

A Historical Look at the Iowa High School Baseball Coaches Association

The Iowa High School Baseball Coaches Association (IHSBCA) was founded in September of 1968 to promote the game of baseball while honoring players, coaches and contributors.

Getting things started

A handful of coaches originally invested time and effort into the developing the organization, including Harold “Pinky” Primrose who served as the group’s President from 1968 to 1971 and eventual Executive Secretary from 1972 to 2008. According to Primrose, the person credited with spearheading the concept of a separate state baseball organization was L.C. “Cap” Timm the long-time head coach at Iowa State University. Timm encouraged Primrose to get Iowa high school baseball coaches to unify.

After Primrose’s Cedar Rapids Washington squad won the 1966 state summer championship, Primrose said he was discouraged that his team wasn’t getting any recognition. “Anyway we win the state championship in 1966, and come home and get no recognition from anybody anywhere. Boone (Iowa High School Athletic Association) couldn’t have cared less about baseball and we didn’t have what you would call a ‘clinic’ of baseball. So Cap Timm came down and spoke to my kids the following year. I was complaining to Cap that there was no all state, there was nothing. No kids got any recognition so Cap says, ‘Maybe we can get one (organization) going.’ Anyway, that’s how it started,” Primrose explained.

The next step for Primrose was to gather other influential high school coaches he thought would be willing and able to help get this project off the ground. A small group of coaches met with Timm in the fall of 1967 on the Iowa State University campus. “So Cap got us up to the Scheman Center at Iowa State and I invited in some of what I thought were ‘key’ high school coaches at that time,” Primrose said. Some of those coaches included, Vern Bredesen (Cedar Rapids Jefferson), Bill Freese (Davenport Central), Elmer Starr (Mason City), Dick Wagner (Burlington) and Denny Olejniczak (Decorah).

Freese pointed out that there were a lot of questions kicked around at the first meeting. “The original meeting was in the fall of the year. Went to a football game in the old, old, Clyde Williams Stadium. It was falling down then. Our first meetings were discussions to determine ‘If we could’ and ‘If we should’ try to create a coach’s association.”

Olejniczak, easily the youngest coach in the group, said he was simply excited to be a part of the original planning. “I was honored to be included, and I say this very sincerely, to be among the prestigious coaches that took part in the initial organization of our great association. I was just tickled that they thought I was worthy enough to put in my two cents,” he explained.

IHSBCA Hall of Famer Duane Banks, whose tenure as head coach at the University of Iowa spanned four decades, said he was quick to support the new association. “I thought it was a great idea to get high school coaches involved in their own organization. I just thought it was great and what Pinky was doing was fantastic so I was on board right away because I thought anything we can do to help our game is going to be good. And what better way than serving high school coaches?”

Limited clinic opportunities for baseball coaches

Freese recalled the early years of coaching clinics in the state. “In the late 40’s and 50’s, the Athletic Union in Boone held a football, basketball and baseball clinic at Spirit Lake. It was vacation time with family in early August. It was not well advertised or attended. The three to four day clinic was targeted more to football and basketball, with perhaps a day and half for baseball,” he explained. “Eventually, baseball coaches realized it was time to have something to help coaches develop baseball programs, as well as develop and care for baseball fields. The purpose of a baseball organization and clinic was to improve coaching in Iowa,” Freese added.

By the 1960s, there were still limited opportunities for coaches to meet and hone their craft. According to charter member Dick Core (Dubuque Senior and Hempstead), the IHSAA sponsored clinics for coaches of all sports in various locations. “In about 1967 we had coaches clinics put on by the IHSAA in the spring at various sites around the state. At a couple of the sites there was discussion about forming a Baseball Coaches Association so we would have better communication with other coaches and conferences around the state. Pinky Primrose and Cap Timm and several others really got the ball rolling and did a lot of work to get a working model to start the IHSBCA.”

