Some History of the Mid-lowa Baseball League Established in 1994



(Please note: This document is always a work-in-progress. We would be happy to correct any errors or omissions. If you have any information you can contribute, please send it to: midiowabaseball@yahoo.com and put "League History" in the subject line.)

In the winter of 1993-94, plans were put place to start an over 30 men's baseball league in the Des Moines, Iowa area. **Merle Sharp** of Chariton, IA, who had lived in Arizona and played in an over 30 baseball league there, went to work trying to get a similar league started in Iowa. He was put into contact with **Steve Sigler**, who was the founder and president of an over 30 national baseball organization called the **Men's Senior Baseball League (MSBL)**, in Long Island, NY. The two of them began planning for the 1994 season. After several advertisements and flyers throughout the community, there was a tryout in the spring. That tryout generated enough players to field nine teams. However, many of the people interested were under 30 years of age, so teams were formed for players aged 18 and over as well as over 30. There were four MSBL and five MABL teams that first year and the league was called the **South Central Iowa MSBL/MABL**. The first season ended in September 1994 with no playoffs or year end tournament, but with a foundation that still exists today.

During the next several months of 1994 and into 1995, the league was reorganized and taken over by three of its members, **Tim Kirgan, Bill Hyland and Ford Goodman**. The league was renamed the **Mid-lowa Baseball League**. The league had almost folded when there were too many debts to pay and basically not enough money collected to pay those debts. However, after much planning and hard work, the league was saved, not only retaining most of the original teams, but adding more teams to have a total of 12 teams, five MSBL and seven MABL. Over the years, the league has continued to grow into what it is today, a fine organization with over 350 baseball addicts.

Number of Teams per League & Approximate Number of Players:

	Total	MABL	MSBL	30/35/38/40/42	Hyland	Fall	
Year	Teams*	18+	25/28/30+	+	45/48+	League*	Players
2020	20	6	6	4	4	0	263
2019	24	9	7	4	4	0	343
2018	26	7	5	7	7	3	384
2017	23	5	5	7	6	3	326
2016	23	6	5	6	6	4	350
2015	26	7	8	7	4	4	368
2014	28	9	8	6	5		400
2013	28	8	9	7	4		#
2012	31	8	9	9	5		#
2011	33	9	9	11	4		#
2010	36	12	11	9	4		#
2009	37	12	12	9	4		#
2008	32	9	12	7	4		468
2007	26	8	12	6			454
2006	28	10	12	6			429
2005	29	13	10	6			473
2004	25	10	10	5			406
2003	29	13	12	4			435
2002	30	13	13	4			450
2001	25	13	12				375
2000	23	12	11				345
1999	22	10	12				330
1998	18	9	9				270
1997	18	9	9				270
1996	15	8	7				225
1995	12	7	5				180
1994	9	5	4				135

#: records not kept

During the first six years of the league's growth, many improvements were made:

- * A nine body **Board of Directors** was established. To better serve our growing league, the Board has since increased to 16 members.
- * Mark Cory designed league patches for everyone to wear on their uniforms. David Less designed the base for our current league logo and John Linden has since enhanced that logo which has been updated for different milestones & anniversaries.
- * In the late 1990s, **Pat Roth** designed & maintained what was one of the top MSBL web sites in the nation. The website responsibilities were later taken over by **Steve Maifield**, who spent many hours making enhancements that allowed the site to be more user-friendly. **Brian Schueller** took over webmaster duties in the spring of 2004 and added to Steve's design to continue the excellence in this regard, as our league continues to have one of the top websites in the country.
- * **Tim Kirgan,** League President from 1994-2004, was one of only 20 national presidents, representing the top leagues in the country, invited to a national seminar and round table discussion concerning the future of MSBL National, entitled "Seminar 2000".

