

TORBAY BARONS



FIVE YEAR PLAN 2012-2017

Torbay Barons Baseball Club Five Year Plan

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“You see, you spend a good piece of your life gripping a baseball, and in the end, it turns out that it was the other way round all the time”

.....Jim Bouton, New York
Yankees pitcher

A Brief History

The Torbay Barons Baseball Club was officially formed in June 2011 after founder Laurence Smith, a lifelong baseball fan and former member of Croydon Pirates Baseball Club, moved to Torquay, Devon. Laurence missed playing the game and after asking around realised there might be enough interest in Torbay to warrant forming a club.

The Clubs name is taken from 'Torbay', the area where majority of the players live and the home ground is based, and the 'Barons' was selected to honour Baron William Brewer (d 1226), the Sheriff of Devon and administer of Justice in the South West.

There already are two established baseball clubs in the South West, Plymouth Mariners – who have two quality baseball diamonds in Central Park, Plymouth; and Bristol Badgers. The Bristol Badgers have recently renovated and upgraded their diamond and are currently involved in the British Baseball Federation "AAA" Division, and currently have a development team called the Bristol Bats.

In early 2011 Laurence contacted Torbay Council after identifying Clennon Valley as a potential home ground for the club, and with their support, in March the first practice was held there with 4 players, 1 bat, 3 gloves and 5 balls. The need for proper equipment was vital to starting the club so Laurence decided to apply for funding from Sport England Lottery Fund for the necessary equipment that the club would need. The application was approved for start up funding and in September 2011, the club received equipment and uniforms to begin proper training.

Interest in the formation of a baseball club in Torbay grew quickly and by end of 2011, 32 people had attended the training sessions. The Barons played three games at the very end of the 2011 season, all of which they lost. With the mild winter the club were able to continue training well into December with the players showed signs of improvement, despite half the team never playing the sport before.

The Year Ahead

2012 has already proved to have followed on from where the club left off from the previous season, with 3 new members joining since the start of winter indoor training sessions.

Along with Plymouth Mariners and Bristol Bats, Torbay Barons are negotiating for the formation of a South West Baseball league, under the administration and affiliated to the British Baseball Federation (the governing body of baseball in the U.K) as an Adult competitive league, allowing for the winners to be eligible to compete in the National Play offs at the end of the season. This league should hopefully be set up by the summer of 2012 as an exhibition league, before starting as a competitive league in 2013. For the foreseeable future, the South West Baseball league will consist of three teams, but every effort will be made to attempt to increase the participating teams by drawing in possible college teams. There is also rumour of a new baseball team in Taunton.

In March of 2012 the Barons will be competing in the Herts Spring League, which a National Baseball Tournament hosted each year by Herts Baseball Club just prior to the Start of the Baseball season on 1 April 2012. Teams from all around the country will be involved, and it will be an excellent benchmark for the club to judge their abilities against.

The club are planning to enter various other tournaments throughout the UK and possibly into Europe this year in order for the team to get as much experience as possible in order for the Torbay Barons to be as competitive as possible to compete against the much more experienced and older clubs of Plymouth and Bristol.

Torbay Barons believe baseball is vital to the community, by offering a new sport to participants who would not normally participate in the established sports already on offer in the South West. It is able to provide an intense means of fitness training, without having to participate in major amounts of running, and is a good cardiovascular exercise. There is also a very good team and community spirit aspect to baseball and it does become a good social event.

Home Field Development

After discussions with the Torbay Council, Torbay Barons have been granted permission to use an area of field at Clennon Valley playing fields in Paignton as their home ground.

Currently there is no field infrastructure but the Council have agreed in principle to install an adequate gravel infield, pitcher's mound and field lines and markings.

At the moment, the club has a temporary backstop which has to be set up each practice. We are hoping that a long term agreement with the council can be arranged so that we will be able to erect a permanent backstop and fences surrounding the field. We will be searching for corporate sponsors to assist the club with the funding for the fencing and backstop.

A professional field is important to the development of the club. A sports club that has good quality facilities will generally attract a higher percentage of new members than a club with poor quality facilities.

Youth development

At Torbay Barons, we regard the development of youth players as an essential part of sustaining the club for the future. We will be sending current adult players on official BBF coaching courses throughout this year with the assistance of both the BBF and Active Devon (the Devon County Sports Partnership) and with the assistance of the BBF in obtaining the CRB checks which would allow the Club to offer training and taster baseball sessions at local junior and senior schools, and

allow the Club the opportunity to form a youth team. Plymouth Mariners have a really decent youth system in place, and we would like to both emulate and work with Plymouth in developing a youth baseball system in the South West.

We have contacted Torbay Council who has agreed to assist us through the Torbay Sports Partnership into obtaining the required contacts to be able to offer the taster sessions into the local schools and colleges.

The Barons, alongside the other South West baseball clubs are aiming to begin a schools baseball league for both the 7 – 11 year old (Little League) and 12 -16 year old (Junior) age groups.

High on the list for the Barons are Torbay Community College and Paignton Community College as both offer sports programs, and are both local to our club.

