

History

Hanover Senior Softball League History

Those of us who are in the age category to play senior softball believe that slow pitch softball doesn't necessarily have to be a younger person's game. Many players who retire from playing in other softball leagues have had to travel outside the Hanover community to continue playing softball, i.e. Henrico or Chesterfield. Hanover has long been a hot bed for baseball, then fast pitch softball. When slow pitch softball became increasingly popular, many older players, men and women, joined in the game because of their interest and skills. The belief prevailed that Hanover and the surrounding community had enough interested persons (men 50 and over; women 40 and over) to support a senior softball league.

The initial impetus for the founding of the Hanover Senior Softball League (HSSL) came out of a situation in 1992 in which Tom Foster was playing in the Henrico League on Monday nights. Tom could only play one night per month at Henrico due to prior commitments on three Monday nights in each month. At the end of that season, in December, the Atlee Ruritan Club held its annual spouses' night, and newly appointed Director of Hanover County Parks & Recreation, Brad Ashley, and his wife were invited as special guests to the event. Tom took the opportunity to tell Brad that he played softball on Monday nights for the Henrico Senior Softball League, on Wednesday nights for the Richmond City Senior Softball League, and on Thursday nights for the Chesterfield Senior Softball League. Brad responded, "Are you saying that we need a Senior League in Hanover?" The response was a definite "yes". Consequently, Brad invited Tom to a meeting of the

county softball league presidents to be held on December 22, 1992, at the school board office building in Ashland. Tom decided to go to the meeting and make a pitch for establishing a senior softball league in Hanover county.

The first step Tom took was to invite Ralph Lett, a friend who had invited him to play in the Henrico and Richmond City leagues, to attend the meeting with him. Ralph suggested that Joe West, a longtime softball player and manager join them at the meeting. Tom, Ralph, and Joe formed a planning committee for getting the league established. When the topic was introduced at the meeting, no lengthy remarks had to be made. The idea of a senior softball league was accepted immediately and unanimously. Thusly, on December 22, 1992, the HSSL was conceived.

The county agreed to provide a field on which to play. Billy Young, principal at Rural Point Elementary School, agreed to allow the league to play at the school. An organizational meeting was announced in the local papers for mid-February at the school board office building in Ashland. Four people attended this meeting: Tom, Ralph, Joe, and a staff member from the Dept. of Parks & Recreation who was interested in seeing the league organized. Somewhat discouraged, but determined, a second organizational meeting was scheduled for mid-March at the same location. Also, this time, four people attended: Tom, Ralph, & Joe and a potential player from Montpelier. Discouraged, but not defeated, another meeting was called for early April. This meeting, however, was not billed as an organizational meeting; rather the newspaper announcement stated that men 50 and over and women 40 and over who were interested in playing softball should bring their gloves and bats to Rural Point Elementary School at 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 3, 1993. A total of six people showed up.

Before the third meeting, several planning meetings took place in which issues such as field conditions including lighting and playing surface, field management, and uniforms, were

discussed. At that time the county's role was to supply a playing field and liability insurance. The league would provide field maintenance, field chalking, and umpires. An ASA representative was invited to attend one of the meetings. The planning committee made a decision that the league would play by ASA senior softball rules.

By early June, HSSL was able to field three teams. Officers were elected as follows: Ralph Lett, President; Tom Foster, Vice President; Kathy Walle, Secretary-Treasurer. These three plus Joe West made up the first Board of Directors for the league. Joe West volunteered to obtain softballs and uniforms for the league. HSSL adopted its' rules of the game using Henrico Senior Softball League rules as a model. Some rules were modified. Others were added, with player safety as the primary consideration. During the first year, the three teams played two games each Wednesday night. A volunteer umpire was used, usually from one of the teams.

It was decided early on that new teams would be formed each year to promote team equality and competitiveness. As the league developed, various committees were established such as the player-assignment committee, rules committee, banquet committee, tournament committee, and others to address specific needs.

The second year of the league, 1994, Tom Foster was President, Everett Walle was Vice-president, Kathy Walle was Secretary, and Susan Crouch was Treasurer. Four teams were established that year. Each team played a double header on Wednesday evening at Rural Point Elementary School. A small fee was charged each player to defray the cost of uniforms, balls, scorebooks, and other supplies. Tommy Rice, son of one of the players, volunteered to umpire that year. A league banquet was implemented in 1994 and held at the Ashcake Rescue Squad building.

Everett Walle was President in 1995 and served as league

president through 2002. The growth of the league during those years was as follows:

1995	–	4	teams		1998	–	8	teams		2001	–	8	teams
1996	–	4	teams		1999	–	8	teams		2002	–	8	teams
1997	–	6	teams		2000	–	8	teams					

During Walle’s tenure as President, the league played all of its games at Cold Harbor Elementary School. The 1995 league banquet was held at the Ashcake Rescue Squad building, and the 1996 – 2002 banquets were held at Fairfield Presbyterian Church. In 1996, Walle started a HSSL tournament similar to the ones already being held by Henrico and Chesterfield Senior Softball Leagues. (As the author recalls, Hanover won its first tournament!) In addition to players’ enjoying good caliber softball, players and guests alike enjoyed meeting and having fellowship with players and teams from the Richmond Metropolitan area. To make up for the shortage of women players on the 1996 Hanover tournament teams, players were invited from the Hanover Women’s Church League to play. A positive outcome from this was that a number of these women who played in the tournament eventually joined the HSSL as permanent players.

Garland Branch, our present league president, began his tour of service in 2003. During his tenure, the league has experienced growth as follows:

2003	–	9	teams		2006	–	13	teams
2004	–	10	teams		2007	–	14	teams
2005	–	12	teams					

During Garland’s tenure, the banquet site was changed to Shady Grove United Methodist Church. In 2006, the Hanover tournament consisted of teams from Henrico and Hanover. Henrico canceled its own tournament.

Hanover, Henrico, and Chesterfield have committed themselves

to better planning and more effective communication for tournament play in the future.

Hanover Senior Softball League

Officers Roster

Year	President	Vice President	Secretary	Treasurer
1993	Ralph Lett	Tom Foster	Kathy Walle	Kathy Walle
1994	Tom Foster	Everett Walle	Kathy Walle	Susan Crouch
1995-2002	Everett Walle	Ed Schmidt	Kathy Walle	Susan Crouch
2003	Garland Branch	Ed Weil	Holly Wachsmuth	Susan Crouch
2004-2006	Garland Branch	Wayne Sears	Holly Wachsmuth	Susan Crouch
2007	Garland Branch	John Payne	Holly Wachsmuth	Susan Crouch

The above is an effort to document the history of HSSL. It is by no means complete. Anyone who believes that the information contained herein should be edited or that additional information should be included, should contact Kathy Walle via email at kathywalle@aol.com.

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