^{*}Fall League teams not included in Total Team count

- * **Tim Kirgan** was inducted to the National MSBL Hall of Fame on October 27, 2001 during the MSBL World Series in Phoenix, AZ. This is evidence that Kirgan was instrumental in helping build one of the premier MSBL/MABL Local Leagues in the nation.
- * **Brian Schueller**, league member since 1997, took over the President position from Tim Kirgan in February of 2004. Brian played for and managed the Des Moines Royals/A's and had previously been League Secretary.
- *John Linden assumed the Commissioner position and has held that role as of November 2008.
- * Formal rules and by-laws are in place and the league is recognized as a non-profit (501c4) organization.
- * A scholarship was organized. To keep our non-profit status, annual donations are made to different charities (CAP Cure is one example, an organization helping fight against prostate cancer) and organizations. We have also helped send local kids to baseball camps across the United States and even Australia.
- * Donations are made annually to local schools and towns that allow us to rent their fields.
- * An umpire committee was organized. **Pat McIlhon** had been the Umpire in Chief for many years and these duties were eventually assumed by **Kelly Wingfield**. **Robin McQuerry**, a league umpire for many years, assumed the Umpire Director position beginning with the 2005 season.

In 1996, the **Des Moines Tigers** participated in the Rochester tournament with a few other league members. Since 1997, the **Des Moines Bruins** have participated in the Hiawatha Summer Slam, a regional MSBL tournament held in Rochester, MN. From 1998 to 2000, the Bruins had made it to the championship game, only to lose to the Rochester (MN) Businessmen, the Chicago White Sox and the Chicago Durham Bulls. In 2001, they were finally able to win the regional tournament, defeating the **Iowa Oaks** of our league in an all Mid-Iowa MSBL final, 19-4. The **Des Moines Yankees** also participated in this same tournament from 1998-2001.

1998 was a great year of recognition for the Mid-lowa MSBL, from a national level. President **Tim Kirgan** and Treasurer **Keith DeWitt** were asked to participate in two regional meetings, held by the national office, in Chicago, IL. Tim was also asked to participate in the 1998 Nike World Masters Games in Portland and Salem, OR, playing with a team from New York State. **Pat Roth** and **Steve Maifield** were recognized by the national office for having a great website and were the second league in the country to receive the "website of the month" award.

In 1998, **Bill Hyland** was featured in the Summer Edition of Hardball Magazine. In 1994, Bill was also featured on WHO-TV in Des Moines, and in the national publication Baseball Weekly. In 1999, Bill was featured in the Rochester, MN newspaper. Bill, who at age 77 retired from the MI-MSBL in 2001, has been an inspiration to not only the local members of the league, but to players and teams across the country!

In 1999, some of the league's board members and volunteers had a unique opportunity. Nine members of the league went to Cooperstown, NY, to play two exhibitions games. One was at a local field vs. a team from Cooperstown. The other was at Doubleday Field, playing against an All-Star team from Rochester, NY. The trip, which included a visit to the National Baseball Hall of Fame, was a chance of a lifetime.

- * In 2002, **Ken Mikesell** and **Brad Eveland** worked together to establish a MSBL 40+ league. After one season, the league was renamed the Bill Hyland League and adjusted to accommodate players 38 and over to stay aligned with our national organization. This league continues strong as many of the original league members now fall within this age bracket.
- * In January of 2004, longtime league member, **Greg Gaul** (Royals/A's), was the victim of a homicide while he worked as a youth social counselor. With Greg's wife due to have their 7th child, the league decided to hold its first All-Star Event to help raise money for the family. The event was an overwhelming success as we collected more than \$3,300 in one evening.
- * In July of 2005, the league held its second All-Star Event. The Lymphoma/Leukemia Society of Iowa was chosen as our charity for the event. The day turned out a heat index of about 110 degrees, but we were still able to cut a check from the proceeds of the event.

- * In 2006, the format of our All-Star Game changed as we worked with the Omaha MSBL to hold two competitions between our leagues. In early August, our 28+ All-Stars played the Omaha 28+ All-Stars in Omaha at Rosenblatt Stadium. Omaha jumped out to a quick lead and used some great pitching to win the inaugural event 7-3. In late August, our 38+ All-Stars hosted the Omaha 38+ All-Stars at Principal Park in Des Moines. Our league held off a late rally to win 7-5. It is our intent to alternate game sites each year going forward for both age groups and for the 4 ½ foot trophies donated by Hooters to reside in the winners restaurant.
- * Over Labor Day Weekend in 2006, the league held it first 25+ Regional Tournament. Mother Nature created trouble during the weekend and kept us from using Principal Park for our final games as intended. In fact, the final never took place. The **Lincoln Bug Eaters** were awarded the championship because of their 3-0 pool record. The **Des Moines Vikings** went 2-1, the **Des Moines Bruins** went 1-2 and the **Des Moines Astros** went 0-3. The Astros ended up defeating the Bug Eaters in the first semi-final before the rains washed out the remainder of the tournament.

