Steve Langone had an outstanding junior year at Boston College where he went 8-4 on the mound and hit something like .365 with 13 homeruns. Steve was named to the All Big East second team. A great thrill for Steve came in the Baseball Beanpot at Fenway Park where Steve was the winning pitcher vs. UMass and also hit two homeruns, one over the Green Monster and one *over the screen!* Erik Olson saw a lot of time on the mound, mostly in relief, and drew praise from the UMass coach for throwing heat in relief in that same Beanpot game. The UMass coach's comments in *The Boston Globe* were "I think we could have done a little better job at the end hitting their good pitcher. But when the velocity gets above 86 mph that separates the men from the boys...and he was definitely up there." **Steve Rulison** ('98) played his freshman year at Bowdoin College and got a decent amount of playing time, especially toward the end of the season. Although he is an outfielder, Steve was pressed into pitching duty in one lopsided game, and rumor has it that he got a fellow alumnus to hit into a double play. This year, we will have three graduates from our '99 team playing ball: **Dennis Gramolini** will pitch at George Washington University, **Dave Polcari** will play first base at Merrimack College, and **Jamie Gath** will be an infielder for Babson College.

All three of these guys have the potential to make an real impact for their respective teams.

Some of our aging alumni refuse to hang 'em up and continue to play ball in an over-30 league. Scott Farris, Bob Lucci, and Jim Lucci were all stars for their respective teams this summer. I hear that **John Macaluso** ('86) made a couple pitching appearances in that league. And, using his Alumni Game performance as a springboard, Jim Lucci made the league's all-star team!

Other alumni played in top amateur leagues around New England. Dennis Gramolini pitched in the North Shore League and was named to that league's All-Star team. Steve Langone and Erik Olson both played in the New England Collegiate Baseball League. This is an excellent wooden bat league that has teams from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Steve played for the Rhode Island Reds, out of Warwick and Erik played for the Central Mass Collegians, out of Leominster. Both players had good seasons and Steve made the league's all-star team in two positions: pitcher and DH.

Scoreboards

In our most recent letters, we tried to solicit funds for an electronic scoreboard to be shared by baseball, softball, and both soccer teams. We did receive some donations from alumni, and we thank you very much. The vast majority of the funds were raised by the soccer people and they have taken advantage of using the scoreboard. We have access to it in the spring and tried it out for a game last year. We decided that it is not as effective and useful as we hoped, so have not continued to use it. I was thus able to use the alumni contributions for other needs (a couple new bats). There is, however, a movement by some parents to have a business donate funds for a large, permanent electronic scoreboard. So maybe that can become an addition to Morton Field in the future. We are also toying with the idea of installing a (non-permanent) fence at Morton. There are some decent fences on the market that can be installed and removed each season. A permanent fence would be

better, but as long as field hockey plays in the outfield, a permanent fence is impossible. The curse of Mim strikes again!

Speaking of raising funds, we continue to conduct our annual Reading Baseball Mini-School. This past March, we raised \$7000, all of which is used directly for our program. Many thanks to some alumni who helped out at the Mini-School as instructors: Jim Gray, Jon Cignetti, Gary d'Entremont, Tom Zaya, Dave Zaya, Dan Robinson, along with our current coaching staff of Coaches Bryson, Nelson, and Sigsbury. We are always looking for alumni to help at this event, so if you are interested, let me know. This year's Mini-School will be on the weekend of March 11 & 12. In addition, if anyone would like to work at the Reading Baseball School (for this you would get paid well), I am running programs on Sunday mornings from January to March and during the February School Vacation. By the way, any of your children are welcome to join any of our programs at 1/2 price.

RMHS Baseball Website

In the past, we have talked about creating a website for our alumni club. The website could give alumni access to the newsletter, schedules, upcoming events, season update, etc. I have always liked the idea, but felt that I would not have the time to keep the site current, especially during the spring. Nevertheless, I think we might give it a shot. Dick Gillis at RMHS is a webmaster who would like to do this for us. So stay tuned for a possible website as the RBAC goes into cyberspace. If anyone would like to help with the site, please let me know. It would be great to have someone who can help keep the site up to date.

Speaking of cyberspace, I am about to change my internet service and my new email address will be: petemosc@mediaone.net I continue to receive a lot of email, especially from our alumni in college, and I really enjoy that. So I hope to continue to hear from you via my new address.

