

Reading Baseball Alumni Club Newsletter

Hello to All Reading Baseball Alumni

Greetings to all our alumni friends; I hope everyone is doing well. Here is the Fall/Winter 2003-2004 edition of our annual newsletter. This year, I got a later start than usual, not typing this initial paragraph until early November. As I sit here now, I hope to have this done by the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve. I appreciate all the great feedback I've received on last year's newsletter. As I look back at that one, I recall how special it was with tons of information about alumni happenings, events, Cooperstown, Halls of Fame, and much more. That's a tough act to follow, but I don't think I will try to match it. I know I need to reduce the length of the letter, but I will still do my best to give you something substantial and entertaining to read. We'll see how it goes.

I hope you and your families had a good 2003 and enjoyed fall in New England. Most normal people cherish the clear, crisp autumn days and the beautiful foliage and look forward to skiing and other winter activities that make New England so special. That's what normal people do. But Red Sox Nation people are different. Another calendar year winding down just give us an

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opportunity to practice our math skills (let's see: 2003 minus 1918 = how many years?). I hope that you are recovering from the exasperating end to the Red Sox' season. It's not that hard to get over it. Here's what you need to tell yourself: "I know that the events of the late innings of Game 7 of the ALCS were mildly disappointing, but overall it was an enjoyable season. Their record-setting offense was amazing and the 'team chemistry' and loose, fun-loving attitude was refreshing. It was a pleasure to follow a Red Sox team that seemed to enjoy playing the game and each other's company as much as this one did." See, we can fool ourselves into thinking everything was fine. Okay, maybe that only works for a few minutes and then our minds go back to the late innings of Game 7 of the ALCS. So let's talk about it so we can put it behind us and go on with our lives.

I was watching the game with Scott Farris and when the Sox led 4-1, I said, "I just hope this game does not come down to Grady having to make a tough decision about whether or not to leave Pedro in the game." Note: did you notice that Scott Farris was the first alumni name to be listed in this letter, and his name is *not* in bold type. Believe it or not, it is painstaking to go through these long letters and find each

name listed and make sure it is boldfaced the first time and in regular type on subsequent times. There is probably an easy way to do this, but for me, I just have to crank it out. So I decided that this year, I will save some time and not type names in bold. I hope you understand – your names are still boldfaced in my mind (hoping you'll buy that lame argument). Back to the Sox game: it's not that I was worried that Grady would make the wrong decision; it's that I know how difficult those decisions can be. It's easy to make a pitching change when the guy out there is getting hammered. And, sometimes, even if the pitcher is not getting hit too hard, but your team falls behind, it is easy to see it's time for a change. But what is more difficult, and I know I have been burned on this before, is when you have a good pitcher out there who has done well for most of the game and, although he is showing signs of tiring, he still has the lead. There is great temptation to let this guy just get the one more out he needs. This is especially true at the high school level where, unlike the pros, your relief pitchers are not really trained to be relievers. They are just starters who occasionally have to come in to relieve, often after playing 3rd base or right field during the game. So there is more fear of the unknown when you bring in such a pitcher. That certainly should be much less a concern at the MLB level where starters are starters and relievers have plenty of time to warm up and are used to their roles.

This is not to defend Grady Little; it's just a perspective from a high school coach. Of course, trying to hold on to a slim lead versus Belmont is not quite the same pressure as trying to get into the World Series! Ultimately, I think Pedro should have been yanked after Bernie Williams' single in the 8th made it 5-3. I think, at that point, Pedro had given up five hits, in the last 1 1/3 innings. Even though Pedro fanned Soriano to end the 7th, I think he was losing it. I can see him starting the 8th, but Timlin was ready and had been effective in the playoffs. But it's easy to sit in our recliner,

munching on Doritos and drinking Mountain Dew and yell at Grady Little, but it's a little tougher being out there.

You guys are too young to remember all of the Red Sox' previous near-misses, but you certainly have heard about these. I was a young teenager who enjoyed the Red Sox Impossible Dream in '67 and was not upset when the Sox lost game 7 to the Cardinals. That season was incredible in that the Sox had always been terrible and to even be in contention was amazing. The pennant race was so intense, with four teams in contention through the final week, that just winning the pennant was gratifying (like it was for "Pop" in *The Natural*). Then, I had just graduated from college in '75 when the Sox lost in game 7 to the Reds, but the euphoria of game 6 was reward enough that year. Now '78 was hard to take, but that was just a game to get into the playoffs. What was frustrating was that the Sox had a big lead over the Yankees all summer and blew it down the stretch. They actually had to get hot in the last two weeks to catch the Yankees and force the playoff game. But I think '86 was the worst, even worse than this year. People are upset about being five outs away from *getting into* the World Series. In '86 it was *one strike* away from *winning* the World Series. So, for all the young Sox fans, it's welcome to the world of Red Sox heartbreak. Get used to it; let's see now, what is 1918 subtracted from 2004, 2005, 2006, . . . ?

The memory of the painful ending to the Sox' 2003 season may have faded a little with the trades and acquisitions made in the off-season. You've got to like the addition of Curt Schilling and Keith Foulke. Pokey Reese could help, too. And, I don't know about you, but I got caught up in the excitement of possible trades for Alex Rodriguez and Magglio Ordonez in exchange for Manny and Nomar. I'd have taken A-Rod's offense over Manny's (by a close margin) and Ordonez' bat over Nomar's. And I think the Sox would have

improved themselves defensively at both shortstop and left field. When I wrote this paragraph initially, the probability of the trades looked pretty high, but now is “dead as a doornail” as one Sox executive said. But you never know. Maybe by the time this reaches you, A-Rod could be a Red Sox.

January 2003: Alumni Dinner

We had made a strong appeal to get good numbers at the 2003 Alumni Dinner, and you guys came up big. Because of your efforts, we had our best turnout *ever* at any alumni event - 40 guys! So thank you very much. It was great to see nearly the entire 2002 team there. You younger guys really came through, as the teams from the 90's and 2000's were heavily represented. I hope you had as good a time as I did. Us old timers from the 70's and 80's stuck around until after 11:00 (on a school night, even) telling stories and having a lot of laughs. Whether a former player is 19 or 44 years old, the memories and stories seem to have common themes. You all are a part of the fraternity we call Reading Baseball.

Among the most entertaining stories told that night were ones by Steve Lane, who was coaching a high school basketball team in his hometown of Wilton, NH. The school, called High Mowing School, is a “Waldorf School” which, apparently is for kids with interest and ability in the arts, music, and other creative endeavors. Certainly basketball is not a top priority for them, so Steve had his work cut out for him in building a ball club. Steve told stories about kids missing basketball practice because they had to attend “circus practice” or had an impromptu jam session with their guitars in the parking lot. The day before one particular game, knowing that he would be short on players, Coach Lane told his young assistant coach to “get a haircut and shave close, you’re suiting up tomorrow”. He did, and since he was the only decent player on his team, scored about 30 points! His team, however, still lost by 20. Apparently, the

Bearded Lady and The Incredible Rubber Man* had off-nights shooting the ball.

** these are meant to be harmless references to fictitious “circus people” and are not meant to be derogatory comments. We mean no offense to actual ladies with beards or young men made of latex.*

Let's see if we can list all those who attended: Mike Moscarello '77, Joe Picano '81, Joe Hagan '82, Jim Lucci '85, Scott Farris '85, Dave Johnson '87, Scott Thomas '87, Steve Lane '87, Dave Zaya '94, Mike Flint '94, Josh Martin '95, Josh Driscoll '95, John Feudo '95, Scott Reinold '96, Steve Langone '96, Erik Olson '97, Ryan Fitzgerald '98, Ryan Carroll '98, Jamie Gath '99, Jason Zerfas '99, Dennis Gramolini '99, Dave Polcari '99, Jesse Woods '00, Connor Hardy '00, Tim Bryant '01, Greg Barchard '01, Paul Melanson '01, Rory Fitzgerald '01, and from 2002: Kevin Donahue, Mark DeMasse, Rob DeMoura, Jon Rosenthal, Matt Abrams, Nick Radocckia, Donnie Garrity, Mike Ottariano, and Mike Hurley. Add coaches Dave Blanchard, Ace Bryson, and myself and that was quite a group.

Alumni Dinner: January 2004

I have a feeling that by the time this letter gets finished and mailed out to you, the Alumni Dinner will have already happened. That's why I previously sent out postcards announcing the dinner: to make sure you were all notified. So I will predict that the dinner *was* another successful event. I am sure we hall had fun ***On the Border on January 4 at 6:00 pm***. Thanks for passing the word along to your teammates and helping us ring in the New Year in the traditional American way: with fajitas and burritos.

Alumni Weekend in Cooperstown

We tried to have two Alumni Games during the summer: our usual one at Morton Field and then the special event in Cooperstown.

Unfortunately, the game scheduled for June 22 was rained out. That was too bad because the event was well-advertised and I think a good number of guys were planning to attend. We tried to hold a make-up game the following Sunday, but it just didn't work out. I feel especially bad for the class of 2002 whose players were looking forward to their first alumni event. Since six guys did show up on the make-up date, we will give each of them **Reading Baseball Alumni Club Lifetime Member** status. So congratulations to our new Lifetime Members: Mark DeMasse, Kevin Donahue, Jim Murphy ('93), Matt Peabody ('93), Jason Zerfas, and Scott Farris.

Of course, we did have our Cooperstown game and the following is an account of that fantastic weekend in the historic baseball town.

For several years we've had a dream of playing our Alumni Game in Cooperstown and this year the dream came true. Twenty-three alumni and coaches traveled to Cooperstown to play on Doubleday Field on August 23 and the event was everything we hoped it would be.

Players got to Cooperstown in various ways, with various companions: some guys arrived in Cooperstown on Friday, some came Saturday morning, some brought their wives, some brought their kids, some brought their parents, some stayed in downtown Cooperstown, some stayed in Oneonta, some stayed in Utica, but all made it to Doubleday by game time. Both teams were in full uniform: one wearing black Reading Baseball t-shirts, with varsity hats and pants, and black sox; while the other was red similarly outfitted, but in red. So both clubs were sharp looking, like all Reading squads. The teams were split as equally as possible, by age. That is, half the guys who played in the 70's played on the Black team, the other half played on the Red. We did the same for the guys who played in the 80's, 90's and 00's, so we had

a nice distribution of younger and older players on each club.

The contest was to be played like a "real" game, with umpires, called balls and strikes, change of sides after three outs, electronic scoreboard, etc. Both teams jogged out to the outfield for brief stretching and then some throwing. Intensive stretching consisted of reaching down to pull up your socks and "long toss" was considered any throw over 40 feet. The Black team took their pre-game infield/outfield practice first with Coach Mosc hitting balls to each position and players showing off their sure hands and strong arms. It was exciting to see some of the throws to first base actually reach their destination. Coach Bryson then did the same for the Red squad, allowing the Red team to show off their flashy style. After infield practice, some of the older guys then retired to the shady dugout for a brief nap.

After the umpires and coaches went over the ground rules, the Black team took the field as the crowd cheered (if you consider comments like "Look at that guy, he can hardly fit into his pants!" as cheers.) Actually, there really was a nice ovation, as not only were there several of the players' wives, parents, and children in the stands, but many other Reading folks were there, as well. Reading Babe Ruth was to play at Doubleday on the next day, so lots of those players and their parents were on hand to see how former Reading High players, young and old, handled themselves on the field.

