

UCSSL MEETING MINUTES FOR JANUARY 11, 2023

The meeting was brought to order at 7 PM with introduction of UCSSL Officers, Managers and Assistants.

Pete Osborn was recognized and thanked for his more than a decade of service as UCSSL Commissioner and Treasurer. He was congratulated on his induction to the Union County Softball Hall of Fame in October.

The **UCSSL Officers** for 2023 were announced as:

Marty Marks, Commissioner

Pete Osborn, Asst. Commissioner/Treasurer

Rich Grossberg, Operations, Facilities/Fields, 70's coordinator

John Malone, Advisor on legal and other matters

Mike Rosenberg, 60's Coordinator

Frank Mastrocola, 50's Coordinator

A **financial report** was given. The league finished 2022 with a balance of \$26,418.76. This was up \$2,923.14 from last year. Accordingly, officers determined that the player registration and team sponsorship fees would be unchanged for 2023. Player fee will be \$55 for each division of participation. Sponsorship fee will be \$525. Checks for the above can be either hand delivered or mailed to either Marty Marks or Pete Osborn and should be made out to UCSSL. Managers will also be required to provide a forfeit check prior to the beginning of the season. The amount of the forfeit check will be determined once we know what our umpire fee will be. We know that other costs such as field usage and lighting fees will definitely increase this year, and we will absorb those costs by use of the healthy surplus we now enjoy. Player and sponsor fees will need to increase in coming years.

Online registration has been proceeding nicely leading up to this first meeting. We already have 100 registrations in our 50+/60+ Divisions. We have 40 registrations in our 70+ division. Team rosters can now be easily generated. From this point forward, Commissioner Marty Marks will be sending periodic roster updates to each of our 22 50+/60+ team managers so they can be monitored by our team leaders. Players should be encouraged to continue to use the online registration process. The link can be found here:

<https://forms.gle/ECW5Sm15r5sLZEaW7>

Players may also choose to use the older paper version for registration.

We are also getting **new player** registration submittals from guys that are looking to play in the UCSSL but do not have a team assignment as yet. Managers are encouraged to consider adding these players to their roster to bolster their numbers and give these guys a chance to play. It was advised that erring on the side of "too many" players on the roster is better than "not enough". When vacations, business, and family commitments conflict, in addition to inevitable injuries that occur, it is best to have a roster larger than our present minimum (14). Please reach out to Marty Marks for the contact information of these new players seeking a team.

There was no objection to continuing with **Bat Testing** for 2023. Once again, there will be a bat testing session just prior to opening day for new bats that do not have a 2022 sticker already on them. Testing will occur on a team by team basis at the fields during the first two weeks of the season. Players with a 2022 sticker on their bat(s) will be allowed to use them up to the point their at the field team testing has occurred. Another testing session will be scheduled some time soon after Father's Day. A suggestion was made that another full round of bat testing take place just prior to the beginning of playoffs. This can be discussed and voted upon at our March 29 rules meeting. Bat testing is a long arduous process for our bat testing committee (which has essentially been UCSSL Officers). If another full round of testing takes place, we will definitely need additional men on the testing committee. Thank you to Rich Gaul, Alan Dente, and Steve Wieczerszak for volunteering to be a part of the 2023 bat testing committee. Others will also be needed if we are going to expand bat testing.

It is the manager's responsibility to inform their players about testing dates and monitor team bats. A bat without a sticker is an illegal bat and cannot be used in a game OR in batting practice. A bat where a sticker has fallen off is also considered an illegal bat. *Officers cannot be called upon to test a bat other than on the proscribed and agreed upon testing session dates.*

It was discussed and *unanimously* agreed upon that **Rules Enforcement** needs to be strictly applied. It is never a good idea to ask officers to bend or make exceptions to our written rules and policies. This will absolutely apply to our player registration and player/sponsor fees. If a player participates in a game without having first submitted *to the league* (not just in the hands of the manager) a registration/waiver form (online or paper) AND their \$55 fee, the team will be subject to forfeit of game(s) where that player has illegally participated. The same will apply to sponsorship fees. Full sponsorship fee must be submitted to the league prior to Opening Day or the team cannot participate and will be subject to forfeits. There will be NO EXCEPTIONS.

Umpire Review will continue for 2023. Most teams participated in the process in 2022. A few answered the review email only when they had a problem with an umpire. A few never participated. After each game, the manager, or a designated team representative will receive an email with 4 Yes/No questions:

1. Did your umpire arrive with enough time to conduct a pre-game conference with managers?
2. Did your umpire have command of the game and hustle?
3. Was your umpire familiar with UCSSL special rules?
4. Would you like to have this umpire officiate a future game?
5. Additional comments

It was suggested that we had another column to the **Umpire Review** spreadsheet that would provide for a 1 through 5 numerical rating. This will be included for 2023.

It is important to respond to each question and not just give a blanket response such as "the umpire was fine" or "the umpire was not good" as your individual answers will be entered into a spreadsheet for evaluation. During the season and especially prior to playoffs the umpire assigner will be contacted and based upon the results of our Umpire Review will be asked to assign our better umpires to future games and assign our less than adequate umpires elsewhere. The assigner has been cooperative in this regard in the past.