Having received a Sport England grant for the Adult senior team, we will be applying for another grant in order for the club to purchase all the equipment we would require for us to both host and sustain youth baseball programs.

There are also funds available through certain supermarket chains, offering sports equipment for vouchers schemes which we are planning to join in an effort to provide the funding to promote junior and youth baseball programs.

Summer 2012: Torbay Barons plan to visit at least three schools this Summer, offering baseball taster sessions consisting of basic fielding and batting practice, and finishing the session with a short game. The idea of these sessions is to introduce the children to the game of baseball.

Equipment, Uniforms and field equipment

Torbay Barons will be requiring at least two junior baseball sets and two Little League baseball sets (which would allow for the two Club junior teams , and two sets for the taster sessions for schools and colleges). We are planning to apply for a Sport England grant for the equipment, and as we have already received a Grant from Sport England for the adult senior team, we believe that we will be successful with our second application.

We intend to approach commercial business in order to purchase the school baseball packs and uniforms in order to equip the local schools for the inter school baseball leagues. With the relatively low cost for all the required equipment, and the interest in youth sports, we do not see many problems securing sponsorship.

The Club also intend to sign up for some of the many 'Vouchers for Sports Equipment' schemes that are on offer at the moment. We intend to be signed up to coincide with the formation of the youth team in 2013.

Marketing and Promotion

Currently, the Torbay Barons have had a few articles published in local newspapers and magazines, but a large publicity push is planned for the first full season.

The club will be expanding the areas of coverage to branch further away from Torbay and cover a radius further out than Exeter.

Along with the printed media (Newspapers, Magazines Posters etc), and internet access (websites, Forums etc), We are to begin discussions with Major League Baseball International (MLBI) and ESPN Sports Network, in order to gain permission to supply free DVD copies of four MLB games per year for junior participants. With the only access to MLB games in the UK through ESPN as an added Chanel, there is a need for participants in the school and taster sessions to be able to watch what they have experienced during the sessions performed at the highest level by the professionals in the Major Leagues.

The Five Year Plan

With the basics now covered, the next step forward is to increase the adult participation, and within the next two years we aim to start a second adult team.

A youth team for children aged between 12 years and 16 years old is planned for the start of the 2013 season. This team will be competing locally and nationally in league games and training sessions hosted by the BBF and other BBF affiliated clubs.

By continued taster and training sessions at schools and colleges, our club are hoping to offer at least two junior teams by the start of the 2014 season. The positive aspect of baseball is that the Sport is multi gender, suitable for players of all ages (from 7 years old to 60 years old), and you do not have to be a specimen of perfect physical condition as with most sports, (just look at Detroit Tigers new trade Prince Fielder!!).

The Start of the 2014 season is also planned to be the first year of hosting a bi-annual junior baseball tournament for children aged from 7 years to 11 years old. This 'little league' style round robin tournament will offer a competitive but friendly tournament for junior participants of the basic taster sessions that the club will be holding starting from the 2012 season.

Hosting these tournaments during the summer at Clennon Valley Playing fields will give the Barons the opportunity to invite junior teams from around the country to participate, as more temporary fields would be available for the tournaments.

By 2015 we are hoping to be able to introduce the first season of little league and junior baseball into interested schools.

Of vital importance to the growth of baseball in Torbay and the South West is to have a dedicated baseball diamond which is permanently fenced off and includes a professional backstop and team 'dugouts'.

The fact of having our own dedicated baseball field will assist the club with procuring sponsors for the forward development of both the adult and junior teams. To have the continued use of Clennon Valley Playing fields will be of great benefit to the junior levels baseball, to use for tournaments where multiple teams will be attending.

Conclusion

In the United States of America, MLB games are regarded as more than just a sports meet. It is a daylong event, with food, drink and entertainment. Special days are set aside for dog appreciation day, kids fun days, Military awareness, Cancer awareness, on Care of the elderly to name a few.

With our own dedicated ground, we aim to set about similar events, to both raise money for various charities and organisations, and to assist troubled teens.

The possibility of using the uniqueness of baseball to work with the community is endless, and the 'American' connection with the sport is a great draw for the younger generations.

By the End of our Five Year Plan, we hope to have the two Adult Teams, the Little League team, the Junior Team and our own dedicated Baseball Diamond, and a strong and competitive South West Baseball League.

Along with the South West Baseball league, our club intends to have instigated the formation of the inter schools baseball league for the two age groups, and to have new schools signing up on a yearly basis.

The whole plan may seem ambitious at this stage, but the strides Torbay Barons have taken since their official formation at the end of last year have been enormous, and the sport can only grow and develop from here. All baseball clubs are naturally ambitious and hard working, as there is barely any infrastructure from which to begin, and the only schemes for us to follow is the professionally

run MLB. All clubs in the UK help and support each other, which is only a benefit for the growth of the sport in the UK.

With ambition, hard work, dreams and sweat, anything is possible!



Torbay Barons team against Plymouth Mariners 23/10/2011