Class of '81 righthanded pitcher, Jon Drew, was on the mound and he was throwing the ball very well. It's not surprising, as Jon, at age 40, is still an effective pitcher in the Intercity League. "Drewsa" as he was called 22 years ago, gave up a lead-off double to Jim Lucci, but then smoked his fastball past a couple unsuspecting Red hitters to close out the inning. Mark DeMasse was his catcher behind the plate and looked as

comfortable and natural as a *lefty* catcher can be.

The Red team took a 3-0 lead in the second inning, but the Black team came back with a big 8-run outburst. Key hits were a ground rule double to right center by Scott Farris and a 2-run homer into the right field bleachers by DeMasse.

The Red squad used four pitchers; Bob Macaluso ('82), John Barrett ('84), Joe Prew ('77), and Scott Reinold ('96). Three of those guys were Reading's #1 pitcher in their senior years, so it was great to see them back on the mound. Drew, John Macaluso ('86), Scott Farris, Kevin Donahue, and DeMasse all pitched for the Black. Steve Palumbo ('96) handled most of the catching duties (since he is young and the only guy that could squat for any length of time), but Bob Maco put on the gear for a couple innings, as well. Jon Drew, after his pitching stint, looked pretty good as a catcher and even Coach Mosc got behind the plate for a few innings of action

The Black team prevailed by a 15-7 score in the 9-inning contest, banging out 19 hits to Red's 17. The game was remarkably very well played with some excellent defense from both sides. John Feudo ('95) looked like Clete Boyer in his prime, as he handled some hard smashes at the hot corner. Mark DeMasse made a great play at third base and a running catch in centerfield to go along with his effective pitching, homerun, and a couple other hits (sounds like an MVP performance, doesn't it?). Mike Spurr ('82) showed off his old smooth form at second base, but paid the price, pulling a hamstring. He was surprisingly the only injury on the day. But the injury did not stop Mike as, after conferring with our trainer, Ben Gay, he went right back out there.

MVPs for each team were named after the game. Scott Farris won the MVP Award for the winning team, as he was able to benefit from the rule stating, "No player who got to play on Doubleday Field when he was in

high school can win the MVP Award", which disqualified DeMasse and the other young studs. Okay, maybe Scott's 4 for 4 day with 3 RBI had something to do with it. Jim Lucci, on the strength of his double and controversial "home run" was MVP for the Red. More on this homerun later.

After the game we enjoyed lingering on the field and taking lots of photos. Many of them are posted on our website, readingbaseballschoo.com. The game was also videotaped, and a nice feature is that we can fast forward the tape so it looks like we are all playing at normal speed!

Seriously, though, the game looked, and was played like, a real ballgame. Guys were fit, trim, appeared to be in great shape, and looked good in the uniforms. I heard that some of the people who were in the stands were so impressed that they thought ours was a college game (true comment). I can see them thinking that, as the play was so good. But did they think that in Massachusetts some guys go to college until they are 45 years old?

Here is the complete list of players: for the "Black" team: Shawn Kennedy '77, Mike Moscariello '77, Jon Drew '81, Mike Spurr '82, Scott Farris '85, John Macaluso '86, John Feudo '95, Anthony Caporale '95, Jay Connelly '96, Kevin Donahue '02, Mark DeMasse '02, and Pete Moscariello '71. For the "Red" team: Joe Prew '77, Peter Collins '79, Bob Macaluso '82, John Barrett '84, Jim Lucci '85, Josh Martin '95, Josh Driscoll '95, Steve Palumbo '96, Scott Reinold '96, Jason Zerfas '99, John (special guest as Pete Collins' brother-in-law), and Coach Ace Bryson.

Many thanks to the wives, children, parents, and friends who made the trip. Their presence made the event even more special.

A highlight later that evening was having both teams, plus families, have dinner at the Hoffman Lane Bistro, just across from the Hall of Fame. It was a wonderful reunion as

players exchanged stories about their playing days.

What an event it was – to go to Cooperstown on a beautiful summer weekend, see the Hall of Fame, visit the baseball shops, go to the batting cages, ride the go-karts, and be with family and former teammates made the weekend just about perfect. Here are my personal comments on the weekend:

From a coach's perspective, this was one of the great days ever for Reading Baseball. To see over 20 of my former players interacting, joking around, and playing ball together was a thrill. Conversations like "I played in 1977" with a reply of "Well I was born in 1978" were priceless. It was special for me to see Mike, Joe, and Shawn from my first team in 1977 all the way to Kevin and Demass from 2002. The ages of the players may have been as much as 26 years apart, but the experiences and stories seemed to be very much the same. I think we have something pretty unique with this Reading Baseball Family and I am proud that so many guys, after many years, still consider Reading Baseball special to them.

I appreciate each one of the guys who came out to Cooperstown and I have warm memories of each team and each player from their high school days. Whether a player was an all-star, a starter, a back-up player, or scorekeeper never mattered to me. Each guy was a player and person that Coach Bryson and I chose and wanted to be around, so everyone was equal and important in our eyes. And now as I see my former players as adults, doing so well with careers and families, I feel even more fortunate to continue to know, and maintain friendships with, each player.

So thanks for making this a special, memorable event for Reading Baseball and your old coach. I've told people that, next to the day when we won our state championship in '96, I consider this the best day ever for Reading Baseball. Being with

all you guys on and off the ball field in Cooperstown was a thrill and makes me feel that everything we've done in the last 26 years has been meaningful to you and worthwhile.

The feedback out there is that we should do this again next year. By the time you read this, I will already have sent in our application to play next summer. We get to list several dates and hope that one of them is available. I have actually hired a courier in the Albany area to deliver our application to the Village of Cooperstown Office at 8:00 am on January 5th – that is the earliest time that the Village will accept applications. So I am hoping that we will be granted a date again. The dates I have requested are all in August (the 15th, 14th, 22nd, 21st, 8th, 7th in that order of preference). We can probably expect to have even more guys wanting to go next year, so I requested two slots on the same day, which would allow us to play two games back-to-back. Once the date is decided (I usually hear from the Village in February) I will let you know.

Finally, we mentioned a controversial homerun by Jim Lucci. Here is the real story: Jim blasted a pitch over the wood fence in left field and the ball hit the high chain link fence about the wood. I was catching at the time and asked the ump if that was a homerun. He said, "No, that ball is in play; the ground rules state that the ball has to clear the chain link fence." So I said, why don't you give him a homerun; what's he going to do – go home to his wife and tell her he hit a *double*?" So the ump called it a 4-bagger and Jim circled the bases with that wide Lucci grin on his face. That is the true story, but a couple guys (Jim Lucci and his close friend and arch nemesis, Scott Farris) have different perspectives on the homer. The following is an email that Looch, who must have a lot of free time on his hands, sent to Scott.

Mr. Farris, my name is Carl Gartner from the Associated Press. I've been working as

a freelance journalist and periodically cover the "feel-good" type sports stories. I came across some material I think would make for a great article while searching the AP wire this past weekend. Apparently you and several of your high school alumni partook in a game at Doubleday Field in Cooperstown a few weeks ago. That's great in itself, but what I'm really interested in is getting some feedback on a particular individual who apparently has transformed himself from a single/double hitting second baseman in high school - to some sort of modern day home-run hitting machine. The material on the wire was short on details but apparently this gentleman blasted a line drive home run over the fence and into the screen in left field. I've spoken to others who have witnessed it as well, and most agree the ball was no more than 10 feet off the ground and still rising when it went over the left fielders' head (to be honest, I did get conflicting stories here because many of the spectators had a hard time judging the height of the ball due to the squatty-nature of the left fielder at the time of the blast). Anyway, back to the main reason for this email. Whoever this phenom is, I'd love to get a hold of him. What an inspiration it would be for many of the former ballplayers who are scared to get back in the batters box because they've been away from the game so long. Word has it this gentleman (or should I say homer-man) hasn't picked up a bat in ages and has been tending to three kids, a wife, and an au pair from out of the country; he drove 6 hours, following 2 hours sleep, stepped into the batters box, faced and Division 1 hard-throwing lefthander - and WHAM - balls are flying all over the park - outtahere!

Please help me get in touch with this man - this is the type of story that really could open up some serious career opportunities for me. Who knows, maybe even a scout will read it and want to take a look at this fellow. Sounds like he still got the knack for the long ball.

Again, any help would be greatly appreciated.

Oh yeah, congrats to you on your cue-shot to third and Texas-leaguer to right. As they say - "they're line drives in the book"

*Sincerely -
Carl Gartner
Free-Lance Journalist*

Of course, this prompted a reply from Scott and the two of them have been emailing back and forth on this issue for three months. And you thought the Grady Little-Pedro decision was the biggest baseball controversy this fall!

Golf Tournament

It has been a couple years since we have had an Alumni Golf Tournament. That's too bad, as the previous ones were well-attended and highly successful. But is also understandable why we have had the respite: it is a lot of work to organize the event and such tasks should not be the responsibility of primarily one person each time. So if there is anyone out there that would like to resurrect our tournament, let me know. Maybe there will be three or four guys who can get together and make this happen.

Address Book

Good news. This year I did not, through technological ineptitude, lose your email addresses! But I am always trying to add to my address book. I send out some group emails once in a while to keep alumni posted about events and news. If you do not receive those emails, then I don't have your address. Please send it to me at petemosc@comcast.net so I can include you in all correspondences.

Alumni Births, Weddings , and Engagements

Holy Schnikies, we have a lot of alumni news. It seems like you guys continue to get married, have babies, and do other real-world stuff worth reporting. Just goes to show that, once you stop playing baseball, you have time to meet girls. So here is our big alumni news report.

Tiffany and Steve Lane ('87) are pleased to announce the arrival of their first daughter, Brooke Anne. She was born at 5:30 am on November 7. Brooke weighed 7 lbs., 9 oz. and joins brothers Casey and Tyler in the Lane household. Nicole and Gary d'Entremont ('87) just had their second child, Eva Maureen. Eva was born on October 8 at 11:03 am, weighed in at 8 lbs, 2 oz., and was 20.5 inches long. Nicole, Gary, and their 3-year old son, Luke, are back, for good, from Saudi Arabia and have recently bought a house in Wakefield. I think we previously announced that Mary and Jim Lucci ('85) are the proud parents of twins, Anthony and Malaina. The update is that the twins, their big sister, Amanda, Mary, and Looch are all doing well. And we just heard that Lisa and Mike Crispo ('84) have a baby girl, Erin, who is probably almost a year old now. Congratulations to the Crisos, who live in Chicago, on their first child. Diane and Paul Sumner ('91), a few months ago, had their second child, Thomas Edward. Thomas was born in May, weighed in at 6 lbs., 11 oz. and was 21 inches long. He throws and bats right handed. Diane and Dave Johnson ('87) announce the arrival of their first baby, Brady, who was born on June 17. Brady weighed 8 lbs, 6 oz. and was 22.5" long. Brady Johnson – sounds like a ballplayer. Paula and Joe Picano ('81) also had their first child, Anthony Joseph, born on May 23 at 5:45 am. Baby Anthony came in at 20.5" long, weighing 7 lbs., 13 oz. I know you like all the specific weight and length details; you probably thought the only stats I ever reported were about baseball.

Congratulations to all our alumni new parents; we hear that all babies and moms are doing well and we wish our alumni dads good fortune with their young families

Next, we have some alumni who recently got married. Congratulations to all our alumni grooms and their beautiful brides.

Congratulations to Bob Lucci ('87) and his bride, Lisa, who were married on July 5, in Connecticut. They will live in Philadelphia.