The Reading Baseball Line of Apparel

Over the last few years, we have established quite a wardrobe of fine Reading Baseball t-shirts, golf shirts, sweatshirts, and wind jackets. Some alumni have told me that they would be interested in purchasing such clothing or even a hat (maybe I'll buy some fitted hats to sell). I am happy to make these available to alumni and would sell them at the same cost at which I buy them. Possibly this clothing could be displayed on the new website

RMHS Athletic Hall of Fame

Another group of athletes, coaches, and teams will be inducted into the RMHS Athletic Hall of Fame on November 20. This group include **Jim Murphy** ('93) who tri-captained our baseball team his senior year. Most people probably remember Jim for his incredible accomplishments in football and basketball. He was an RMHS Super Bowl quarterback who went on to set something like 28 records at Northeastern University and play professional football for the Patriots and in Europe. Jim also was an exceptional basketball player and is one of RMHS' all-time leading scorers. Yet, I will remember fondly his baseball achievements. Jim was an excellent pitcher who went 7-1 with a 1.33 ERA his senior year. He was named to the Middlesex League All-Star Team. He also played left field and shortstop and is one of only three players to hit a homerun over the center field fence at Washington Park. One of his best highlights was his pitching performance in our last regular season game on Memorial Day evening (a continuation of a protested game that we needed to win to get into the tournament that year). The game was replayed from the fourth inning, tied (3-3, I think). He was dominant, shutting down Burlington over the final four innings of that continued game to clinch our berth. In addition, Jim is a great guy; a natural leader with charisma, and truly one of the great all-around athletes in RMHS history. Congratulations to Murph from all of us at Reading Baseball.

Another inductee is **George Watkins** ('68). I remember watching George play football, basketball, and baseball (I was just a toddler then, of course) and he certainly was an exceptional athlete. He played on the '68 baseball team that went all the way to the state finals. George is quite a character and one of the best stories about him involves the Tech Tourney (which is what the MIAA basketball tournament was called back then). The game was at the Boston Garden and Reading and Stoneham were tied with just a few seconds left in the game. Reading had the ball and was holding for the last shot. The ball was knocked loose and George picked it up about 25' from the hoop. Just before the buzzer, he let fly with a long jump shot that swished through the net, giving Reading the victory. Reading's players and fans went crazy, but George didn't understand why. As he explained later, he thought Reading was already ahead by a point, and just threw the ball up for the heck of it. That's George Watkins.

Other inductees who played baseball were **George Fennelly** ('43). I have read that he, obviously, was an incredible athlete. And, one of his sons, George ('78) was a catcher for us. Another son, **Carl** ('72) was a hard-throwing pitcher and a teammate of mine in 1971.

The Hall of Fame will now induct members every two years, so the next induction will be in 2001. At that time, our 1996 team will be eligible and, if inducted, we could have a big alumni celebration at that time.

Six Seasons

In the last two major newsletters, we've printed sections called "Four Fantastic Years" and "Five Years" and, fortunately, since we had another good year we can now present "Six Sensational Seasons". This highlights the accomplishments of our teams during the last six years.

Schedule	W - L	Pct.	Achievement
Middlesex League	95 - 13	.880	ML Champs '94, '96, '97, '99
Non-League	9 - 2	.818	Wilmington Invitational

			Champs '94, '95, '98, '99
Regular Season	104-15	.874	Boston Globe Top 20 '94, '95, '96, '97, '98, '99
Tournament	17 - 5	.773	State Champs '96 Division II North Finals '94, '98 Div. II North Semifinals '95, '97, '99
Overall	121 - 20	.858	

And, amazingly, we have not lost two games in a row during those six years (of course, the track team hasn't lost *one in a row* in 28 years!)

Reading Baseball 2000 Preview

As we enter our second millennium of Reading Baseball, we leave behind us the 1990's which were very kind to us (see section entitled "Six Years"). So what's in store for the Rockets in year 2000? Well, we lose some great players to graduation, as described in detail earlier. We have to replace seven starters, not to mention four .400 hitters (the other 3 hit over .300). We also graduate 13 pitching wins. Maybe even more significant is that we lose terrific leadership from the '99 team. So we will have our work cut out for us.