2007 Highlights:

The 28 and over league dropped the age limit and moved to a 25 and over league. This aligned us with our national organization and definitely brought a more competitive balance to our league.

Brian Schueller worked with the Iowa Games to add Adult Baseball to their summer offerings. The Carroll Classics won the inaugural 18+ tournament. The Des Moines Bruins won the inaugural 30+ tournament.

The Bruins also traveled to Chicago in mid-July to compete in the Windy City Blowout for the first time. The Bruins returned with the 25+ championship, an exciting 6-5 victory over the Detroit Atu-Jet-Box Braves behind the strong pitching of **John Evans** and tournament MVP **Joe Smith**.

The All-Star Series continued with Omaha. Omaha 25+ came to Principal Park and defeated our All-Stars 11-6. The 38+ All-Stars played a doubleheader against Omaha, losing the first game at Birdland Field 5-2, managing only one hit. MVP **Dave Hartman** started the second game at Principal Park with a lead-off triple and they never looked back in a 9-5 win.

The 18+ division held their All-Star Game at Principal Park on Labor Day Weekend. The National All-Stars defeated the American All-Stars 14-4 behind MVP. **Jon Williams**.

The excitement continued in Phoenix at the annual World Series. The 25+ Bruins reached their 2nd national championship game in five years, destroying everyone in their path and outscoring opponents 124-41 in their eight consecutive wins. Unfortunately, Salt Lake City put a stop to the incredible run with a 5-1 victory in the final.

The Father/Son Iowa Cubs led by manager **Brad Eveland** decided to go one step further and brought back our league's **1**st **NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP** with a 5-3 victory over "The Tribe"

2008 Highlights:

The 38 and over league dropped the age limit and moved to a 35 and over league to align with our national organization. **Ken Mikesell** spearheaded the formation of the 45 and over division in 2008.

2015 Highlights:

In February 2015, at our annual manager's meeting, **Maloch Spivey** presented the structure for what could become our newest division. The Inaugural Fall League kicked off & was greeted with great weather on five consecutive Sundays in September & October. Four teams were formed, jersey tops & hats were provided, managers & coaches were chosen & a player draft was conducted. About 50 players participated in the inaugural season.

National Tournament Recaps

Since 1995, at least one team from the MI-MSBL/MABL has participated in the MSBL National World Series Tournament in Phoenix, AZ, playing on the spring training fields throughout the valley.