The Boys of '93 had busy summers/falls as three of them got married. Congratulations to Jon Cignetti ('93), and his new wife, Erin, who were married on June 7 on Cape Cod. Also, this summer, Duane Sigsbury ('93) married Courtney Nelson, of Woburn. And, on October 12, Matt Peabody ('93) married Sue Bonasia. His best man was Jim Murphy ('93) and among those in attendance were '93 teammates Chris Cosenza (who flew in from Las Vegas), Greg Smith (in from Chicago), Duane Sigsbury, and Jon Cignetti.

Mike "Temple" Thompson, who works for ASU International as an underwriter for sports disability insurance, was married on October 18 to Shelby Reed, of Alabama. Mike and Shelby were married in Savannah, Georgia and now live in Charlestown, MA. And congratulations to Coach Bryson who had two wonderful events this fall: his younger son, Jeff, was married to Jennifer on October 12 and his older son, Mark, and his wife, Margaret, recently had their first child, Nicholas.

And there are more weddings to come! Upcoming weddings include four from the class of '97: Jim Gray will marry Bridget, from Wilmington; Jamie Severance will marry RMHS sweetheart, Annie Cuffe, in September; Erik Olson is engaged to Rachel, whom he met at Boston College ; and Billy Olsen is engaged to Melissa.

And two more: Brian Gath ('93) will marry RMHS classmate Shannon Rea on February 15, and Dave Zaya ('94) will marry devout

Yankee fan Alison Bozzi in August. Best of luck to all the engaged couples on their upcoming weddings. More details about their wedding dates will be provided in the future.

And I think I am late on reporting the following engagement, so I apologize. Nevertheless, congratulations to Rich Foohey, captain in '89, who is engaged to Tracy Shattuck.

The late date of publication of this newsletter allowed me to add some late-breaking good news. John Feudo ('95) became engaged, on December 22, to Michelle Andrews. Best of luck to John and Michelle, who are planning a December 2004 wedding. And big congratulations to my brother, Mike Moscariello ('77), and his wife Cindy. They are expecting their first child to be born in August.

More Alumni News

We have more alumni news beyond births and weddings. And there is no better place to start than with the annual Jim Murphy Update. Murph just completed his first year as Head Coach of Merrimack Colleges' football team. Jim was named to that position in the late spring and did not have much time to put together a staff and new system. He selected good friend and former teammate, Billy Tucker (Bill – notice you are the only non-baseball player to get your name in the letter) as Director of Football Operations. Murph, Billy, and their staff did a tremendous job and had an excellent first season. After losing their first two ballgames, they won six in a row and ultimately finished at 6-3. Congratulations to Murph; the players at Merrimack are lucky to play under Billy and you.

An alumni coach enjoying great success in **baseball** is Bob Macaluso ('82). As you know, Bob is the Head Coach at Muhlenberg College, in Pennsylvania. He led his team to their best season ever, going 21-14-1 and making the conference

tournament. And, right on the heels of his college season, Bob went to Cape Cod for his first season as Head Coach of the Brewster Whitecaps. Bob's club put on a late charge to finish in first place in their division before losing in the playoffs to the ultimate championship team. Maco was named as the Cape Cod Baseball League's Coach of the Year for 2003. What an honor! There are just a handful of guys in the country who get to coach in that league, which is comprised of the nation's top college players, and Bobby Mac is at the top of that elite group. The following is most of an article that appeared in the 2003 Cape Cod Baseball League Media Guide:

After leading the Brewster Whitecaps to the pinnacle of the final East Division standings as co-champions, Bob Macaluso won the 2003 Mike Curran Award as the Cape Cod Baseball League's Manager of the Year in his first year at the helm.

The former Whitecaps assistant coach led his team to a 24-17-3 record and a berth in the CCBL Playoffs against eventual champions Orleans. Before entering the 2003 season, Bob stated, "I know what it takes to win on the Cape and I'm more than ready to step into the head job with the Whitecaps." And that he did as Bob (or "Mac" as his players call him) took the Whitecaps into the playoffs for the first time since 2000, when they won the league championship.

His players worked hard for him, and respected his coaching technique. Brewster's ace pitcher Aaron Rawl said, "Coach Mac gave everyone a chance and was always positive. He made us want to win."

Coach Macaluso was not only an outstanding coach, but also took immaculate care of his field. He told College Sports Television during an interview that "taking care of the field in the morning was one of his favorite parts of the job."

Brewster will look to Bob Macaluso for continuing success in his team and his excellent field maintenance for years to come.

Another alumnus who has joined the college coaching ranks is Jon Whalen ('95) who is the Pitching Coach at Division III powerhouse, Pomona College, in California. His club went 29-9 and won their conference title.

Congratulations to all of our alumni who just graduated from college. I know I can't keep track of all of them, but I do know Jamie Gath ('99) graduated from Bentley College, where he had an outstanding baseball career. Jamie Lynch ('99) graduated from Wentworth Institute of Technology, all the while working nearly full-time for Lynch Construction Company. And Kevin Phinney ('99) graduated, this past spring, from *the finest academic institution of higher learning* in the country, the University of New Hampshire (I threw that in there for Jim Lucci, Kevin Mello, Franny McHugh, and Pete McHugh and myself – all fellow UNH Wildcats). Seriously, Kevin had a remarkable academic career as an Environmental Engineering major, which included winning an international competition on creating and marketing an original environmental design. Erik Kaloyanides ('98) graduated from Syracuse University after an outstanding career as a Division IA football player. Erik has joined the RMHS football coaching staff where players will benefit from his expertise and character.

In golf news, Steve Lane again won his club's championship this summer, shooting a 67 in one of the rounds. I believe he won another tournament, a member-guest with his dad. Last official report we got is that Steve is a *scratch* golfer, so scores under par are not unusual for him. I remember my golfing highlight; it was the only birdie I ever made. My tee shot ricocheted off a blade of the windmill at Hago's to within two inches of the cup, for a tap-in birdie.

College Baseball

We had a great number of alumni in college ball this spring, as **13** former Reading Baseball players are continuing their careers in the collegiate ranks at this time.

Dennis Gramolini '99 played for Division I George Washington University as one of the team's regular pitchers. Dennis was 2-1 in 16 appearances. The team had a great season with a 37-18 record. We are proud to report that Dennis was chosen as captain of GW's team for 2004. Quite an accomplishment to be captain of a strong Division I team. Dennis hopes to be drafted or have the opportunity to sign after his senior year but, if not, he has already been offered a coaching position in the New England Collegiate Baseball League. Jamie Gath '99 completed his outstanding career at Bentley College where he had a career .298 batting average with 13 homeruns and 45 stolen bases (in 48 attempts). Tim Bryant '01 had an excellent sophomore at Bentley where he was second on the team with a .294 batting average (wood bats), 1 homer and 13 RBI. Tim also won a game on the mound for the Falcons. Kevin Foley '02, did a great job at St. Michael's College, cracking the starting lineup as a freshman. Through the team's first 15 games, Kevin batted .259. and was 1-0 as a relief pitcher, with a 2.08 ERA. Jon Rosenthal '02 was a freshman catcher at Bowdoin College where he batted .333 in 6 games, for his 15-12 club. Kevin Donahue '02, another freshman, did well at Endicott College. Kevin helped his team win their conference championship by smacking game winning hits in two consecutive games. Wheaton College, with two Reading alumni on the team had another fabulous season, winning its conference title and ending up ranked #23 in the nation. Jesse Woods '00, a junior, has worked hard to get his shot and he did well as a DH, smacking four doubles

and driving home 10 runners. Jesse was recently elected, by his teammates, as captain for the '04 season. That's a great tribute to his attitude and dedication to his team. Freshman Mark DeMasse '02 had an outstanding season as Wheaton's closer. Mark was 1-0 with 5 saves and a 3.15 ERA in 14 appearances. Dave Kaloyanides '01, a freshman at Sacred Heart University, was the starting center fielder for the Pioneers. I'm sorry I cannot report stats, because none were available on the team website, but I know Dave did very well. Dave Bunten '00 continued his career and pitched for Anna Maria College and Mike Ottariano '02 pitched (3-1 record) and played the outfield for Phillips Exeter Academy, helping his team win their conference championship. Mike Hegarty '02 was a starting pitcher and infielder for Northern Essex Community College's ball club. Last, but not least, Rob DeMoura '02 was the student manager for UMass Lowell's nationally ranked team who went 30-10 and won their conference championship. Rob enjoyed playing his home games at Lalacheur Park.

It looks like we will have even more alumni playing college in 2004 as only Jamie Gath, from the above list, has graduated, and we are adding several more players. From RMHS class of '03, Brian DeMasse (Merrimack College), Steve Gath (Bentley College), Jason Howse (Colby Sawyer College), Dan Marshall (Endicott College), and Chris Dolan (Cushing Academy) are all expected to play next spring. Would give us 17 guys playing, an all-time high!

Alumni Playing Summer Ball

Just as we have many alumni playing college ball, we have even more playing in various summer leagues. Scott Reinold '96 heads up a team in Woburn that includes '96 teammates Jeremy Purington, Jay Connelly, and Steve Palumbo as well as '93 grads Matt Peabody, and Jim Murphy. I understand they had a very good season, which is not

surprising considering they had all those former Reading players. Scott Reinold also finds time to play for the Boston Royals of the Boston Baseball League. That club made it all the way to the playoff finals and was honored at a banquet at Fenway Park's 406 Club. Jamie Gath '99, Steve Gath '03, and Jon Drew '81 all played for the Anthony's in the Intercity League. Imagine having Reading Baseball Alumni on the same team who graduated 22 years apart! From what I hear, Jon Drew still has it on the mound: around midseason he fired an impressive complete-game shutout. Also, in at least one game, the brothers Gath made up the double play combination, with Steve at 2nd and big brother Jamie as short. Tim Bryant '01 and Mark DeMasse '01 reunited this summer as teammates for the Gately Rams, the Melrose entry in the Intercity League. They were instrumental in leading Gately to the league championship. Tim had a fabulous season on the mound with a record, I believe, of 9-1-1 and an ERA *under* 1.00. Two more Intercity League players were Kevin Foley '02, who played for the Wakefield Merchants and Dennis Gramolini '99, who pitched for Andre. Earlier in the summer, Dennis pitched in a league in Virginia, going 4-0 with a 1.80 ERA in relief.

Jamie Lynch '99 had another excellent season, pitching very well for Lynch Construction of the Wakefield Twilight League. Jamie was the key pitcher on that squad that won their league championship. Jon Rosenthal '02 played for T's Mariners of Brighton in the Yawkey League. Jesse Woods '00, and Dave Kaloyanides '01 played for East Boston Blue Sox in the Yawkey League and helped their team finish first in their division and make it to the playoff finals. Jesse batted over .300 and Kal batted over .500 in his 13 games. Last, but not least, Kevin Donahue '02 played in the North Shore League.

It is great to see so many of our players continuing to play baseball and I am sure

there are even more guys playing than those listed here. I apologize if I did mention you.

The Summer Rockets, coached by Jason Zervas '99, had a good season, winning the South Division once again before bowing out in the playoffs. Eric Sample, John Dudley, and Tim Melanson represented the team at the Northeast League All-Star Game on July 12.

Reading Legion Post 62 eight players from Reading's 2003 varsity team graduates Chris Dolan, Jason Howse, Brian DeMasse, and Dan Marshall. Also, 2004 captains Dennis DiCicco, Mark Andrick, and Bryan DelloRusso were on the club. DiCicco and Howse both made the Legion All-Star Team this summer.

