

# 2024-2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

### INTRODUCTION

The report will cover the period November 1, 2024 to October 31, 2025 and will highlight initiatives and activities approved by the Board and completed by the staff of St. John's Minor Baseball Association (SJ MBA) that are above and beyond the normal day to day scope of work.

### ADMINISTRATION

This was my second year in the role of Executive Director, beginning in March 2024. After learning a lot of the inner workings of the organization in 2024, I set out to make some improvements on our membership feedback, with the help of our board of directors.

#### *Grant Workers*

SJ MBA had a decrease in grant student numbers compared to 2023:

Canada Summer Jobs 12 (2 more than 2024, 1 less than 2023 and 4 less than 2022)

NL Provincial Grants Post-Secondary / High School 11 (2 more than 2024)

**In 2023 and years prior, these NL Provincial Grants were split into Post-Secondary and High School**

#### ***Total 23***

*It is important to note that these jobs are becoming increasingly difficult to fill. Students are not wanting to work 20 plus hours each week and that has become a strain on the association during hiring time. Through umpiring alone, a staff member would have to work a double header each night, Monday through Thursday, to achieve approximately 18 hours.*

## PROGRAMS

2024-2025 was another busy year, especially navigating the 2025 Canada Games. While we knew the games would have some effect on our programming, the full scope was released fairly close to our season start, however we did plan ahead. Our registration numbers slightly declined compared to last season, and as always, we saw a number of refunds due to injuries, and we saw partial refunds for participants of the NLWBL (NL Womens Baseball League).

### *Winter Ball*

On November 23rd, we opened On-line registration which was approximately a week and a half earlier than the previous year. This was our 12th year under the current structure. In short, Mark Healy plans, staffs and executes the program. We are responsible for all administrative requirements, rent the facility and provide the equipment.

Winter Ball was well attended given the multitude of training opportunities that exist in the Metro region, with an increase across the board for Session 1, and Session 2 holding steady from 2023. Comparative numbers to 2018-2025 are shown below:

Session 1				Session 2		
	House League	All Star	Female	House League	All Star	Female
2016	119	74	0	121	90	0
2017	124	82	0	123	93	0
2018	121	101	0	132	110	38
2019	113	100	36	113	122	42
2020	92	69	47	95	90	40
2021	67	50	40	68	53	46
2022	91	20	26	115	42	33

2023	73	46	25	115	79	42
2024	101	60	39	119	70	37
2025	83	48	23	89	59	26

The program consisted of two 7-week segments with two 90 minute sessions (one for House and one for all-star players). We charged \$225 per player per session (\$400 for two sessions). Attendance was open to players from all baseball associations in the region. The female program consisted of two 7-week segments. We charged the same amount per player as the Friday session. Winter Ball was a success in all aspects given the increased stress put on the association to conduct the programs, as well as an increase in competition for training programs throughout the region. We have not increased registration for Winterball since 2013.

In 2025, we continued doing specialty camps under the name “Spring Training”. The goal of these camps is to provide specialized small group training in response to our membership asking for such programming. These camps were designed as short term sessions to target either offensive, pitching or defensive skills. In 2024 and 2025 these were offered in the form of 2x Offensive Camps, 1x Pitching and 1x Defensive camps, so the numbers will look different than 2023 since the session offerings have changed slightly. Registration numbers were as follows:

	Offense #1 (2024)	Offense #1 (2025)	Offense #2 (2024)	Offense #2 (2025)
Early Session	53	54	57	65
Late Session	41	37	42	46

	Pitching (2024)	Pitching (2025)	Defense (2024)	Defense (2025)
Early Session	54	64	60	60
Late Session	36	44	39	41

### *School Tournaments*

In 2025, SJMBA opted out of hosting the school tournaments. At the time of the decision, we weren't fully aware of how long we would be losing Edgar Hartery Field which would affect our House League programming. After cancelling the school tournaments, we managed to select our all star teams earlier and start our house league program two weeks earlier, which was a massive success for both programs and we received a large amount of positive feedback in our end of year survey surrounding the topic of starting earlier. To see the data showing the growth of the school tournaments from 2023 to 2024, please see the 2024 Executive Director's report.