Legendary Indian Hills Community College coach and IHSBCA Hall of Famer Pat Daugherty said he attended one of these state-sponsored coaches clinics held in Storm Lake in the early 1960’s. “The first one I ever attended had maybe a half hour or 40 minutes on baseball. I was thinking we have a clinic and all these coaches in attendance and we only get 40 minutes on baseball?”

Primrose recalled the meager success of random baseball clinics in the 1960s due to a lack of structure and interest. “Before our organization began, Boone set up Pat Daugherty to run a clinic for baseball coaches in Des Moines and seven coaches showed up. There was another coaches’ clinic held at Iowa State. Hardly any coaches showed up. Something had to be done,” he emphasized.

Coaches donate money to the cause

So a small group of coaches agreed to invest \$25 of their own money to get the organization started. “Yes,” Primrose acknowledged, “and \$25 was a lot of money at that time. But that got us started so I could have money for postage and promotion.” Long-time association member Gary Paulsen (Ogden umpire) explained the value of having some money to work with. “The money helped us get the word out to schools. ‘This is what we have in mind’ and we have the blessings of Cap Timm and Dick

Schultz (University of Iowa) and Drake even had baseball at that time.” Freese said once money was available, true promotion could take place. “We could say ‘so and so’ would be a speaker at the clinic. The first one was in Cedar Rapids,” he added.

Newsletters for a new organization

The first of hundreds of IHSBCA Newsletters was published on September 6, 1968. The initial flier attempted to recruit coaches to the new organization. In a one-page memo Primrose and co-chairman Bernie Hutchison of Norway, listed several “aims” the IHSBCA would have. These goals included:

- **to promote better baseball in Iowa
- **to sponsor a good clinic
- **to select an all-state team in your district and state
- **to select a district coach of the year (in each of the 9 districts)
- **to select a state coach of the year
- **to get better acquainted with college baseball coaches
- **to promote fellowship with other baseball coaches
- **to keep you informed of new things
- **to have a newsletter from various coaches
- **to hold an annual meeting during the clinic
- **to hold three board meetings a year

Dues

Association dues for coaches and adults were \$3 in 1968. All dues paying association members could attend the first clinic at no cost. Any high school player could attend the clinic for \$1.50. Cost of the clinic banquet was \$2.50 regardless of age.

Today dues for coaches and adults are \$30 a year. Cost for members to attend the clinic is \$75 which includes admission into all clinic sessions, as well as tickets for Saturday breakfast, Saturday lunch and the formal Awards Banquet on Saturday evening.

In an attempt to reach out to as many coaches as possible in 1968, Primrose said his group divided the state into nine recruiting districts. The original district representatives in charge of membership were:

District 1	NW Corner	to be named later
District 2	Don Burgess	Denison
District 3	Keith Meyers	Shenandoah
District 4	Elmer Starr	Mason City
District 5	Clair Rierson	Radcliffe
District 6	Bob Bielstein	Des Moines Lincoln
District 7	Dennis Olejniczak	Decorah
District 8	Bernie Hutchison	Norway
District 9	Bill Holmstrum	Iowa City High
or	Bill Freese	Davenport

First Clinic in 1969

The IHSBCA held its first clinic in 1969 at Washington High School in Cedar Rapids from February 29 thru March 1. During a “dinner meeting” on Friday night the group also formed a Constitution, elected officers and talked about prospects for the 1969 season. Clinicians at the inaugural clinic included former Chicago White Sox player Hal Trosky, former Cleveland Indian Dick Rosek, former Chicago White Sox player Hal Trosky, Jr., former Chicago Cub Gene Baker, Southern Illinois coach Joe Lutz, Iowa State University coach Cap Timm, University of Iowa coach Dick Schultz, Centerville Junior College coach Pat Daugherty, former Cleveland Indian Ray Petrzelka and Head Coach Bill Freese of Davenport Central HS. Each man was scheduled to speak on a different topic and all of them volunteered their time in order to help make the first clinic a success.