- * In 1995, the Des Moines Yankees began making the trip, making the playoffs twice in seven years.
- * Between 1996 & 2002, the **Des Moines Bruins** compiled a 21-17-1 record, winning their pool once and making the playoffs three times.
- * In 1998, a MABL team also called the **Des Moines Bruins**, formed by Mike Ray, participated in the MABL World Series. Two players from that team played for a team from Chicago in 1999.
- * In 2000, a MABL team, formed by **Mike Ray** and **Brian Schueller**, went to the national tournament as the **Des Moines Vikings**. The Vikings continued the trip through that decade under Mike's leadership. Mike has led this highly talented team to the national final in both 2005 & 2006. In 2005, they fell to the Las Vegas Dirtbags 7-1. In 2006, they fell to the San Antonio Pirates, 4-3, in a great matchup.
- * In 2000, **Greg Huyser** formed an age 40 and over team, the **Des Moines Demons**, to participate in that age bracket, along with members of the Indianapolis, IN MSBL. The team also played in the 2001, 40 and over national tournament.
- * In 2000 and 2001, **Jerry Perk**ins and his son **Geoff** played in the newly formed Father/Son World Series, playing for a team from California.
- *In 2001, **Tim Kirgan** was inducted into the Men's Senior Baseball League National Hall of Fame. He was the first MIBL member to be inducted nationally.
- * In 2002, the **lowa Oaks** participated, going 5-1 and winning their pool before losing their opening round playoff game to the Bay Area Beavers.
- * In 2002, **Steve Sigler**, President of the National Organization, held an "All-Star Game" for the players of those teams that were eliminated from the playoffs. Many of the Bruins and Oaks combined to form Team Iowa. They went on to win the game and thus began a relationship that has been successful ever since.
- * In 2003, key members of the **Bruins** and **Oaks (Tim Harvey, Tim Kirgan, John Linden, Brian Schueller** and others) determined that greater success in Phoenix (and regionally) could be obtained by combining forces at the 28 and over level. A 38 and over team was also formed. The new 28+ Bruins debuted in the Hiawatha Summer Slam tournament in Austin, MN by defeating the St. Louis Gameface 16-9 for the title. The Bruins captured four consecutive Summer Slam titles from 2003-2006. In the fall of 2003, the Bruins reached the National Final of the 28+ Central Division at the World Series in Phoenix. Going 5-1 in pool play, the Bruins charged through the playoffs to meet the only team to beat them that week, the St. Thomas (Virgin Islands) Tropical Waves. In the final, St. Thomas jumped out to a 12-0 lead, only to see the Bruins stage one of the biggest comebacks in World Series history. An 11-run 7th inning made the final two innings an edge-of-your-seat battle with St. Thomas hanging on for a 13-12 win.
- * In 2003, the 38+ Des Moines Bruins reached the national semifinals by going 4-2 in pool play and winning their first two playoff games. They ended up losing a heartbreaker to the eventual champion, Calgary Cardinals, 13-12.
- *The Bruins reached the national semi-finals three straight years, from 2004-2006. In 2004, they lost to the eventual champion LA Bulls 9-7. In 2005, they lost to the Salt Lake Buzzards 7-4. And in 2006, they lost to the eventual champion So Cal Cardinals 11-8.
- * In 2006, the Iowa Cubs finished as National Semifinalists at the Father/Son World Series in Phoenix.
- * In 2007, the Bruins finished as National Runner-Up once again, falling 5-1 to the Salt Lake Buzzards in the Central Division 25+ Championship. From 2003-2007, the 28+ Bruins compiled a 34-10 (.773) record under the leadership of **John Linden** in Phoenix.

* In 2007, the **Father/Son Iowa Cubs** brought home our league's first ever **NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP!** This team was led by **Brad Eveland, Greg Huyser, Bobby Williams** & others, along with their sons.



Back row: Jim Pizinger, Geoff Perkins, Brad Eveland, Mike Huyser, Adam Shupe, Kyle Shupe Middle row: Lynn Henry, Jerry Perkins, Erick Fleener, Rick Fleener, Greg Huyser, Pat Scholer Front row: Jeff Kinkle-Schuster, Bobby Williams, Trent Williams, Tyler Williams, Will Scholer

- * In 2008, the 25+ Bruins finished 3-3 in pool play. After defeating Santa Barbara 14-12 in an exciting quarterfinal game, the Bruins lost to the eventual champion, Chicago Seminoles, 17-2. That same year, many of the 25+ team members stayed a 2nd week to help re-vamp the 35+ Bruins. The 35+ Bruins went 4-2 in pool play and fell in the quarterfinals to the Mid-Atlantic Twins, 4-1.
- * In 2009, the 35+ Bruins went 4-2 in pool play, falling in the quarterfinals once again, this time to the Tucson Diamondbacks, 8-6. Also in 2009, the 45+ Bruins finished pool play with a 2-4 record, missing the playoffs due to the runs-allowed tiebreaker.
- * 2010 brought another exciting run for the 35+ team. After going 4-2 in pool play, the Bruins defeated the Puget Sound Gators (8-4) and St. Thomas Storm (12-1) on their way to the national championship game against the Utah Black Sox. After three runs in the top of the first inning, the offense stalled. Utah starting pitcher settled in and they eventually took the lead in the bottom of the 8th. Final score, Utah 6 Bruins 5.

Also in 2010, the 45+ Bruins finished pool play with a perfect 6-0 record earning a first round bye. However, they would fall in the semifinals to Armstrong Slugging Company.