## Registration

Our summer registration opened on Saturday, April 5th with full on-line registration and payment. We continued with the RAMP Registration software. We managed to find a better average roster size for house league to help with the defaults which certainly reduced the overall number, but did not eliminate them completely. Unfortunately even with teams of 15 players which hurt the number of reps and at-bats a player will receive, teams still find themselves in situations where they have 7-8 players unable to attend and forcing a default . We continued with the lower number of players per team in Rally Cap to align with the Rally Cap roster guidelines presented by Baseball Canada

	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Rally Cap (5-7)	120	98	141
9U (8-9)	204	234	229
11U (10-11)	172	212	177
13U (12-13)	138	189	177
15U (14-15)	87	96	111
18U (16-18)	63	63	61
12U Female (10-12)	49	59	46
14U Female (13-14)	40	45	45
16U Female (15-17)	18	15	15
Unassigned	54	N/A	N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>1011</b>	<b>1002</b>

Note that the 16U female team played in the 15U House League in 2024 but not 2025, and the 14U AA Female team did not play in the 14U LOTO league in 2024 but returned to LOTO in 2025. Our 18U male players were given the option of playing all star without registering for house league and this was the first year where a new league was offered for the 18U+ female program called the NLWBL.

The unassigned players includes players who registered late who played but are not showing in RAMP as assigned to a team due to some IT issues, as well as players who registered and received a refund or partial refund.

## ALL STAR PROGRAM

In April and May, the All-star Committee co-chaired by Danny Penton and Alex Curtis, decided to start our expression of interest for all star coaches as well as house league coaches. Although it was a lengthy process with some delays to naming coaches on certain teams, we staffed all teams with experienced coaches. We continued our policy that if a parent was selected to coach, his/her coaching role was confirmed only after all players including his/her son/daughter were selected, not vice-versa. This process helps us to further demonstrate transparency and equity in the selection process.

SJMBA fielded 19 all-star teams in 2025 in the following divisions:

11U A RED - Did not qualify	11U A BLACK - Provincial Gold	11U AA - Provincial Silver	11U AAA - Provincial Gold
12U A - Did not qualify	12U AA - Provincial Silver	13U A RED - Provincial Silver	13U A BLACK - Provincial Gold
13U AA - Did not qualify	13U AAA - Provincial Gold	14U A - Qualified for AA, Finished 3rd	14U AA - Provincial Silver
15U A RED - Did not qualify	15U A BLACK - Provincial Gold	15U AA - Did not qualify	15U AAA - Provincial Gold
16U AA - Did not qualify	18U A - Provincial Silver	18U AA - Provincial Gold	

As Baseball NL introduced a new ranking system in 2023, this affected the placements of our teams at Provincial events which in some instances increased the overall competitiveness. I have already submitted my end of season review to BNL on the status of the current ranking system and how it is perceived from our organization. In short, the ranking system is a huge positive to baseball as a whole in the province, however it still needs tweaking which is to be expected with a new system. In 2025, our 14U A team was promoted to AA provincials which might be the first time this has happened, and this team managed to finish third which is an amazing accomplish.

The all star program as a whole was very successful, including 4 teams going to Atlantic (11U AAA, 13U AAA, 15U AAA and 18U AA) with our 15U AAA team capturing silver. We started the season with the CBS Kiwanis tournament and had 6 Caps teams capture 6 Championship Banners (11U A, AA, AAA and 13U A, AA, AAA). In metro play, we also had 6 Caps teams win 6 metro championships (11U AA, AAA, 13U AA, AAA, and 15U AA, AAA).