Two Reading players were selected to play in the Bay State Games at Harvard University in July. Mark Andrick made the team as an infielder/pitcher and Bryan DelloRusso as an outfielder. DelloRusso had a big game in the tournament, with a 2-run homer and 3 RBI in a 4-3 win for the Northeast team.

And I know that you all follow Steve Langone's professional career. He did very well at AA Jacksonville this spring, with a 3-0 with a 2.98 ERA. Steve was recognized for his excellent performance by being selected to the Double A All-Star Team. He was not able to play in the All-Star Game, but for good reason. He was promoted to the AAA Las Vegas 51's; just one notch below the big leagues. Steve had several outings at AAA before an injury, which has bothered him for some time, caused him to shut down. Steve had "Tommy John surgery" in September. You know that is the surgery in which they take a tendon from a pitcher's wrist and use it to replace the torn ligament on the elbow. Steve reports that the surgery went well and he is doing his rehabilitation in New York City. We wish Steve the best of luck on his recovery, return to pro ball, and quest to make it to the Major Leagues.

The Fence

In last year's newsletter, we talked about our battle to get a fence at Morton Field. Well, we did get a non-permanent fence installed, and it worked out quite well. This was a fence comprised of red vinyl mesh that attaches to poles that insert in the ground. The fence looked pretty good; it dressed up the field nicely, giving Morton more the look of a ballpark, rather than a playground (we know that some people consider Morton to be a field hockey field with a baseball diamond attached, but we won't go into that now). The left field section of the fence was set about 12' closer than the existing chain link fence, making it about 330' down the line. The fence then stretched to 357' in left center, but just 347' in center field; the trees and overhanging limbs dictated that shorter distance. Right center was over 350' feet and the right field line was 335'. We predicted that the fence would take away more home runs than it would give, and I think that came out true. We hit just two balls over the fence (Mark Andrick and Steve Gath), but some of the doubles that bounced off the fence might have been homers otherwise, rolling into the wooded area or Mimville. But that's okay; we no longer had to watch outfielder run into the woods and throw back the ball, only to have it hit a branch. And, of course, knowing that they won't have to retrieve a ball that rolled into the softball area allowed our outfielders to sleep better at night.

The fence became a reality only because Jamie Lynch '99 and Peter Seibold volunteered their time to install it. These guys spent their entire Sunday creating the holes for the ground anchors, installing the poles, and attaching the fence to the poles. Many thanks to Peter and our alumnus, Jamie, who from the time he played for us at RMHS to the present, is always eager to help any way he can.

Field Renovation

Since we are on the topic of field renovation, let's talk about the future of Morton Field in regards to the major renovation of the high school and surrounding fields. The fifty-five million dollar project is intended, primarily, to renovate some of the school, tear down other parts, and build a new wing. "A" Building will be gone, "B" and "C" will be renovated, and new construction will create classrooms extending from C building toward the Field House. Overall, the plans look pretty impressive and we will finally get a school that is modern, well heated and ventilated, and able to accommodate technology. There will be some field improvements, as well. My understanding is that the football field will and outdoor track will be enhanced. The natural grass surface will be replaced with the new synthetic turf (I don't know the actual name of the product) that has become popular. The artificial blades of grass are soft and flexible and the surface below is made of crushed rubber particles (I think either from old tires or sneakers). Belmont High School has this surface on their football field and Lexington has put it on some of their fields, as well. The word is that it is fantastic – a great playing surface with virtually no maintenance. The original plan was to put the same surface on the practice football field, but it was cut out of the budget. It is still a possibility as an "add-on" if other areas of the project come in under budget. It would be nice if that second field could be done; that way one of those fields will be available for soccer and, hopefully, for field hockey as well. So what about the baseball field? The original plans called for major renovation of the baseball and softball fields at Birch Meadow, but such plans have been removed, for budgetary reasons. I am not happy about this. I do not think it is unreasonable to ask for some improvements on Morton Field. Installation of a permanent fencing around the entire field, dugouts, and a scoreboard would all be relatively inexpensive additions

that would dress up our field. The field also needs replacement of the current clay mixture with a professional product that is more firm and drains better. To bring this one step further, if two other fields are getting artificial turf, then why not the baseball field? Morton Field gets more use (between high school teams, Babe Ruth teams, Legion, and Summer Rockets) for a longer season than other fields. A maintenance-free surface would be logical. Catholic Memorial High School has the same material on their field and Scott Farris and I checked it out one day this fall. We went there on Veterans Day and since we weren't exactly invited to see the field, we hopped a fence and got on the playing surface. They have done their entire field with the material: infield, outfield, warning track, foul territory, etc. The only clay areas are sliding pits at each base, the mound, and home plate. We took some ground balls and fly balls and we thought it was awesome. The notion of playing on a smooth, even surface is nice and the thought of no lining, mowing, draining puddles, re-seeding, fertilizing is very exciting. North Andover HS is putting that surface on their infield (outfield will remain natural grass) and the cost is not as astronomical as I would have expected (\$188,000). It may be a foolish wish on my part to think we would ever get this done at Morton, but I think we should at least push for some improvements. I would rate our field about 7th or 8th best in the Middlesex League. Belmont has a beautiful new field; Wakefield just renovated theirs; Stoneham has done some nice improvements; Woburn's Ferullo Field is excellent; Lexington's field is nice, with new lights; and Melrose's Morelli Field is better than ours. Woburn, Lexington, and Melrose all have lights, Stoneham and Melrose (and Watertown) have dugouts, and all of those schools, except Lexington, has permanent fencing. Winchester's field isn't bad; I would rate it about even with ours; Watertown has the potential for a good field, but it just isn't kept well; and Burlington's Symonds Park is basically a ski slope with a

ballfield built where the lodge should be. I humbly think that, with the way our players and program has represented our community and school over the years, we deserve something better than what we currently have. So maybe I will recruit your help in a quest to see if we can get, at least, an outfield fence, above ground dugouts, and a scoreboard at Morton Field.

Update of Bat Controversy

The bat controversy has made our newsletter for the 2nd straight year; that's how long this issue has been debated in Massachusetts. In last year's letter, I reported that the MIAA Baseball Committee had voted, in October 2002, to ban metal bats from the 2003 tournament. That rule stuck and, as you probably know, all teams used wood in the tournament games. How did that work out, you ask? Well, in our one wood game, we lost (5-4) to Malden Catholic. However, I don't think wood bats affected the outcome. They beat us fair and square and, in fact, they went on to win the Division I state title. The wood bats did, however, affect strategy and how the game was played. Imagine a 9-inning game where teams sacrifice bunted after getting the leadoff man on in the *first inning*. That's because you really have to play for that one run, since game scores of 1-0 and 2-1 are not unusual with wood. All together in that game, I put on the bunt sign *nine times!* You have to play the outfield very shallow and play the infield in closer, too. Most ground balls are hit more slowly and, if you play back, you are susceptible to infield hits. I think we had eight hits on the day, which isn't bad. We had previously scrimmaged Lincoln-Sudbury in preparation for the tournament, and got just one hit, a bunt single, in eight wood bat innings. And this is from one of our best hitting teams of all time.

If you take a look at the scores from all 195 MIAA tournament games, you find that the average runs scored (total from both teams) was 6.5. Here is an interesting comparison.

In the first five ALCS games, the Sox and Yankees combined for 6.6 runs per game. Remember how frustrated everyone was with the lack of hitting in those games. Nomar, Ortiz, Mueller, Millar, Giambi, and Soriano were all hitting under .200. The Yankees' team batting average was .196. Clearly, that was not the kind of baseball that people enjoy. Yet that is what we are likely to get when high school kids hit with wood.

Also, in the MIAA tournament there were twelve 1-0 games and one team scored either zero or one run in exactly 50% of the games. High school players just struggle to hit successfully with wood. Nevertheless, some teams and leagues like that style of baseball and chose to use wood during their regular seasons. Other leagues prefer metal, but chose to use wood during the season because they would have to do so in the tournament. Some leagues, like the Middlesex League voted to stay with metal. We decided that we were not going to let the tournament tail wag the regular season dog. Here is a Middlesex League sidebar: a couple years ago, the Middlesex League Athletic Directors tried to see if the name "ML10" would be a catchy moniker for the league. It didn't really gain much popularity. In fact, the idea flopped. But I have some interesting ideas: how about change the official league name to the Middlesex Athletic Conference and refer to it as the MAC 10? You see where I'm going with this? The NCAA has the PAC 10; we would have the MAC 10. And fat guys could call it the BIG MAC 10. I suggested that to our AD, but he didn't go for it. I'm not surprised, 'cause he also didn't like my idea of changing from Reading Rockets to Reading Railroad. Just think of the cool headlines in the *Daily Times Chronicle*: "Reading Derails Woburn" or "Reading Steams Past Melrose". You see, this is the kind of "out of the box" thinking that we need in the world of high school athletics today. I have a lot of other swell ideas about how to improve professional sports. I'll list

those later. Anyway, back to the bat issue. Prior to the tournament and even the regular season, the Mass Baseball Coaches Association had to work hard to prevent metal from being banned from regular season play. Here is how that all went:

The Baseball Committee, after making their decision about the tournament (they have jurisdiction over the tournament only), recommended that the MIAA Board of Directors prohibit metal during the 2003 regular season. Generally, rule changes can be made only every two years, but rules can be changed at any time if there is an emergency and safety issue at hand. Remember, this entire issue came about strictly because of the safety issue. The notion that metal bats pose a safety concern came from the fact that two Mass. high school pitchers were hurt when hit by line drives in 2001. The Board of Directors met last December to make their decision, but rather than make a ruling, they decided to form a Baseball Bat Task Force to study the issue. The Board of Directors' thinking was that the MIAA Sports Medicine Committee had voted, 15-0, against a proposal to ban metal, but the Baseball Committee voted to prohibit metal. So there were two committees with opposite opinions. So the Board of Directors formed the Task Force, which was comprised of some members from the Sports Medicine Committee and some from the Baseball Committee. The Task Force was to meet on January 15 and listen to "expert" testimony on both sides of the issue. The experts included: Dr. James Sherwood, from UMass Lowell, who does all the bat testing for the NCAA and MLB; Dr. Fred Mueller, who works for the National Center at the University of North Carolina, and gathers and analyzes injury data for the NCAA and high school sports; Bill Thurston, highly respected coach from Amherst College (he is a wood proponent); Dr. Trey Crisco, from Brown University, who had done a study comparing metal and wood bats; representatives from PONY Baseball, USA Baseball, Worth Sports,

Louisville Slugger League, and Easton Sports. I was the "expert" representative from the Mass Baseball Coaches. We all got 10 minutes to present our points of view. I presented injury data that we had compiled from Mass. coaches' surveys, results from polls regarding coaches' preferences for bats, injury data from USA Baseball, statements from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, and so on. The Task Force listened to about six hours of testimony throughout the day. Dr. Mueller's injury data showed that ours is a very safe sport with an extremely low incidence of serious injury. The men who study and test bats showed that the new -3 BESR certified metal bats act more like wood than the previous generation of metal bats. Dr. Sherwood showed that, in his experiment, balls exited off metal bats at 2-3 mph greater than off wood. Another scientist showed that the 2-3 mph faster ball exit speed translates into a batted ball reaching a pitcher .01 seconds faster. This guy, who studies human reaction times, said that the .01 sec. difference is negligible; it would neither cause nor prevent a ball hitting a pitcher. And that's how the meeting continued; the wood bat proponents had mostly anecdotal, rather than factual, information and really had no evidence that any metal bat injury could have been prevented by using wood. When the hearing ended, it looked pretty clear that the data presented indicated that metal bats pose no greater injury concern than wood, and that is exactly how the Task Force voted, by a 7-1 margin. Their official statement was that there is "no compelling evidence that metal bats were significantly more dangerous than wood." However, they took a second vote, which passed by a 5-4 margin, to recommend to the MIAA Board of Directors to invoke their power, for reason of safety, to ban metal bats for the regular season. That Board was not scheduled to meet until May, so it would be too late to make any changes for the 2003 season, but their decision could affect future years. So now we needed to plan how to convince the Board of Directors to decide in

favor of allowing metal bats. In the meantime, there were other meetings and votes that supported our cause.