During the first IHSBCA board meeting the following men were elected officers as proposed by the Board of Directors. President Harold “Pinky” Primrose (Cedar Rapids Washington), Vice-President Elmer Starr (Mason City), Treasurer Bernie Hutchison (Norway), and Secretary Dave Hoyt (Cedar Rapids Washington).

Minutes filed by Hoyt after the first IHSBCA clinic in 1969, revealed that 156 people were in attendance for the inaugural two-day affair. Of that total, 85 were coaches, 38 were “associate members and visitors,” while an additional 33 students also took part. Many positive comments were shared with Primrose about the first clinic, but few as profound as those made by Daugherty. “Your baseball coaches’ association is probably the first real breakthrough in Iowa High School baseball in the past 20 years,” he said.

For Daugherty and many other charter member coaches, having an entire clinic devoted to baseball was monumental. “I can remember when they got it started and I was like ‘Boy this is really something. This is just baseball coaches,’” he said. Daugherty stressed the value of the early clinics. “Well I didn’t -- and still don’t -- have all the answers and it gave me an opportunity to rub shoulders with guys, at that time, who were a lot older than me that had had successful baseball programs,” he explained.

By the early 1970’s, average clinic attendance had grown to the mid-400’s but it was during the late 1970’s when interest really exploded. A record 785 supporters attended the 1977 clinic which featured discussions on hitting by former Boston Red Sox great Ted Williams, a 19-time All Star, who was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1966.

In 1978, spearheaded by appearances from former major leaguers Lefty Gomez, Bill “Moose” Skowran, Jerry Lumpe and Lindy McDaniel, clinic attendance reached 775. Former major leaguers Gene Woodling and Ray Sadecki helped bring people to the clinic in 1979 when 780 patrons visited Washington High School in Cedar Rapids.

Banks emphasized the increased value of the clinic due to the quality of its speakers. “Well I think the clinics were really important because of the speakers we used to have. My gosh we had world class speakers and I think they just got better and better and better. Holy buckets we had great speakers. It was a who’s who of baseball,” he said.

Good speakers and “Free Speech” pave the way

Primrose explained that it was important to offer a product that would interest coaches in order to generate excitement and success. “I thought the only way this is going to fly is if we have a banquet and bring some of the best speakers in. You’ve heard about free speech? Well that’s what it was. It was free speech - they would come in and speak for free. And you know something? These old baseball players in Iowa were happy to come and speak at our early clinics. Hal Trosky, Sr., Gene Baker and a lot of guys. That’s how it started....free speech.”

Freese said these contributions were generous, but also necessary. “Look, we were all so short on money if you were asked to speak, you did it.”

Daugherty identified one common denominator to the growth and development of the clinic and the association. “Pinky was fantastic. The hours that he and his wife put into that thing that got it rolling and then it just got bigger and bigger and bigger and ends up now I’m sure it’s probably the premier one in the country and, if not, it’s one that other states copy.”

Annual Awards Banquet becomes a highlight

Sticking with one of the association’s early goals, the annual Awards Banquet became the setting to best honor successful coaches, contributors and Hall of Famers. “We had a banquet over at Washington High School for several years and then we got to the point where Washington couldn’t hold it anymore,” Primrose explained. “We were up into the hundreds and Dostal was catering it - actually the food was excellent. My wife (Flo) was in charge of that and it just got too big. That’s when we went down to the Five Seasons and that was for about 20 years.”

Mason City Newman Hall of Famer Gary Nyhus stressed the importance of recognizing baseball people. “Awards were always at the top of the list for the association,” he said. “From the very beginning, Pinky thought awards for coaches would bring many of them to the clinic and also help keep coaches in the profession.”

Core tipped his cap to the vision that Primrose had in the early years of awards, even though at times the practice seemed excessive. “Pinky would always counter, ‘We need to honor coaches, players and communities. If we don’t who will promote baseball?’ He was right. Keep honoring as many as you can.”