In May, we conducted our all-star selection process. Once again, we engaged Mark Healy, as well as the All-Star committee to develop an evaluation matrix so that each player could be assessed in a transparent, equitable manner. We also continued the use of skill shark software to allow for better player tracking and monitoring. We asked the all-star coaching candidates to attend the try-out sessions for their age division. The all-star committee, in coordination with Ken, Mark Healy, select evaluators and myself went through the data to ensure we felt comfortable with results. After 2021, we deemed it prudent to make some changes to the selection meeting. We invited coaches whose kids were safely on a team to be a part of the conversation so as to not influence decision making. We also reached out to all coaches with their comments regarding what they saw at tryouts, as well as referencing numbers/comments from coaches in the past season. While we always try to keep our approach current, our number one goal is to ensure all players have a fair chance regardless of their background and we are extremely proud of our commitment to this.

#### *Caps High Performance Program*

In 2020, we started our Caps High Performance Program with Premier Sports Academy. We continued this program in 2023 and did not resign the contract with PSA in 2024, nor did we put the contract out to tender.

The 2024 Caps High Performance Program was designed in-house by all-star committee co-chair Danny Penton, and saw some tweaks in 2025 through the guidance of Danny and lead instructor and all star co-chair Alex Curtis. Once again, the High Performance program was very successful and will be continued in 2026, with some minor adjustments and tweaks. Our attendance from the 15U age bracket is currently being reviewed and will be a topic of discussion by the 2026 all star committee.

#### *Metro League*

In 2023 the Metro area associations decided to hire a scheduler to help decrease the workload on SJMBA. Previously, the metro league was a SJMBA run endeavor which was too much work and time spent by the previous executive director.

We hired a new scheduler for 2025 and incorporated a website to host the schedules for these Metro teams. While the metro league continues to be successful and was improved upon from 2024, there are still some tweaks that need to be made as we continue to participate in a successful endeavour.

As mentioned previously, we did sweep the metro league playoffs. There continues to be questions surrounding entering the A teams into a metro league, however our neighboring associations have zero interest in doing so.

### *Female Teams*

While we did not capture a provincial gold at the female level this year, we saw numerous successes throughout the year. Our 14U AA team had an undefeated season going into the championship game at provincials and unfortunately lost a tough game. Our 14U A team was promoted to the AA provincials and managed to finish third in the tournament.

## **House League**

While we never implemented any rule changes for house league in 2025 compared to 2024, we did optimize our roster sizes in an effort to prevent defaults at certain levels, while also fixing our staffing issues. We modified some plans in Rally Cap and 9U however further evaluation is necessary. We continued with tiered championships in 11U and 13U to give more kids a chance to play for a medal. While not perfect, it is still well received and the buzz around the park during playoff season still retains that magic of fall baseball that the kids and parents all love.

*Rally Cap Program* – Rally Cap was offered on Mondays and Wednesdays or Tuesdays and Thursdays, and we operated with 12 total teams (up from 10 in 2024) and an average roster size of 10 per team. Previously, we were going outside the Baseball Canada recommended roster size for Rally Cap and had rosters of 12-14 players per team. This year we had 3 teams over the recommended roster size of 10 due to late registrations, however these were because of friends requests and did not pose issues. The Rally Cap Under the Lights night returned to St. Pat's after a brief move to Airport Heights due to renovations at St. Pat's and was a huge success.

*9U* – We continued with the Minor and Major 9U divisions in 2025 and continued to play 4 nights a week at Virginia Park and Kelly's Brook under the guidance of various grant staff and casual staff. After the 2024 season we sought to provide more standardization and consistency to 9U, and we ended up developing a rubric on our website to help parents slot their kids in the right division. We only saw 3 athletes migrate (2 from minor to major, 1 from major to 11U) and the competitive balance was achieved, as seen in the end of season playoffs. Some medal games were moved to Edgar Hartery Field under the lights which was well received. There is still work to be done with 9U and a big part of that begins with our staff.

*11U* – We had 10 teams as opposed to 12 in 2024, which reflects our lower registration totals however we had far less defaults than in 2024. Our goal for house league is for players to have fun and play with their friends. This is something that all coaches and parents should support as well. We struggled to fill coaching positions at the beginning of the year due to lack of people stepping forward, but ultimately we did manage to fill these slots. We did start the season with 2 weeks of practices thanks to parental feedback in 2024, and there were some teams that still did not have coaches by the first practice despite our efforts. Unfortunately, volunteering is down in every sector in the province and we cannot control this, but we can continue to forge ahead and try to fix these issues in 2026. Defaults were no longer an issue in 11U however there was one team that struggled throughout the year despite their roster size.