At the Mass. Baseball Coaches Association annual meeting (Feb. 2003), 72% of Massachusetts baseball coaches voted to support the continued use of non-wood bats for regular season and tournament play. Next, the Massachusetts Secondary Schools Athletic Directors Association voted 14-2 to reject the proposal to ban non-wood bats. Then at the MIAA's Annual Meeting in the spring of 2003 Mass. Principals and Athletic Directors voted against the proposed ban on non-wood bats (vote was 78-37). So we clearly had coaches, principals, and athletic directors in agreement to leave the rule the way it was and allow metal bats. But these groups are not the ones that have authority on rule changes; the committees that make those decisions are with the MIAA. The MIAA Board of Directors meeting was in May, and I got to speak on behalf of the Mass. coaches. The Board voted that day, by a 10-6 count, to reject the proposal to prohibit non-wood bats. That was good news, but there was still one more (regular season) hurdle, and that was the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Council, who was to meet on May 22. The MIAC is the ultimate rule-making committee of the MIAA and they have the power to vote in rule changes, for any sport, every two years. The proposal in front of them was to ban non-wood bats from high school play. Again, I had the opportunity to speak, along with a couple other coaches, and we were pleased when the MIAC voted against the proposal. That meant that in 2004 and 2005 member schools/leagues will have their choice of bats, metal or wood, during the regular season.

Wow, that was a long road and a lot of committees to convince. For nine months I was involved in seemingly constant phone calls, strategy sessions, MIAA meetings, and speech writing. Our controversy got national attention and was written about it Collegiate

Baseball, Sports Illustrated, Coaching Management magazine, the New York Times, and virtually every newspaper in Massachusetts. Coaches across the country were interested in what was happening in Mass., because a ban on metal bats in our state could cause other states to follow suit. It was pretty rewarding to represent our coaches association and have the rulings come out in favor of what the majority of our coaches wanted.

Still, the issue of the tournament was unsettled. The MIAA Baseball Committee, who would meet in October 2003, had the authority to vote to continue a ban on metal for the tournament or to overturn that rule and go back to choice of wood or metal. We had some more data to present, as we had Mass. coaches complete a survey *after* the MIAA wood-bat tournament. The results showed that 74% of the coaches prefer to allow schools to use bat of choice while 67% disagree with the MIAA dictate that wood bats must be used in the tournament. We brought this information, along with the rest of our evidence to the Baseball Committee meeting and, after a long, passionate debate, the committee voted by a 9-8 margin to allow metal bats for the MIAA tournament. That means that teams will have their choice of metal or wood in the postseason in 2004.

So the way this all flushes out is that no rule change, unless an emergency situation arises, can be made for two (regular) seasons. Therefore, we will be able to continue with metal in the 2004 and 2005 regular seasons and, at least, 2004 for the tournament. The tournament rule is subject to change every year, so we will see what happens there.

Okay, thanks for sticking with that long, long description about the bat issue. You can tell how invested I became in an issue that would have major repercussions our game of high school baseball. Let's break that intensity with the promised ideas on how to

improve pro sports. These are not simple suggestions like “pro football pass receivers only need to have one foot in bounds, like in college”. These are innovative, revolutionary ideas. If you agree with me then maybe we can start a campaign to put pressure on the bigwigs to institute some of these changes. First, in Major League baseball, I think each team should be limited to using a *maximum* of three pitchers in a game. That would make the starters have to go deeper into the game and eliminate all the bring-in-a-lefty-reliever-to-pitch-to-one-lefty-batter stuff. In the NFL, I would limit teams to one field goal per half. That would put a premium on trying to get the ball into the endzone. I don’t like the current sudden death overtime format in the NFL. So I think, if a game is tied after regulation play, each team puts their entire roster of players in their own endzone. On the whistle, every player tries to get to the opposite endzone. First team to get all players there wins the game! That stresses the team concept, as all players are involved. Tennis and golf, at any level, need one fundamental change: the crowd should be able to cheer, yell, boo, etc. I’d like to see Vijay Sing stand over an 8-foot par putt with the crowd all doing the Darryl Strawberry chant: “Vee-jay, Vee-jay, Vee-jay”. The NBA presents a challenge but I think I have the solution to the low-scoring games. All standings are based on a point system, like in the NHL. You get one point for a win, but here’s the catch. If you win, but score less than, say, 95 points you only get ½ point for the win. If you lose, you get no points, but if you lose and score under 85 points you actually get minus ½ point. Brilliant, you say? Maybe so, but all of these ideas have fallen on deaf ears, as MLB, NFL, and NBA executives have not responded to my letters. I’m so frustrated that I may not even bother sending the NHL my “blindfold the goalie” idea to increase scoring.

Subvarsity Seasons

Our subvarsity clubs had their usual strong seasons under more excellent coaching by our JV and Freshman Team coaches. Dave Blanchard’s (*Melrose ’95*) JV team had another very good year, compiling a 13-5 record. More importantly, Dave does a superb job teaching his players the skills, techniques, and attitude they need to move up to the varsity level. Blanch works his kids hard and gets them to work to their potential. Plus, he helps each player learn about himself, mature, and grow. JV players are fortunate to have the opportunity to play for Coach Blanch. I know I am lucky to have him coaching in our system.

Tim Hogan, a former Lowell HS and Endicott College baseball player, was our new Freshman coach this year. Jim Lucci (’85), who had done such a good job as the previous coach, had to relinquish the position due to his commitment to his family (Jim has a wife and three children, including infant twins!). We were lucky to find Tim, who stepped in and did a terrific job. He learned our system fast and brought us some good ideas from his experiences. He pushed his players hard and made them commit to the team and to improving themselves. Tim’s club had an excellent 14-3 season and Tim will be back in 2004 to coach the Freshman team again.

Dave and Tim did not coach their teams entirely alone: Jason Zerfas assisted Blanch when his college class schedule would allow; Eric Farias, one of Tim’s former teammates at Endicott, worked with the Freshman team. They were both valuable members of the coaching staff and provided the crucial second coach that our system really requires.

Varsity Season Summary – Middlesex League Champions

After finishing a game out of first place in both 2001 and 2002, we grabbed the Middlesex League championship in 2003. The team compiled an 18-1 regular season record and won the league title by a six game margin! This was a remarkable feat considering that Reading returned, from last year's team, only 9 innings of varsity pitching experience and just one fulltime starter. But the players, led by co-captains Dan Callahan and Steve Gath, refused to accept mediocrity, believed in themselves, and worked very hard all spring to make 2003 a truly memorable season.

Here are some of the highlights:

Reading opened with a 17-1 win at Belmont in which the team scored in every inning. The players were motivated by the offer, made by Coach in the 4th inning, that I would buy them ice cream if they scored in each inning. Some teams are motivated by pride, a desire to excel, or the love of competition; this group was motivated by dessert. Nevertheless, this was the first glimpse of an offensive lineup that would become the highest scoring (in runs per game – 9.1) team in Reading history. Jason Howse picked up the win in that game and Brian DeMasse followed with a shutout victory in the next game, at Woburn . Howse hit a 2-run homer in that 7-0 win. The Rockets dropped the next game, 11-7 to an excellent Wakefield club on a 35 degree day that registered a wind chill of 9 degrees! The frigid weather is not the reason we lost, although we did lose a potential run when our baserunner slipped on a patch of ice rounding 3rd base. So now stood with a 2-1 record and a decision whether we were going to be a good team or an unremarkable one.

And this is where Reading began an incredible streak of 16 wins in a row! The streak started with the annual game in

Cooperstown , NY , where Reading prevailed in an exciting 4-2 ballgame, behind the pitching of Jason Howse. Next, DeMasse had another strong outing and Mark Andrick had a big 2-run triple in a 4-1 win against Winchester . The team then traveled to Watertown where the 13-0 win marked the 400th victory in Coach Mosc's career.

The team kept rolling with wins vs. Burlington and Melrose which set up a big game vs. Stoneham, who stood just one game behind the first place Rockets. After falling behind, 3-0, in the first inning, Reading came back strong, as DeMasse settled down nicely and we got key hits by Eric Morgani and Brian DeMasse to win the game, 10-3. That opened up a 2-game lead on the rest of the league. From there, the Rockets never looked back.

The next ballgame was a tight one, under the lights at Lexington on a very cold evening. Reading held a small lead for most of the game until Lexington scored two runs in the bottom of the 6th to take a 6-5 lead. Most teams would have been demoralized after seemingly letting a win slip away. But this resilient group battled to tie the game on an error with two outs in the top of the 7th. Steve Gath then singled to knock in the go-ahead run. Jason Howse closed the door in the bottom of the 7th to preserve the exciting 7-6 win. After a one-sided win against Belmont, Woburn came to Morton Field and gave the Rockets a very tough battle, but Reading hung on for an 8-6 win behind Mark Andrick's clutch relief pitching. Next was Wakefield , who had now taken over 2nd place. The Warriors jumped out to a 4-0 lead in the first inning, but Brian DeMasse settled down and held Wakefield to just one run for the remainder of the game. In the meantime, his teammates mounted a rally, winning on a literal "walk-off", as Bryan DelloRusso walked on a 3-2, two-out pitch in the bottom of the 7th.

Reading went to Winchester and won, 10-2, to get closer to the league title. The Middlesex League Championship was clinched on the very next game, by virtue of Reading 's 6-0 win vs. Watertown .

The team stayed motivated to continue their win streak and high standing in the state. So wins vs. Burlington (9-4), Melrose (2-1), and Stoneham (12-9) closed out the Middlesex League schedule. Reading 's 17-1 league record tied for the best ever by a Reading team (the '94, '96, and '97 teams were also 17-1). Now the team hoped for a chance to tie the best all-time regular season record of 19-1, set in 1994. Reading got win #18 vs. Wilmington as Jason Howse ran his record to 9-0, but rainy weather prevented the 20th game to be played, so Reading "settled" for an 18-1 slate and a school-record 16 wins in a row.

Reading received the #2 seed in the Division I North Tournament and drew a first round bye. The quarterfinal opponent was Malden Catholic, who had beaten West Roxbury , 1-0, in the first round. Reading and MC have matched up several times in the past, in the Wilmington tournament, and the result has always been close, hard-fought, low-scoring games. This was to be no different, except that the game was to be played with wood bats and would be 9-innings long (by MIAA rules). Reading held a 4-3 lead going into the top of the ninth but MC came up with two big runs to pull out a 5-4 win. In fact, Malden Catholic went on to win the state title, winning five games by one run and the final game by a 2-0 score.

This team compiled some statistics that rank among the best in Reading Baseball history. The Rockets averaged an all-time high 9.1 runs per game and banded out 10.6 hits per contest. The club set the all-time record for doubles in one season (47) and for least strikeouts (65). The 2003 team ranks 2nd all-time in wins (18), winning pct. (.947), runs (172), batting average (.355), hits (202), assists (195)and RBI (145); ranks 3rd

in on base average (.476); and 4th in stolen bases (51).