We do return some key players including tri-captains Jesse Woods, Jamie Cerretani, and Connor Hardy. Jesse has been a great hitter for us for the last two years and has the inside track to be our catcher. We will rely on him for good defense and lots of clutch hitting. Cerretani will return as the league's best shortstop and will be counted upon to pitch regularly. Jamie is a terrific all-around player who hit .313 last year with 19 runs, 23 hits, 19 RBI, and 7 stolen bases. His play at shortstop was both reliable and spectacular: he made only 3 errors and made a bunch of big-league plays. Hardy was a versatile and excellent defensive player last year in left field, center field, and second base. We will again need his versatility as well as offense and leadership. Chris Condon played very well in a part time role (batted .474) and this year should emerge as an

excellent hitter and all-around player. Lefty Russell Hunt was 6-1 as our #2 pitcher last year and has the potential to be among the league's best hurlers. He has a good fastball and a nasty curve. We also need Russell to hit well so we can utilize his great speed on the bases. Tim Bryant was our only sophomore on the club last year, and he is a talented player who is ready to pitch, play 3rd base, and hit for us. As always, we have some eager players who were JV's last year who will compete for the remaining spots. I think we can have another solid year but that will depend upon developing strong pitching beyond Hunt, good defensive catching, and most of all, leadership, hard work, and attitude. Yeah, I know what you are thinking, "That's what Coach says every year."

We have a very short preseason this year as we can't begin practice until March 20 (the rule is we begin the 3rd Monday in March) and neither the MIAA nor league AD's made adjustments in game schedules to accommodate the late start. So we open up on April 11, just 3 weeks and one day after the first practice. That's one week less preseason practice than in a normal year. So you know what that means - long practices in the field house until we get done what needs to be done. I can't wait!

2000 Season Schedule

Since I am late in getting this letter out to you this year, I am able to include the league schedule, which has just been finalized. I hope you can come to see us play a few times. Please make a point of saying hello after the game. Don't worry, if we lose I will not make you run homeruns!

Tue	April 11	at Burlington
Thur	April 13	at Melrose
Tue	April 17	Lexington (10:00)
Thur	April 19	Belmont (10:00)
Mon	April 24	at Woburn
Wed	April 26	Wakefield
Thur	April 27	at Winchester
Mon	May 1	at Watertown
Wed	May 3	Stoneham
Fri	May 5	Burlington
Mon	May 8	Melrose
Wed	May 10	at Lexington

Fri	May 12	at Belmont
Mon	May 15	Woburn
Wed	May 17	at Wakefield
Fri	May 19	Winchester
Mon	May 22	Watertown
Wed	May 24	at Stoneham

notes: we have not yet scheduled our 2 non-league games; probably will be Sat & Mon of Memorial Day weekend (we have to make sure they don't conflict with the Alumni Game!)

We don't know yet if we are playing in Cooperstown. If so, the 4/17 game vs. Lexington will be at Doubleday.

Trivia/Stats

Here's a piece of Reading Baseball information that you may find interesting. There is a RBB alumnus named **Dave Mollica**, who was a teammate of John Doherty's on the 1969 team. Dave was a catcher and is a real good guy. Anyway, I imagine that he will be going to some World Series games this year, since his father-in-law is Yankee coach Don Zimmer. Maybe Dave can get Zim to come to one of our alumni events.

As I was watching the Braves on TV and their remarkable pitching staff, I was thinking about the exceptional staffs we've had. (I find myself thinking about this stuff a lot - while in the dentist's chair, lying awake in bed, eating dinner with boring guests, etc.). In particular, I was thinking about the best "one-two punches" we've had, that is, which two pitchers on a given team have combined for the most regular season wins. Since I like to go with 2-man rotations, we often have had two pitchers combine for a large number of wins. So here is the trivia challenge for you this year. This time the answer is at the end of this letter, so give it a try before you peek.

Can you name the two Reading Baseball pitchers who combined for the most wins in a single season?

Prizes will be awarded on the honor system. If you email me and promise that you knew the correct answer before you looked, then I will email a t-shirt to you.

Favorite Quotes

Ryan Carroll recently emailed this passage to me. You will recognize it as the end of a speech by Terrance Mann (played by James Earl Jones) to Ray Kinsella (Kevin Costner) from *Field of Dreams*. Ryan knows me well; it is one of my favorites.

The one constant through all the years, Ray, has been baseball. America has rolled by like an army of steamrollers. It's been erased like a blackboard, rebuilt, and erased again. But baseball has marked the time. This field, this game, is part of our past, Ray. It reminds us of all that once was good, and that could be again. Oh people will come, Ray. People will most definitely come.

My other favorite quotes from James Earl Jones:
"Welcome to Bell Atlantic" and
"Luke, I am your father."

Scholarship

As you may be aware, a group of parents have decided to create a scholarship to be awarded to an RMHS baseball player at graduation, beginning in 2001. I am both flattered and honored by this kind gesture. Since this is a rather unusual graduation award (considering that I am not dead yet), some alumni wanted to make sure that it was a legitimate venture. I can assure you that it is and I appreciate what Mrs. Woods and her committee are doing (although I would have been happy to put any donations toward paying Lea's tuition at UMass).