This is a hard issue to fix given that the roster sizes are constructed to prevent this.

*13U* – We had 8 in 2025 compared to 10 in 2024; once again this reflects our registration numbers. Defaults were not a major issue in 2024 and this trend thankfully continued in 2025. There was one team that did struggle throughout the season despite their roster on paper being competitive. Once again, this is a hard issue to fix given the roster size and team makeup should not have produced this result.

*15U* – We had 4 teams (the 16U girls did not partake in this league in 2025) which was down from 6 in 2024. In 2024, this league had the most issues by far in SJMBA. We had a number of kids who signed up for baseball who consistently did not attend, “A” all-star players were brought to my attention by the House League coaches for poor attendance, and despite intervening, sending some high energy emails, we could not string 3 games in a row without a default. We ended up combining teams, albeit far too late, and as luck would have it, when the playoffs rolled around, attendance went up, which is not always a positive given that these rosters had an average size of 14, and now combined rosters could be as high as 28.

In 2025, we saw a much better 15U house league program. While one team did struggle at the beginning of the season with attendance, the coaches managed to turn it around and the playoffs were very successful and had some intense baseball being played. To be perfectly clear, the attendance issue that is recurring with this age group is not a result of roster sizes, but very clearly player based and their commitment to playing.

*18U* – We had 3 core 18U House League teams this year that had the A and AA players evenly spread out throughout the division with the help of Mike Kirkland assessing these teams to ensure parity. In 2025, we gave the option to both A and AA players to register for house league if they wanted the extra games. These teams played in a regional league with Mount Pearl and Paradise. We strived to improve on 18U compared to 2024 and with the help of our new metro scheduler, we managed to schedule more games for these teams to give them more baseball.

One team had to be folded early in the season, and I believe we made the right move folding it when we did. Instead of dragging it on and hoping for change, the decision was made and we distributed the remaining players. This team could not secure a coach until Game 3 and myself and another parent jumped in to coach the team for the first 2 games of the season. While the team sported a 2-1 record at the time they were dissolved, it was the right move as it was becoming an administrative nightmare trying to get RSVPs from players. We did start earlier as planned, but we saw an unfortunate closure of St. Pat’s for 3 weeks which disrupted the schedule and saw games moved to Wishingwell at alternate times in order to preserve the number of games played. This was an unforeseen circumstance and we do not see this happening in the future, as St. Pat’s has never seen a mid-season closure like this in the last 20+ years.

*Female Divisions* - Our LOTO teams experienced success throughout the year as well, with the Blue Jays capturing the 14U championship and the Mets capturing silver after a growth filled season. SJMBA continues to offer premium time slots for the LOTO league however there has been some feedback that the games against other associations are not at ideal times and we will look to manage that better in the 2026 season.

#### *Drills & Skills Clinics*

We opened registration for Drills & Skills and received less than 10 registrants in both our 11U/13U and 12U/14U program. We decided to cancel these events due to the low registration numbers.

#### *9U Drills and Skills Program*

The 9U program suffered the same problems as the older Drills and Skills clinics, and we had to cancel this program as well. Despite strong feedback from the 2024 season to have sessions such as these, we did not get the registration numbers we wanted.

#### *Special Events*

Our provincial hosting was very strategic this year as we had to navigate the loss of Edgar Hartery Field for the Canada Games. We ended up hosting 2 15U events at Airport Heights Field which fit our schedule perfectly. Events included the following:

Mike Buist Classic	July 11th - 13th
Baseball day in Newfoundland	July 26th - Edgar Hartery / St. Pat's Ballpark in support of the Senior Provincial FInals
15U A East Provincials	August 1st to 3rd Airport Heights Field 4 teams
15U AAA Provincials	Aug 29th to Sept 1st Airport Heights Field 4 teams
Night Under the Lights	Sept 5th St. Pat's Field