Regarding our umpiring, keep in mind that there is still a shortage of umpires not only here in NJ, but across the country. We might not always have the best umpires. Please do not advise the league that your team will not play if a certain umpire is assigned to your game. Managers are responsible for the conduct of their players especially as it relates to dealing with umpires. We had one ugly incident last season where an umpire felt physically threatened because of the conduct of one team. He is a respected umpire in the area and told the assigner and the UCSSL he would never officiate in our league again. This is a bad reflection on our league, its officers, its players, and our sponsors. Managers need to step up and ensure proper decorum is followed regarding our umpires.

The **alignment of our divisions** was discussed. We now have 11 teams in the 50+ division and 11 teams in the 60+ division. This makes division alignment and scheduling challenging. Ultimately it was decided that the only workable format would be to have either a 6A/5B or 5A/6B format in 50+ and 60+ play.

6-team divisions will play each team within division 3 times (15) and play each team outside of their division once (5) with two bumper games for a total of 22 games over 25 playing dates. (byes will be needed)

5-team divisions will play 4 times within their division (16) and play each team outside their division once (6) for a total of 22 games over 25 playing dates. (byes will be needed)

Playoffs in the 6-team divisions will have the 3 vs 6 seeds and 4 vs 5 seeds play best of three series. Lowest remaining seed will play the 1 seed and highest remaining seed will play the 2 seed in best of three semifinal series.

Playoffs in the 5-team division will have a 4 vs 5 seed best of three play-in series. The winner of the play-in will play the 1 seed, and the 2 vs 3 seed will complete the semi-finals.

Based upon UCSSL **Rules 1.2.2 and 1.2.3** the following will be the alignment in our 50+ Division:

A Division

Douglas VFW
Deegan Roofing
Linwood
Hard Rock Café/Tad Pools
Rocky's Bar & Grill
Blackbird (formerly Sonia's)*

B Division

Phenomenal Boyz*
Thirsty Turtle (formerly Cranford VFW)
Suspenders
AJ Jersey
Linda's Driftwood

*Blackbird and Phenomenal Boyz have the option (if BOTH teams agree) to remain in their respective divisions from last year. They will discuss and get back to the league.

Based upon UCSSL **Rules 1.2.2 and 1.2.3** and some previous precedent, the following was presented as the proposed (by officers) alignment in our 60+ Division:

A Division

Swan Hotel
Deegan Roofing (formerly Diversified Lighting)
Linwood Taphouse #2
Linwood II
Awnings Galore
Rocky's Bar & Grill (new team)

B Division

Kenilworth VFW
Contact Lens & Vision (new sponsor in 2023)
NJ Governmental Services
DeBellis Associates
Yogi's Boys

John Campanella of Awnings Galore presented some additional historical data in addition to concerns regarding age and safety and made the case for keeping Awnings in the B Division for 2023. Debate and discussion ensued. By an 8-3 vote of 60's managers, it was decided to have the 2023 60's division alignment as presented above in the 6A/5B format.

Team uniforms will once again be purchased by the teams themselves. It is recommended that each player have two uniform shirts if possible. While the team shirts do not have to be absolutely identical, they should be relatively consistent in color. They are also required to have a number, team sponsor, and the UCSSL logo displayed. Last year, because of supply chain issues and the fact that this was the first year we asked teams to procure their own uniforms, the league was lenient in enforcing **Rule 3.3** which mandates that all players on the field must have on the official team shirt, violation of which would result in a team forfeit. As with previously mentioned rules, this shirt rule will be strictly enforced in 2023. It is highly recommended to begin the shirt purchase process for existing and especially new players NOW. We have more than 3 months until opening day and there is no excuse to be without a uniform shirt. Two UCSSL players are in the uniform shirt business. Please contact either or both ASAP if you are looking for that service.

Carl Gamba: carl@proayr.com

Joe Kilburg: tees4u2@verizon.net

Opening Day of the UCSSL season will be April 17. **Regular season ends** no later than August 10
Playoffs will begin on first available day following the end of regular season

IMPORTANT: Team switch deadline is Jan 31. As per **Rule 4.10.2** A player must notify previous team manager and league Commissioner Marty Marks in writing (preferably by email) of their intention to play on a

different team in 2023. If a player misses that Jan 31 deadline, they can only play for their previous year's team or sit out for the 2023 season.

Ed Kushner provided an update on the three **Linden fields** that we use. Renovations are presently underway. Fencing, dugouts, bleachers, and backstop work is complete. Actual work on the field surfaces themselves has not yet begun and will be weather dependent. It is quite possible that these field might not be ready by Opening Day. Ed also mentioned that the cost for using these fields has risen from \$15 to \$25 per game. Use of lights will also increase from \$15 to \$25 per game.

Operations and Facilities Officer Rich Grossberg followed up on Ed's presentation and indicated that until Linden fields are ready for play, we might have to compromise on field selection. Rich presented alternative options such as Linden 8th Ward and Rahway Park 3 and 4. He will monitor the progress at Linden and report back to us on what alternative fields are available to us by the time we do field selection at our March 1 meeting.

Our **next meeting** will be on Feb 1

The March 1 meeting will be for field selection

The March 29 final winter meeting will be for a discussion on editing our UCSSL rules. We ask that if anyone has a suggestion for a rule addition/elimination or alteration that you put it in writing and email it to league Commissioner Marty Marks prior to that meeting.