Certainly these team records were the result of outstanding individual performances. We had five players bat over .400: Bryan DelloRusso (.462), Steve Gath (.448), Jason Howse (.438), Dan Marshall (.434), and Mark Andrick (.408). Howse led the team in RBI (25); Marshall led in Hits (33) and Steals (18), Gath led in Doubles (11) and Runs (24); DelloRusso led in Walks (14) and On Base Average (.571).

Jason Howse (9-0) and Brian DeMasse (8-0) combined for 17 wins without a loss, clearly the most prolific 1-2 punch we've had, at least in terms of win-loss records. Howse led the Middlesex League in ERA (1.63), while DeMasse led the league in strikeouts (65).

Some of our players' individual performances ranked among the best all-time for a single season. Dan Marshall set the record for hits (33) in a season, topping Chris Smith's previous record of 32, set in 1996. Marshall also set the record for at bats (76). Steve Gath's 11 doubles ranks #1 all-time as does his record for least strikeouts (0). Pretty amazing for a high school kid to go an entire season without a K. Jason Howse tied the record (Pete McHugh '91) for most wins in a season (9) and both Howse and Brian DeMasse's perfect 1.000 winning pct. can never be beaten. *All told, this year's players appeared in the all-time single-season Top 10 rankings 28 times!*

As far as Career records are concerned, Dan Marshall's 28 stolen bases ranks as #2 all-time. Steve Gath's remarkable career places him #1 all-time in career runs (64), doubles (22), assists (125), and stolen base pct. (1.000). Steve also ranks #3 in hits (70), #4 in at bats (177), and #5 in RBI (43), walks (28), and stolen bases (21). Steve's career .395 batting average is not the best all-time career record (his brother, Jamie, holds that mark at .432), but Steve's average was best ever for any *3-year starter*.

There were some other interesting achievements. Steve Gath became only the fourth player since, at least 1969, to achieve a “Quintuple Double”, that is, attain double figures in runs (24), hits (30), RBI (19), walks (11), and stolen bases (11). The previous three players to do this were Scott Farris ’85, Mike McGillicuddy ’87, and Pete Croft ’01.

Dan Marshall, Jason Howse, Chris Dolan, Bryan DelloRusso, Dennis DiCicco, and Brian DeMasse all had “Quadruple Doubles”, reaching double figures in four categories.

Five players were named to the Middlesex League All-Star Team: seniors Steve Gath (SS), Jason Howse (P), Brian DeMasse (P), Dan Marshall (OF), and junior Bryan DelloRusso (Util). DeMasse and Howse were selected as *Daily Times Chronicle* Co-Pitchers of the Year and Gath was named to the *Boston Globe* All-Scholastic Team. Coach Mosc was named Middlesex League Coach of the Year.

Postseason Cookout and Awards

In addition to those mentioned above, there were more accolades for this year’s players and team. Steve Gath received, at the RMHS graduation ceremony, the Peter Moscariello Baseball Scholarship Award, initiated by Reading Baseball parents and friends three years ago. I was very proud to have my name associated with Steve’s, who is not only one of Reading’s all-time best players, but one of our all-time best people.

At the postseason cookout and awards ceremony, co-captain Dan Callahan received the Albert & Elizabeth Olson Memorial Baseball Award for his exceptional leadership, dedication, and sportsmanship. Co-captain Steve Gath received the Reading Baseball Coaches Award for his incredible career. Mr. Phil Vaccaro, RMHS Athletic Director, received the Reading Baseball

Outstanding Contributor Award for his leadership in promoting sportsmanship and his great support of the baseball program. Captains for 2004 were announced, as a result of the vote by the players. They are Bryan DelloRusso, Dennis DiCicco, and Mark Andrick.

The team also earned a special honor, the Massachusetts Alliance for the Promotion of Sportsmanship (MAPS) Award. Reading’s baseball team was selected among all spring sports teams, boys and girls, in the state. This was wonderful recognition for a group of players who respect the game, their opponents, umpires, and teammates and give back to the community by volunteering with Challenger Baseball. The entire club was honored with a pre-game ceremony prior to a Red Sox game at Fenway Park in June. We got to go on the field (the area between home plate and the backstop) to receive the award.

So it was quite a season – winning the league title and setting some impressive records, while players received many individual honors and awards. In addition, the honor of receiving the statewide team sportsmanship award helped make this a special year. But, as always, the most rewarding aspect of the season, from a coach’s point of view, was the opportunity to work with such an extraordinary group of young men. This team was comprised of outstanding players who committed to our philosophy, worked hard to reach their goals, supported each other, and played the game right. They represented their community, school, team, families, and selves with class and dignity. They certainly carved out their place in Reading Baseball history and will be fondly remembered for all their accomplishments.

Reading Baseball Record Book

I mentioned that the 2003 team assaulted the RMHS record book with so many outstanding performances. Attached to the

end of this letter are the updated records, with newly established records in bold italics.

RMHS Athletic Hall of Fame

In last year's newsletter, I wrote about the Steve Langone's and our 1996 team's selection for induction into the RMHS Athletic Hall of Fame. This year, I get to write about the actual ceremony, which was held in November. It was a wonderful evening as the RMHS Athletic Hall of Fame Committee does a fantastic job putting on a first-rate event. From the dinner, to the videos of each athlete and team, to the speeches by the recipients, to the extraordinary job done by Master of Ceremonies Mike Moscariello, it is a special night. It was a particularly proud night for Reading Baseball because we had both an individual athlete and a team inducted. Fourteen of our players from the '96 team, Coach Bryson and Coach Moscariello were all on hand for the honor. It was great to see everybody; the guys all looked great and we had a chance to talk and share some memories. Prior to the ceremony, each player received, courtesy of the coaches, a nice booklet containing the season summary, stats, and photos. After the ceremony, we coaches gave our players classy new state championship golf shirts. In addition to the players on the '96 team, some other Reading Baseball Alumni and friends were there. It was nice to see Tom Quinn and Paul Sumner, two captains from the '91 team, at the banquet. Tom's sister, Katie, who was an incredible softball pitcher, was inducted. Tom and Paul were there for Katie as well as to see their hockey teammate, Mike Sullivan, inducted. The guys from the '91 team have planted rumors that they are going to make a pitch, at the Alumni Dinner, to have their team inducted next. Maybe they will; the '91 club was a tremendous team; they were league champs and just a couple innings away from winning the Division II North title. Winning a state title was not beyond the realm of possibility for

that group. Also on hand was Paul Smith, from our '79 team; his father, Frank, received the Cliff Alan Award at the ceremony for his long commitment to RMHS Athletics and his promotion of girls' sports. Paul and his '79 teammates have the distinction of being on the first team that I coached at RMHS and the first team that Ace coached. Those guys were freshman in 1976 when I coached the freshman team. The next year, they were on the JV team, which was Ace's first club at Reading. When they were seniors they were the first tournament team we had. So they have earned a special place in our hearts, for sure. Last, but not least, Scott Farris, his wife, Lisa, my wife, May, and daughter, Lea were all at the ceremony. Of course, my parents were there: my dad is on the Hall of Fame Committee (oh, so *that's* why the baseball team got in) and my mom was there to make sure I ate my vegetables and had my tie on straight.

All this and I haven't even talked about the actual ceremony yet. Here it is. The individual athletes were inducted, one by one, in chronological order. Being the youngest of the group, Steve was the last athlete to hear and see testimony presented of his remarkable career. The Hall of Fame Committee has extensive photographs, statistics, and videotapes, which they compiled in a fitting tribute to Reading's all-time greatest pitcher. When it was time for Steve's acceptance speech he was, not surprisingly, articulate, modest, and gracious. Reading's local cable channel will broadcast the entire ceremony at some time in the near future. Those of you who live in Reading should take a look; I know you will enjoy watching the numerous highlights of Steve's career; they are just mind-boggling!

After Steve's induction came the recognition for our 1996 club, the only team to be inducted this year and Reading's first baseball team to be chosen for the Hall of Fame.

We got to see a terrific video of our season (which brought back great memories of how exciting that season was and just how great that team was) and heard some nice words spoken. The three captains, Dave Pizzotti, Chris Smith, and Steve Langone spoke about the season, their teammates, coaches, parents with class and style. I got to speak as well; I was proud to stand at the podium and give tribute to our players for their amazing accomplishments. But what I was most proud of was that everybody in attendance now could see what Ace and I already knew: that this was not only a team of great players, but also a group of outstanding young men in every regard. What follows is not the verbal speech, but the cover letter in the packet that we coaches gave to each player before the ceremony. We think it sums up how we feel about the individuals on the '96 team.

To All Players on the 1996 Reading Baseball State Championship Team;

Attached is a summary of our 1996 season that I wrote for last year's newsletter. I thought you might be interested in having this, in case you did not get the letter last fall.

More importantly, I want you to know how thrilled I am that so many of you came to the Hall of Fame Banquet tonight; it is great to see you all. This evening certainly brings back memories, not only of our sensational season, but also of each of the 17 great guys that made up that team. As I looked through the '96 scrapbook recently and watched videos of a few games, I was reminded of how exceptional this team was and how many talented players we had. The individual and team statistics you compiled are amazing; in the attached pages you will read about regular season pitching and defensive accomplishments that will never be duplicated. Then read and remember how you put together six consecutive great performances, under pressure, in the tournament. Read about the nearly flawless

pitching, clutch hitting, and perfectly executed sacrifice bunts, rundowns, 1st & 3rd plays, and famous 2-strike squeeze that took you to the state title. Enjoy knowing that each of you made your contribution, large or small, to something very special.

Most of all, I look back and remember the great work ethic, strong leadership, awesome team chemistry, and tenacious attitude our players brought to the field every day. You guys knew how to work toward a common goal while still making every day a lot of fun. We worked awfully hard, but we had our share of laughs, too! I looked forward to every game, practice, bus ride, and meeting that our team shared together. I was proud of the way you represented your school, team, and families with dignity and class, at all times.

Back in 1996 you earned your place in Reading Baseball history; now you have earned your spot in the RMHS Athletic Hall of Fame forever. You have the right to call yourself the best team ever in Reading Baseball's long and glorious history.

To say that I am proud of what you guys accomplished on the ball field just doesn't say it all. I am grateful for the pleasure and privilege to have coached such an extraordinary group of young men. I will always have fond memories about each of you, not just as a player, but as a person. I feel fortunate to continue to know you and to consider you all my friends.