## SURVEYS

At the conclusion of the 2025 season, we sent our multiple surveys to solicit feedback from key groups - All Star coaches and House League Parents. Regarding the House League parents survey, we received 97 responses (down from 188) which covered 106 registrants as some survey responders have multiple children in our program. The majority of the responses were from 11U, 13U, and 15U with only 3 respondees stating they will not be registering for baseball next year. Some key takeaways from the parents survey is as follows:

- i. Rally Cap feedback is consistent from 2024 to 2025. Parents want more gameplay and struggle with the development aspect of Rally Cap. No issues with the schedule, jerseys, etc. Rally Cap will be looked at in depth this off season.
- ii. 9u Major and Minor was mostly positive in our last survey, and even better in the 2025 survey. Notable talking points are surrounding the staff and consistency from game to game.
- iii. 11U responses greatly improved from 2024. There were issues with one team in particular that we hope to avoid in 2026. "A" all star players were referenced as they were in 2024.
- iv. 13U had a similar improvement to 11U. There was a majority of positive feedback as 13U was fairly issue-free in 2025 aside from issues with one team in particular.
- v. 15U saw a vast improvement compared to 2024, however the "A" all star players were referenced again. The coaches of 15U House were integral to a successful season.
- vi. 18U received a low number of responses but mostly positive feedback, however there were a few notes regarding the schedules and days of the week that we utilize, which has been a recurring theme in the past number of years.
- vii. 12U was seen as mostly positive to exceeding expectations although there were concerns of all star player attendance. There were issues with game locations and time slots offered by other organizations which is not ideal for our membership.
- viii. 14U had issues with game locations and time slots offered by other organizations. Gameplay was great with the 14U AA players back in the league.
- ix. No responses regarding catchers equipment, which was a talking point in 2024 but we outfitted every field with brand new gear in 2025.
- x. 1 umpire at games was a big problem in 2024 and we managed to fix that in 2025, which was noticed based on our survey responses.

## **MARKETING-PR-CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP**

Given the uncertainty in our economy, sponsorships will continue to be a challenge. We are thankful for our continued support from ScotiaMcLeod Wealth Management, Sportscraft Source for Sports, DWI services, and our newest sponsor, Mr. Lube + Tires who occupy the advertising space on the Edgar Hartery Field scoreboard. We would also like to thank the City of St. John's for continuing to be a great partner of SJMBA and providing us with everything we need to successfully run our organization.

## **THANK YOU AND CONCLUSIONS**

With two years under my belt at the helm of the Caps Organization, I'm very happy with the improvements we have made in the 2025 Season. We listened to our membership and acted upon it which in turn, helped solidify our organization as the best on the island in this sport.

To our all-star and house league coaches, team managers and volunteers – Thank You! We could not offer our program without you.

To our student workers on grant and those who are casual – your efforts are noticed and appreciated. We hope to have you all back in 2026 as you are the gears that turn in the machine that is SJMBA! We saw a lot of new employees in 2025 which is great to see for the growth of our staff and programming. Our operations manager Evan Bursey was also welcomed into the fold in 2025 and saw to it that our operations ran smoothly throughout the summer.

To all our sponsors mentioned above – thank you for your continued support. Your contributions to our program are immeasurable.

To the City of St. John's, especially the Parks staff – Carla Squires, Neil McKenzie, Mike Adam, Tom Marnell, and all the staff who work on our fields – a sincere thank you.

To the board members who served in 2025 and past board members who are still around to help at a moment's notice, thanks again for all your help in 2025. A special thanks to Ken Curtis, Nikki Musseau, and Danny Penton for all of your hard work and efforts.

A special shout out to Jacob Brazil and Darcy Cribb who put in a large amount of time and effort to not only get our equipment ready for both house league and all star, but for also maintaining these equipment bins and groundskeeping at Edgar Hartery Field throughout the year, we couldn't have done it without you.

Finally, to Molli Dillon, who handles the administration side of things in the office, and every little job and detail in between, her extra effort and outlook on the organization is the glue that keeps us going and I can't thank her enough for all she does for SJMBA, day in and day out.

David Lahey

Executive Director

SJMBA