- * In 2011, the 35+ Bruins rolled through pool play with a 5-1 record and clinching their first pool play division title since 2007. The Bruins defeated the Terre Haute Cubs with a walk-off hit in the bottom of the 9th (4-3). Then, for what is believe to be a first for this group, the Bruins were shut out by the St. Louis Tigers 9-0 in the semifinals in the midst of a haboob.
- Also in 2011, the 45+ Bruins finished pool play with a 4-2 record. They defeated the Houston A'z 13-10 in the quarterfinals before falling to the Halo Baseball Club 7-6 in the semifinal.
- * In 2012, four teams from our league entered different divisions at the World Series in Phoenix.

The 35+ Bruins, led by **John Linden**, finished pool play with a 3-3 record. The team would fall in the opening round of the playoffs to the eventual champion Arizona East Valley Yankees, 4-1.

The 25+ Des Moines Astros, led by **Curt Gomes**, finished pool play 3-1-1. The team would also fall in the opening round of the playoffs to the eventual champion Twin City Cardinals, 7-0.

The Father-Son Iowa Aces, led by John Linden, salvaged their four-game effort with a 9-6 win in their final game, going 1-3 for the

week.

The 45+ Bruins, led by **Brian Olson**, finished pool play with a 3-3 record. Ironically, they would also fall in the opening round of the playoffs to the eventual champion Dallas O's by a 5-1 score.

- *In 2012, **John Linden** became the second member of the MIBL to be inducted into the MSBL National Hall of Fame. That same year, **Phil DeVan** became the first member of the MIBL to be inducted into the MSBL World Series Hall of Fame.
- * In 2013, **Maloch Spivey** led a 25+ Des Moines Bruins team to the Fall Classic in Florida. This was our league's first trip to the annual tournament in Florida which was held on the Atlantic side of Florida in Jupiter/Port St. Lucie. The Bruins got off to a strong start winning their first two games, including one over a squad from Athens, Georgia that Spivey used to be a part of. Pitching was strong on the opposing Venezuelan teams & the offense fell short in the next three straight games. The Bruins dropped a 5-3 quarterfinal game to Venezuela as Athens went on to the championship.
- In Phoenix, the 25+ Astros led by **Curt Gomes**, finished pool play 2-2-1, narrowly missing the playoffs. The 45+ Bruins, led by **Brian Olson**, finished pool play 2-3-1, also narrowly missing the playoffs.
- * In 2014, a 50+ team competed in the wood-bat Cactus Division of the World Series in Phoenix, Arizona. This Des Moines Bruins team, led by **Brian Olson**, finished pool play with a 4-2 record, but still had to hold their breath on the final day to earn the final playoff spot. In the quarterfinal, they avenged an earlier loss to a team from Corona, CA by winning 7-6. In the semi-final, the team lost to the Diamond Dream Mustangs 9-2, who went on to defeat the Quad City Blasters in the final.

Also in 2014, **Brian Schueller** & **Joe Smith** worked to take a team back to Florida for the Fall Classic which was moved to the Gulf side in Clearwater. When the league was unable to fill a 45+ squad for the World Series in Phoenix, the committed players of this age group joined forces for Florida and the 35+ wood-bat Central Division. This move proved pivotal as the Des Moines Bruins were able to solidify a strong pitching staff. The Bruins rolled through pool play with a 4-1 record, defeating teams from Central Ohio, New York, Maryland & Pittsburgh. They dropped a 4-1 decision to a team from Venezuela. Earning a first-round bye was key as it allowed the team to rest up as they waited for a team from Clearwater to advance. The Bruins rallied from an early 5-1 deficit to win 9-5 behind a solid pitching effort by Smith. Smith started the championship game against Delaware, only to come out of the game due to injury after four batters. With more late-game heroics, the team rallied from two one-run deficits to win 5-2. **Jason McPherson** threw a gem after taking over for Smith. Smith earned MVP honors with two wins on the mound & a .444 average for the week while also acting as on-field manager. This is our league's first National Tournament Championship since the 2007 Father-Son lowa Cubs.