During the first clinic, five district coaches were named along with a state coach of the year and five Hall of Fame honorees. Conversely, in recent years the association is responsible for nearly 80 awards and an additional 30-40 certificates to coaches at its annual Awards Banquet. Honors ranging from longevity and win totals to district and state coaches of the year are presented. Both head and assistant coaches of the year are recognized as well as district and state umpires of the year. The association also spotlights prominent contributors, district media winners and a President’s Award in addition to its Hall of Fame inductees.

Hall of Fame Class in first year

The IHSBCA Hall of Fame honored its first inductees during the Friday night meeting of the inaugural clinic. The first five people chosen included:

**L.W. "Mon" Whitford the long-time baseball coach at the University of Northern Iowa.

**Otto Vogel who was the baseball coach at the University of Iowa for 38 years as well as an outfielder with the Chicago Cubs in the 1920's.

**Hamlet Peterson who was the baseball coach at Luther College. Peterson is said to have coached almost every sport at Luther during his long career.

**Emil Klumpar who was the physical welfare director and athletic director for the Cedar Rapids Community Schools. Klumpar also coached baseball at Franklin, McKinley and Washington High Schools in Cedar Rapids.

**Ken Blackman who devoted his adult life to coaching, managing and scouting baseball. Blackman coached baseball at several Iowa high schools and colleges and enjoyed a career as a player and scout in professional baseball.

From that first class of five inductees in 1969, the Hall of Fame now includes over 310 members. Today the Hall of Fame Committee typically nominates five or six people for induction every year. That list usually includes coaches and players, but may also honor umpires and contributors.

Clinic Growth

From humble beginnings, the clinic has continued to bring in talented speakers from every level of baseball. In the early years, Hall of Famer Rick Mathews said he recalls seeing outstanding clinicians. "There were many former big leaguers including Moose Skowron, Milt Pappas, Johnny Klippstein, Lefty Gomez and Ted Williams. Also many college coaches like Cap Timm who was second only to the best ever, Pat Daugherty."

Freese said that getting these "big name" speakers significantly helped clinic attendance and growth. "We had coaches from Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska, Missouri and others attending our clinic because of the quality of clinicians. This also helped expand our membership and attendance from Iowa coaches. We were real; not just a temporary clinic," he explained.

Core reflected on the value of seeing gifted speakers. "We have had some great speakers over the years. My favorite was Ted Williams. Many of the major league players didn't tell us what we wanted to hear, but tried to entertain with 'old war stories' from their playing days. Ted was a real student of the game and I learned a lot from him," he said. "Overall, I think the college coaches and some of the high school coaches did the best job of presenting topics that I could take back and use in my program. In the early years, Dick Birmingham from Missouri was a real favorite and was invited back to speak many times," Core added.

Over the years, Olejniczak said he has been impressed with the quality of speakers who have graced the clinic stage. "There are so many outstanding speakers who have presented. We've had some of the greatest, greatest, names in baseball from the

professional level to the great college coaches who end up in the college world series to the good high school coaching of the state of Iowa and we don't take a back seat to anybody," he emphasized.

Though the venue changed from Cedar Rapids Washington High School to hotels in Cedar Rapids and Des Moines, the theme of getting good clinic speakers remained a priority. Annual clinic dates have been modified from late February and early March to mid-January in order to accommodate college and professional coaches whose seasons begin in late January. "I don't think we've ever had what I'd call a bad clinic," Paulsen said. "We simply had some bad weather sometimes."

Banks, who had the University of Iowa field re-named in his honor in 2001, offered one reason he was a frequent contributor and speaker at annual clinics. "All I wanted to do was teach. If coaches could just pick up one thing that I said, it was going to help them develop better players. We did it to make Iowa high school baseball better and I think it did. I think the association definitely did make baseball in the state of Iowa better."

Lee Toole, who followed Primrose in 2009 as the organization's Executive Director, said his goal has always been to enhance the value the clinic can have for coaches of any age. "I think coaches benefit because the association is an educational piece to help make them better coaches and help keep them informed on different trends, new things that are out there and some of the old ways that have been tweaked a little bit that a lot of younger guys are missing," he explained.