Knowing that I was feeling rather sheepish about mentioning the scholarship in this letter, Scott Farris and Jim Lucci were good enough to undertake that task. Here is what Jim submitted for our newsletter.

Moscariello Scholarship Award:

"As many of you are aware, a Peter Moscariello Scholarship Award is being established under the direction of Dr. Eileen Woods and Committee. On behalf of several Alumni from '84, '85, '86, '87

and other years, we believe this an excellent idea and support it fully. This is an ideal opportunity to show our support for Pete (and RMHS Baseball), and ultimately assist a future Reading Baseball Alumni. We encourage all Alumni, as well as others, to contribute to this Scholarship. For more information, contact Dr. Eileen Woods at 781-944-4432, or email @ jjwoods@massed.net."

*Contributions should be sent to:
Peter Moscariello Scholarship Account
Fleet Bank
c/o Vivain Craig
580 Main Street
Reading, MA 01867*

Trivia Answer

Okay, I know you have been on the edge of your seat for the answer, so below is listed the "one-two" punches that have combined for the most win in a season, listed from lower to higher. Records are for regular season only.

<u>W-L</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Pitchers</u>
12-6	'77	Andy Curto (6-2), Joe Prew (6-4)
12-4	'87	Steve Lane (7-2), Bob Lucci (5-2)
12-3	'99	Russell Hunt (6-1), Dennis Gramolini (6-2)
12-1	'81	Bob MacKay (7-1), Lennie DeAngelo (5-0)
12-0	'96	Steve Langone (7-0), Dave Pizzotti (5-0)
13-3	'86	John Macaluso (8-1), Steve Lane (5-2)
13-2	'95	Steve Langone (8-0), Jon Whalen (5-2)
14-3	'80	Andy Hodges (7-1), Penn Michelini (7-2)
14-2	'91	Pete McHugh (9-1), Tom Quinn (5-1)
15-1	'94	Steve Langone (8-0), Tom Fratto (7-1)
15-1	'97	Jamie Severance (8-0), Erik Olson (7-1)

A couple of notes on this. The '91 combo of McHugh and Quinn were the only lefty-lefty duo. Pete McHugh's nine individual wins that year is still a team record. Langone and Pizzotti in '96 were the only undefeated pair. Langone appeared three times on this list and had a 23-0 record in those three years.

The most interesting duo is from '77 because Curto's and Prew's combined 12 wins accounted for *all* of the team's wins that year, as we went 12-8 that season. I don't think any other pair has done that. Not that that is a good thing, though.

On a Personal Note

It thought I might let you know what's going on in my life other than Reading Baseball. Chairing the Math Department at RMHS is going well; it keeps me busy until baseball season. Actually, it's a job I do enjoy. My wife, May, is busy teaching figure skating, mostly at Burbank Arena. She likes her job and is very good at it. Sometimes she and I talk about coaching/teaching our respective sports because we do have some common experiences. My daughter, Lea, is nineteen and a sophomore at UMass Amherst. She is happy there and is doing well. She hasn't declared a major yet, but will do so this year, probably something business-related. My oldest son, Michael, is seventeen and is now a student at RMHS. He has been in a program for kids with special needs in Lexington for the last five years. So far, he's doing well and has a lot of support. Dave Blanchard, the teacher who was hired to work with Michael one-on-one is a terrific young guy who played baseball at Melrose High and was a roommate of **Josh Driscoll's** and Anthony Caporale's at Providence College. My youngest, Jonathan, is fourteen and also has significant special needs. He is in the same program that Michael was in at Lexington High School and is making good progress. I know some of you ask about my family all the time, and I appreciate your consideration.

These newsletters seem to get longer and longer. This is the longest paper that I've written since college (and this time I didn't even copy it out of an encyclopedial!). By now the Red Sox season is over; beaten by the Yankees. I had the opportunity to be in attendance at Game Four at Fenway, as a guest of Joe Picano and his girlfriend, Paula. Joe Hagan was with us, too (no, we were not the fans who threw stuff on the field). Nevertheless, the Sox had a great season and were fun to watch.

I look forward to hearing from you by phone, letter, email, or visit. And I hope you can make it to the Alumni Dinner (look for a postcard in the mail in December). Until then, here's a quote that I like from Jim Bouton, author and former Yankee pitcher:

"You spend a good piece of your life gripping a baseball and in the end it turns out that it was the other way around. all the time."

Take care of yourselves and, remember, when you're on third base, lead in foul territory and go back in fair.