

American Legion Baseball

The Early Days

Baseball, hotdogs, apple pie, and Chevrolet! That's about as American as you can get, at least according to the 1975 Chevy advertisement. That's hard to argue with and the American Legion has embraced baseball since Legion Baseball was founded in 1925. Since then, American Legion Baseball has taught hundreds of thousands of young Americans the importance of sportsmanship, good health and active citizenship. Millions of young men have played Legion Baseball over the years and have seen the organization as a stepping stone to manhood and served their country or community, or played the sport at the highest level in the MLB.

The league was first proposed at an American Legion state convention in South Dakota when it was noted that the American Legion could assist in the training of young Americans through athletic games and that athletic competition teaches courage and respect for others while fostering their growth into active citizens. From that convention came an agreement to draft a resolution that was then presented at the ensuing national convention in Omaha, Nebraska and was fully supported by National Commander James Drain. The resolution read:

“RESOLVED: That The American Legion...inaugurate and conduct baseball leagues and tournaments for local championships, and that local champions determined by the competitions be given opportunity to compete in departmental, sectional and regional tournaments, and that a junior world series championship baseball series be conducted at each national convention...”

1926 saw the vision become a reality when posts in 15 states organized and sponsored teams and conducted championship tourneys. Postseason tournaments at the state and regional levels culminated with a national championship that was held in Philadelphia with a team sponsored by a New York post beat a team from Idaho. After the first year, it was learned that the format of the season was a success, but that came at a price of nearly \$50,000. In early 1928 The Legion's first donor to that expense was professional baseball and with that support the program was thriving, that is until the great depression came along in 1933 when Major League Baseball had to withdraw its support. The Legion's Americanism Chairman Dan Sowers worked very hard and again found corporate sponsors and several large newspaper companies in many major cities, keeping the program marching on, albeit with many teams being run on very limited budgets. In 1935 the MLB was able to renew its pledge which is still intact today with a \$40,000 annual contribution, which in today's budget, comes to about 3 percent of the total budget.

Submitted by,

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Sons of the American Legion

Source – American Legion website