Enjoy your well-deserved recognition tonight,

Coach Mosc

Ten Terrific Seasons

It is hard to believe that it's been 10 years since the 1994 baseball team, led by captains Dan Robinson and Tom Fratto, established a 19-1 record and made it to the Division II North Finals. That was an amazing team,

maybe as good as any in Reading's history (remember the hot debate about that topic at the Alumni Dinner a couple years ago) and they started a run of 10 seasons where we have had tremendous success. Here is a summary of what has happened in the past

Ten Terrific Seasons:

Middlesex League	157 – 23	.872
Non-League	15 – 3	.833
Regular Season	172 – 26	.869
MIAA Tournament	21 – 9	.700
Overall Record	193 – 35	.846
Average Season	19.3 – 3.5	

- ? ? Middlesex League Champions '94, '96, '97, '99, '00, '03
- ? ? 2nd Place Mid'sex League '95, '98, '01, '02
- ? ? Wilmington Invitational Tournament Champions '94, '95, '98, '99, '01, '02
(note: there was no champion in '97 or '03, as the finals were rained out)
- ? ? *Boston Globe* Top Twenty '94, '95, '96, '97, '98, '99, '00, '01, '02, '03
- ? ? Division II State Champions '96
- ? ? Division II North Finalists '94, '98, '01
- ? ? Division II North Semifinalists '95, '97, '99

2004 Season Preview

The players on the 2004 squad will be in the same position as the players from several other years – facing the challenge of defending their Middlesex League Championship. Let's hope this team can duplicate what our guys did in '81, '97, and '00 and make it back-to-back titles. This will be a formidable task because, just like last year, we have to replace nearly all of our pitching. We also have to fill the void left by the graduation of eight terrific seniors, including four all-league players. We have to replace the 17 wins recorded by Jason Howse and Brian DeMasse, which will not be easy to do. But if our kids make a commitment and work hard they should do okay. Returning starters include our three tri-captains Bryan DelloRusso, Mark Andrick, Dennis DiCicco. DelloRusso was a Middlesex League All-Star last year and one

of the top hitters in the league. He batted .462 with 14 RBI and 14 walks as our right fielder; this year he will patrol center field. Andrick pitched about 16 innings last year, and had a 1-0 record, 2 saves, and a 3.57 ERA. He also played 2nd base when DeMasse pitched and was our DH otherwise. He batted in our cleanup spot and hit .408 with 19 RBI and 10 extra base hits. DiCicco returns as our starting catcher; he did a very good job behind the plate last year, calling a good game and helping out staff. He batted .322 with 17 RBI and, this year, could be one of the top hitters in the league. Other than the three captains, we have no full-time starters returning. And, as always, we will count on players who were varsity backups to step into starting roles and do well for the team. Jared Kazanovicz, now a junior, played 1st base when Howse pitched and also got some time as DH. We look for Kaz to be one of our regular pitchers this spring as well as a productive hitter. John Dudley, a senior, is another pitcher, who can play almost any defensive position. He is a big, strong kid who should hit well for us. He had a couple hits, including a double in our (wood bat) tournament game last year. Senior Eric Morgani is a good athlete and an infielder who should help us both offensively and defensively. Junior Mike DiCicco is a lefthander pitcher/outfielder who should be ready to make an impact and Tim Melanson is a catcher who has worked hard in the off-season to get ready for his junior year. Add to that list some players who prepared for varsity ball under the coaching of Dave Blanchard, and we have our squad. We certainly have our question marks, particularly with such inexperienced pitching, so we have a lot of work to do if we hope to continue the success of past teams. Our first practice will be on March 15 and our opening game will be on April 14. We hope to play Lexington in Cooperstown again. A complete schedule will be posted on the website once it is finalized.

Quotes

I still love baseball quotes; we continue to post them on the bulletin board in the locker room. I have entire books of them, so I will never run out! Maybe you will like the following ones:

“A pitcher needs two pitches – one they’re looking for and one to cross ‘em up.”
-- Warren Spahn, Hall of Fame pitcher

“You can stuff your ‘sorrlys’ in a sack, Mister” -- George Costanza

Okay, maybe that’s not an actual baseball quote but remember that George Costanza *did* work for the New York Yankees. Here is one for all of us Sox fans:

“In Boston, we believe, and we are never disappointed because what we believe is this: the world will break your heart someday, and we are luckier than most – we get ours broken every year, at Fenway Park.” -- George V. Higgins, author

When looking through my book of quotes, I found this one which relates nicely to the wood vs. metal bat argument.

“ One of the myths by which we live is that the ‘real’ baseball fan loves a 1-0 game and ‘abhors’ a sloppy 8-6 game. Even the most cursory studies show that fans love 8-6 games and are bored to death by classic 1-0 ‘pitcher’s battles’.” -- Bill Veeck, baseball executive

“I abhor sloppy games of any score and I find 1-0 games to be too stressful at my age. I’ll take a boring 9-0 win any day.”
-- Pete Moscardiello, newsletter author

I think you can all relate to this next one.

“There will be two buses leaving the hotel for the park tomorrow. The two o’clock bus will be for those of you who need a little

extra work. The empty bus will leave at five o’clock.” -- Dave Bristol, Milwaukee Brewers manager 1970-72

And here is one that has come to have meaning to our players.

“Hold on to the rope” – Skip Bertman, former baseball coach, Louisiana State University

Here is an explanation of this last quote. It basically means to hang in there, stay tough, remain positive and confident, trust your teammates, etc. And here is the story behind that quote.

Our guys who have played in the most recent years have seen a motivational videotape by Skip Bertman, former Head Baseball Coach at Louisiana State University. Coach Bertman is now the AD at LSU but, while he was the baseball coach, he led his team to five national championships! So he is considered one of the greatest coaches in the history of college baseball. Anyway, in one segment of his videotape, Coach Bertman tells the “Hold on to the Rope” story. I won’t tell the entire story now but, if you have not heard it before, it is definitely worth borrowing the videotape. Anyway, the premise is that you are hanging off a 100 foot cliff, holding one end of a rope, with certain death if you were to fall. Coach Bertman asked each of his players “Who would you want to be holding the other end of the rope?” The response he wanted was “It does not matter, as long as it is one of my teammates.” The lesson Coach Bertman tries to instill is about trusting and loving your teammates, especially in adverse situations. He goes on to tell how “Hold on to the Rope” became their rallying cry in tough circumstances, helped them win their first conference championship, and springboarded their program to its great success.

Our players enjoyed the lesson and really adopted the concept. “Hold on the Rope”

can be heard at our games and practices, at times. Assistant Coach Scott Farris even brought a rope to tie to the fence near our bench during games, as a reminder. Well, Scott and I had the opportunity to meet Skip Bertman at the College World Series in Omaha, Nebraska this past June. One of the guys that was in our little travel group out there is a close friend of Coach Bertman's. He arranged a breakfast meeting at a hotel with Coach Bertman, his wife, Scott, Frank Carey (North Reading coach), Roy Condon (North Reading AD and Chris' dad), the coach from Stoughton HS, our contact guy, and myself. I told Coach Bertman about how much the "Rope" story means to our team and he appreciated hearing that. He graciously agreed to sign a Reading Baseball T-Shirt (just happened to have a shirt and a felt tip marker with me) on which he wrote, "Rockets – Hold on the the Rope. Skip Bertman". So I thought that was pretty cool. By the way, if you ever get the chance to go to the College World Series, I would highly recommend it. Just a great atmosphere, beautiful ballpark, superb baseball – a lot of fun.

Trivia Questions

Before I present a couple trivia questions, I have to apologize for a mistake in last year's letter. When talking about twins, I said that I did not think we had any player who had a twin, prior to Steve Gath (twin sister Sarah) and Dan Marshall (twin brother Dave). Well Dave Kaloyanides '01 has a twin sister, Jessica. Also Nathan Cross '79 has a twin brother, Jason. My apologies for the omissions. We still have not yet had twins who *both* played on our team.

Here is a trivia question for you. In the course of our non-league or tournament games, there are some teams that we have never beaten and some that have never beaten us. For example, guys from the 1980 team remember beating Somerville in the tournament, so maybe that would be an answer to the question. But the reality is that

Somerville beat us in a non-league game in '77, so Somerville would not be an answer. The question is: *Name teams that we have never beaten and teams that have never beaten us.*

The winner will get an autographed copy of Pedro Martinez' autobiography: *My Life As The Center of the Universe.*

Christmas List

It is time for the annual Christmas Wish List (even though Christmas will be already passed by the time you get this). I am not discouraged by the fact that Santa has not brought me *one single item* from my requests over the years. For example, I didn't get the sophomore lefthander who throws in the 90's, nor the catcher who combines Bench's arm and Piazza's bat. So, having been a good boy this past year, I am confident that Santa will fulfill my 2003 Christmas Wish List. Let's start with a renovated field with the synthetic surface we talked about. Think what that would mean: no more lining the field by Ace; no more draining puddles; no more sneaking down to Morton on Sunday evening to mow the infield grass to a lower height; no more infield lips to the size of Mick Jagger's. Add to that some above ground dugouts (below ground level dugouts would fill up with water like the Titanic at the swamp we call Morton Field), fencing around the entire field perimeter, and a scoreboard. And since the high school will be renovated in the upcoming years, here are some Field House improvements. I would like an electronic system with a remote control panel so when you press a button, L-screens rise up out of the floor, ready for use. Add to that a sloping floor with a "drain" so all the tennis balls roll into one spot, go down the drain, into buckets, and then rise up, full, next to the L-screens. Santa didn't provide me with the rejuvenated arm that I requested last year, but maybe he can bring us a BP pitcher who could throw 65 mph strikes all day long and give our guys great live hitting practice

(if anyone out there can fulfill that need, let me know; a good BP pitcher is worth his weight in gold). And how about our own personalized team bus complete with comfortable seats, air conditioning, and video monitors so we can watch J-Lo videos (oops, I mean “baseball instructional tapes”) on the way to games? A nice clubhouse wouldn’t be bad either. Would be reasonable for our players to be able to get dressed without bumping into the guy next to him. Finally, Mr. Steve Pizzotti would be disappointed if I didn’t include this request: how about a new team manager and scorekeeper, Heather Locklear?

Well, wishful thinking, but it’s not going to happen. But it turns out that the alternate gifts I (we) got are even better. This past season we got another group of great kids and parents who were a joy to coach. Every year I think, “Boy, this is the best group of kids we’ve had.” And then another one comes along. Our program has certainly been blessed with more than our share of athletes of fantastic ability and character. I could not be more grateful for the opportunity I have had to coach you and establish friendships with you all. So I hope you and your families had a wonderful holiday season and I wish you all a happy and healthy 2004.

Staying In Touch

For the first time in several years of newsletters, I do not have to make a request for replacement email addresses. In other words, I have not been an idiot and lost addresses in over one year! But I still don’t have the email for every player who reads this letter. So if I don’t have yours, please email me at petemosc@comcast.net I really appreciate how you guys have stayed in touch. During this past year, I have received more emails, phone calls, visits, and invitations to dinners and weddings than ever before. I knew I would get a social life, eventually. It is so good to stay in touch and

spend time with you guys. Anytime you want to get together for dinner (I especially like the dinners when you guys pick up the tab) or just come by the house, just give me a call.

Turning 50

How did this happen? When I wasn’t paying much attention, I turned 50 this past spring (look out – Ace is about to be 60!). I never thought of 50 as old, but when I realized that some of the “kids” I coached are in their 40’s, I conceded that I am getting up there. Turning 50 can be interesting, as you will see in the following (long) story. This is an absolutely true story that occurred this spring and I hope that it might cause a chuckle or two. This story qualifies to appear in this letter because it does relate, at least initially, to Reading Baseball because it all started at a Saturday morning practice in the Field House in April.

We had already played a few games but we were stuck inside on yet another rainy practice day (as an aside, I calculated that we used the Field House on more than 50% of our practice days last year). Anyway, our players were warming up, playing catch across the Field House as you all have done many times. I sometimes walk behind one line of throwers, but keep my head up to make sure I am not going to get hit by an errant throw. I thought I was safe when I had passed the last line of throwers by about 15’, but I was wrong. One of our guys (who shall remain nameless) let go a wild throw that I never saw coming. It took one bounce on the floor, and somehow gained speed as it bulleted toward its target – my knee. The throw hit me on the outside of my left knee and, let me tell you, it hurt. I remember gritting my teeth, wheeling around to see the culprit and yelling at him, “Ooh, I could pound you!” The players got dead quiet as they were afraid of what I might do (can you say “homeruns”?). My fellow coaches were also quiet, not because they were concerned

about me, but because they were trying to stifle their laughter. Well, I just walked off the pain and was able to continue with practice. The knee did bother me during practice, but not to the extent that I thought it would be a problem. As you will see, I was wrong again.