Back row: Phil DeVan, Jeff Sanders, Ron Watson, Guy Koenig, David Case, Cris Anderson, Jason McPherson, Kent Klemme, Tim Kirgan Front row: John Linden, Darren Lewis, Rocky Reeves, Brian Schueller, Joe Smith, Jeff Lantz, Ron Greenwood, Jerry Wise Not pictured: Gary Frank

In the fall of 2017, the **25+ Des Moines Bruins** joined the 2007 Father/Son Iowa Cubs as the only teams returning from the desert with a **NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP**! The 25+ Cactus Division **Bruins** went a perfect 7-0, scoring the most runs in the tournament and allowing the fewest. A 2-1 semifinal battle was the closest an opponent would come (the go-ahead run scoring on a balk!), but that nerve-wracking challenge led to a determined team in the 11-2 championship victory over the Albuquerque Desert Trout.



Back Row (L-R): John Linden (MGR), Gary Frank, Aaron Quinn, David Case, Jason McPherson, Bud Smith, Matt Pennings, Steve Baldus, Zach Young

Front Row (L-R): Jo Fred, Tanner Linden, Charles Magedanz, Joe Smith, Jake Epsteen, Derek Huxford, Jeremy Green, Dee Ransom, Brian Schueller

Credit to our photographer, **Michelle McPherson**. Also not pictured is Bud's Dad, **Gary Smith**, who helped keep coolers stocked & foul balls chased down. 20 people under one roof & EVERYONE contributed to the success!

In the fall of 2018, the 25+ Des Moines Bruins won the Cactus Division championship on Wednesday, October 24 with a 10-7, late come-from-behind win over the San Jose Marlins. Game MVP & former MIBL member, Jo Fred, led the charge with Will Scholer picking up the win. This was the second consecutive championship for the Bruins, adding a 4th national title to the Mid-lowa Baseball League's trophy case.



Back Row (L-R): John Linden, Scott Sturm, Gary Frank, Jason McPherson, Zach Young, Eric White, Will Scholer, Jo Fred, Dave Wollam Front Row (L-R): Joe Smith, Dee Ransom, Jeremy Green, Jake Epsteen, Tanner Linden, Trent Williams

In 2016, John Linden became the first member of the MIBL to receive the MSBL Lifetime Achievement award.

In May of 2017, the Mid-lowa Baseball League inducted its inaugural class of Hall of Fame members:

Individual Contributors: Warren Anderson, Mike Bell, David Case, Phil DeVan, Keith DeWitt, Tim Harvey, Bill Hyland, Tim Kirgan, John Linden, Scott Littell, Curt Lyons, Robin McQuerry, Brian Olson, Joe Reser, Brian Schueller, Joe Smith, Ron Watson, Bobby Williams

Undefeated Teams:

1998 Des Moines Giants (30+, 17-0)

2003 Des Moines Vikings (18+, 18-0)

2003 Des Moines Giants (28+, 17-0)

2006 Iowa Oaks (28+, 16-0)

2007 Des Moines Bulldogs (38+, 17-0)

2016 Des Moines Cubs (35+, 17-0)

During the 2017 World Series in Phoenix, **Brian Schueller** was inducted into the Men's Senior Baseball League National Hall of Fame, the third member of the MIBL to be honored.

In May of 2018, the Mid-Iowa Baseball League inducted its second class of Hall of Fame members:

Individual Contributors: Rick Fleener, Jason Ickowitz, Mike Ray, Clay Rickert, Chris Tidwell

National Championship Teams:

2007 Father/Son Iowa Cubs 2014 Fall Classic 35+ Central Des Moines Bruins 2017 World Series 25+ Cactus Des Moines Bruins

In early 2020, the third MIBL Hall of Fame class was announced:

Individual Contributors: Chad Cantrall, Brad Eveland, Jason McPherson, Bob Newman, Rob Novak

National Championship Team:

2018 World Series 25+ Cactus Des Moines Bruins (repeat champions)

Shortly after the 2020 Hall of Fame announcement, the Coronavirus (Covid-19) started spreading nationwide. Due to a complete shutdown of minor league baseball & our plans for an event at Principal Park, we postponed our celebration.

We were able to begin our 2020 season for each division in June & successfully completed all seasons amidst the global pandemic.

Last update: October 6, 2020