The rest of indoor practice went without incident, which was unusual for our squad. I say that because this year we (I say “we”, but I mean “they”) managed to break one window, one camcorder, one batspeed machine, and one pitching machine. I was the only coach in the state who had to go to the ATM machine each day before practice. Now they could add *one knee* to their list. I went home and since my knee was sore I lay down on my couch and put an ice pack on the injury. Actually, I did not have a real ice pack, so I used a bag of frozen peas from the freezer (I chose frozen peas because the bag was pliable and would conform to my knee. A box of frozen squash would not work as well.). I didn’t have much time to rest because I promised my son that I would take him to the mall so he could buy a video game. I also had a reason to go to the mall – I needed to buy a new camcorder to replace the one that had been busted at practice. So, despite the fact that I knew it was dumb to go out with my knee hurting, off we went, with me holding the frozen peas on my knee, to the Liberty Tree Mall, in Danvers. As we were driving, I my knee really started to act up. We parked at the mall (seemed like a mile from the entrance) and walked through the pouring rain to the entrance. By now, I was really suffering. But being a good trooper and dad, I told my son to go ahead and do his thing and I would be in Best Buy. We planned to meet at a spot near Best Buy when we were both done. I went into the store (the truth is I was actually *returning* a newly purchased camcorder that I had bought to replace the broken one, because it was missing a necessary adapter. I simply wanted to swap it for the same model) and went to the Customer Service counter to do the simple exchange. Well, the

girl at the counter just couldn’t seem to understand the concept. She took so long and had to consult with so many people that I just couldn’t take it. I actually had to leave the area and sit down in a chair about 20’ away. Finally, after about *half an hour*, the exchange was completed. I think the Louisiana Purchase was negotiated in less time.

So now I got my new camcorder but my knee was just throbbing. I hobbled out of Best Buy, dragging my bad leg behind me like Quasimoto. Now I was in the mall and I sat down at the benches where I was to meet my son. My son, who is a great kid and my inspiration in many ways is, however, not a fast mover. Plus, going to the mall is something he looks forward to and he was in no hurry to leave and go home. And, of course, he did not know that I was sitting on a bench biting a bullet to endure the pain while I waited for him. After a few minutes of positive self-talk, I visualized myself being able to walk down the mall corridor to Electronics Boutique, where my son was shopping. After all, how far away could it be? Well, think of it this way: have you ever seen one of those movies when a guy is in the desert and he can see the mountains ahead of him? It looks like the mountains are about one mile away, but they are really about 500 miles away. That is what I was facing; my brain said this was a short walk, but my knee saw this as a marathon. Nevertheless, I started to walk but only made it about 50 yards before I had to stop. I sat down on a bench in the middle of the mall with my knee screaming at me for even attempting this stupid stunt. Suddenly I got very hot and began to sweat profusely and feel nauseous. I took off my jacket but continued to sweat; I actually had to put my head down between my knees. I’m thinking “this is great; I’m going to be sick right here in the mall like some 5 year old that drank too much YooHoo”. Plus I’m wearing all my Reading Baseball apparel so people can walk past me and think, “Oh, that’s Reading’s baseball coach throwing up. He

must be drunk.” Fortunately the nausea passed and I was able to have a couple minutes of relief. The good thing is that I was sitting opposite the Victoria’s Secret store, so I could look at some posters during my respite. It was short lived, however, as now I got the chills. I promise you, all of this is true. I got cold and actually started to shiver violently. At this point I was sure that my body was going into shock. I started to panic and thought, “What if I am truly injured here? What if I need an operation? What if I can’t coach any more? What if I miss a Seinfeld episode on TV?” The cold shakes finally passed and I felt a little better. During all this, it was interesting to see how many people stopped to ask me if I was okay. Let’s see, there were, uh, zero. Well, my son was still a ways down the mall and I didn’t think I could get to him. I stood up to try to walk but the pain was worse than ever. I sat down and decided to get help. There was another bench set back-to-back with mine and there was a teenaged kid sitting there. I asked him if he could help me by calling mall security. He looked at me, stood up, and walked away. Usually I have that effect on women, but not on high school boys. But he did go into a nearby store and got his mother who came out to offer help. I told her that I was injured and needed security to get me a wheelchair. That’s right; I was willing to make a big, dopey scene by having a security guy parade me down the mall corridor in a wheelchair. She called security and within a few minutes someone showed up. This guy looked like he was 15 years old. I’m sure he was in his 20’s, but his pudgy baby face made him look younger. He asked me what the problem was and I explained how I had gotten hit by a ball and injured my knee. I told him that I could not walk and needed a wheelchair. But first I wanted to locate my son. I still figured that my son was off to our left, at Electronics Boutique. But I was afraid that maybe he had already walked back to our meeting spot near Best Buy (he may have gone past me when my head was down in ready-to-vomit position). So I asked Barney

Fife if he could go to the right, toward Best Buy, and look for my son. I gave him a description. So off he went, walking at about the slowest pace I could imagine. Put it this way. If I was holding a bunch of green bananas, they would have ripened by the time he got to Best Buy. While he was away, my son showed up, coming from the Electronics Boutique direction and I explained the situation at hand and that I needed to get home. My son told me that he wasn’t able to find the video game he wanted and needed to look some more. So, again trying to be a good father, I told him he could look in Best Buy, as we had to go in that direction on our way out. Shortly afterward, Security Guy came back. I asked him for a wheelchair and he “scurried off” and came back with the chair after a few minutes. He then proceeded to push me toward Best Buy. Let me tell you, there’s not a much more sheepish feeling than having a security guard push a seemingly capable person through a mall. I wanted to stop and buy a fake bandage to wrap around my leg so I looked legitimately injured. When we got to Best Buy I explained to the guy that my son needed to go into the store. So my son went in (remember he is not a fast mover) as Security Guy waited with me. He asked me if my son would take very long and I told him, “Probably” (I wanted to say, “Yes, Einstein, he walks at about the same pace as you.” SG responded by saying, “Well, I can’t be tied up here waiting with you.” I was about to say, “What’s the problem – are you expecting some big crime scene over at the Orange Julius stand?” - but I held my tongue. So SG said he had to leave but, since I had “his” wheelchair, he needed some collateral. He suggested my car keys. I gave him my keys and he said I could pick them up, in exchange for the wheelchair, at the Mall Office. Of course, the office was clear down the other end of the mall. Off goes SG to fight crime at The Pottery Barn and other known criminal hangouts. My son was taking a long time (remember I’m still hurting during all this) so I decided to hurry him up. I wheeled

myself into Best Buy, toward the video game section. I must admit, I was doing okay negotiating the turns and traffic in the store. I only knocked over one display, a life-sized Britney Spears cardboard cutout. Okay, I didn't really knock it over, but I did stop to look at it for a while until an employee asked me to move along. I found my son and got him to finish his business; he bought his game, and we left the store. But now we had to go get my car keys. This time my son would have to push the wheelchair, which he did willingly. We motored down the mall corridor, weaving in and out of people traffic, like Bode Miller, slaloming down the slopes. We made it to the Security Office and my son went inside to ask for my keys. They told him we had to wait until *another* security officer came to assist us. This time it was a young woman security person. She was so lethargic she could have been elected Miss Universe – Laziness Division. She got my keys and then reluctantly escorted us, walking about ten feet behind, as my son wheeled me through the mall toward the exit near Best Buy. Now we had to go outdoors; remember it was pouring rain out there. First, we had to go out the exit door. Miss Universe was so unhelpful that I had to push open the door with my good leg as my son pushed me through the doorway, as Miss Universe watched from a distance. Then Miss U. unhappily came through the door after us. The first stretch of outdoor area was, fortunately, covered by a roof. That kept us dry but the area was crowded, as people waiting for rides were all congregating under cover. But my son cheerfully maneuvered me through the crowd, slowing down only once and that was to say to an elderly woman in a wheelchair: "Hey, maybe you guys can race!" Honest, he actually said that. Next, we had to move out into the rain and find the wheelchair ramp so we could avoid having to ride off the curb. We didn't see it so, like an idiot, I asked Miss U. She did not know what I was

talking about. Even my son explained it to her but she couldn't grasp the concept of a ramp. So I said the heck with it, we'll go over the curb (you know me, a real Evel Kneivel daredevil kind of guy) and Miss U. said, "I ain't goin' out in the rain to get that wheelchair. You have to return it." I turned and said, "Thanks for nothing" and asked my son to help me out of the chair and off the curb. We walked what seemed like an eternity to the car with me leaning heavily on my son for support. I was only able to walk at a snail's pace so I actually had to say to my son, for the first time in his life, "Slow down, you're walking too fast." We got in the car and I was really struggling. But I managed to drive home with the pouch of peas on my leg. The peas were not helpful now, as the bag had thawed, but they made a good snack for the ride. When we got home, I immediately took some Advil and lay down on the couch with another frozen vegetable on my knee (I think it was niblets corn). Now May and I were planning to go to dinner at Scott and Lisa Farris' house that evening. I called Lisa to tell her what had happened (I gave her the short version, not this one) and said that it was unlikely that we would be able to make it for dinner. I told her that I was going to try to nap and then would call later. May heard this and said that we should try to go to the Farris' even if it's just for a while. I thought, thanks for the support: "I am practically in shock with pain and all you can think about is getting a free dinner." I did sleep for a while and when I woke up I intended to call Lisa but May was already on the phone with her, telling Lisa that we could make it. I was surprised that someone would make a decision for me without consulting with me first, but then I remembered that I was married. So, despite still being in considerable pain, we went to the Farris'. As we pulled up to their home, I understood why May had (fortunately, as it turned out) forced the issue about going to dinner. I recognized, despite my Advil-induced delirium, several cars belonging to our

friends. May helped me out of the car and up the stairs to my surprise 50th birthday party!

On the Home Front

You guys are often kind enough to ask about how my family is doing. My wife, May, is busy teaching figure skating as well as meeting the challenges of running our household and family. She does an amazing job; she is such a strong and good person. Lea, who is 23, is working at Eaton Vance, an investment company in Boston. She is doing well, but also looking at other career options. Michael, who just turned 22, is going to school in Sandwich, MA. He is doing well, considering this is his first time away from home. He is growing and learning about independence and developing the life skills and social skills he will need in his future life. Jonathan, 19, is learning the same kinds of things at his school, in North Chelmsford. Jon goes to school in the morning, comes home, and then works a part-time job in the afternoon.

My brothers and their families are well and my parents are doing great. My dad has been bothered with a knee injury and a ruptured bicep tendon (I offered to loan him a bag of frozen peas). But he apparently would rather endure those problems than give up playing handball. Of course, they continue to come to all the baseball games, as well as most RMHS football and basketball contests.

The End

Well, that wraps up another newsletter; I started in October and finished on Dec. 29. I hope you enjoyed it. I thought this was going to be a much shorter version this year, but once I guess there continues to be a lot of news to report. This may not be classic literature, but it's better than reading newspaper stories about Michael Jackson or watching reality shows on TV (by the way, how come we have to twist arms to get guys to take extra BP on their own, but people on reality shows are eager to eat a bucket of worms?).

So let's stay in touch – keep checking the website for news. I hope to see you at some games this spring and at various Alumni Club events. I will definitely keep you all posted on the Alumni Game at Cooperstown possibility.

Take care of yourselves and families, God Bless America, and remember to HOLD ON TO THE ROPE!