Toole also pointed out that a good deal of learning can also take place after clinic speakers leave the stage. "I think there's as much importance in people coming here and talking with their peers and growing and learning as there is sitting in the sessions and learning from the speakers. I think that's just as important," he said. "You learn so much just sitting and listening to other coaches and what other sport has that? I think we have more comradery in this association, people just feel comfortable sitting around having a good time and getting along with everyone, than any of the other sports."

Daugherty agreed that a lot of collaboration can take place in the clinic environment. "Oh, golly, the clinic was a place we could share views with all the clinic speakers from former major league players down to successful high school coaches and guys from other states. It was an opportunity to get smarter. And also it was an advantage for me as a Junior College coach to be able to meet a lot of the high school coaches."

For multiple reasons, Banks said he valued the clinic setting. "Well I got to know all the coaches to begin with because I was new here and the one thing I wanted to do at the University of Iowa was recruit Iowa kids first and the best way to do it was to get to know the coaches and what better way to get to know the coaches than through the high school association?" he said. "Man I got to know hundreds of coaches this way and it helped in recruiting the Iowa kids. We didn't get 'em all but between us and Iowa State and Northern Iowa we kept most of the Iowa kids in state at one of the three schools which we all felt was important at that time," Banks added.

Even though the state of Iowa has annually endured school closings and consolidations, Toole said he's happy with membership numbers the past few years. "Our clinic attendance has seen an increase over the past four to five years. Our numbers have seen the biggest increase when we host the clinic in Des Moines. And of course the weather can affect attendance on a yearly basis," he explained. "The biggest change we see towards membership numbers is within the small schools and their coaching turnover rates. That trend alone affects our membership numbers and clinic attendance from year to year," Toole added. In 2016, he said 377 coaches, umpires and fans attended the clinic in Des Moines, while organization membership was 652.

All Star game honors seniors

In 1977, following the completion of the summer high school season, the organization hosted an All Star Series for graduated seniors. Deserving seniors were nominated by their coaches and then selected to one of four All Star teams that were based on geographic location and school size (Large North, Small North, Large South, Small South).

After getting the IHSBCA off the ground, Primrose said there was more willingness to experiment with ideas but integrating new things required coaches to step up. "The All Star game didn't come until about seven or eight years in. We didn't have hardly any money but Posegate (Dave Posegate-Ames High School) for example, he volunteered right off the bat to have the series at Ames," he explained. "With Dave's help, we said 'Let's try it.' We started off playing two games and it was four teams but it was north and south with big and small. We only had one night there (in Ames). We put them up in the Towers. We played at Cap Timm field and Bobby Randall (Iowa State University) was the first coach who really helped us up there. Bob was really a nice guy," Primrose added.

For the first few years of the All Star Series, the site alternated between Ames and Iowa City, home of two Division I baseball programs. "It originally rotated between Iowa and Iowa State. It would go back and forth every other year. Duane Banks was also very helpful with the All Star Series and anything else we ever needed," Primrose explained. Today, the All Star game moves to all parts of the state. "We're lucky to have coaches and communities interested in putting in the time and effort necessary to keep the series a premier event," Toole said.

The All Star Series became a four day round-robin event after Primrose witnessed that format while observing the National Federation of USA Baseball in Indianapolis. "I saw a four team round robin that I thought would work for our All Star Series. So I brought the idea back and presented it and we then went to the big schools and small schools. So then we would have everyone play each other and then the championship. That gave us four days that we could bring kids in and honor them," he explained.

Banks said he was always eager to help with the event. "The All Star Series is a reward to the kids for what they've done for two or three or four years. I think everybody who hosted it felt the same way and they wanted it to be the best thing for the

kids - the best experience they've ever had to date in baseball," he said. "We would host it every year if we could because I just thought it was great for kids. And you know it got better and better every year," Banks added.

Toole emphasized that in addition to good baseball competition, the All Star Series offers several other benefits. "I think it provides a positive end to their high school careers and I also think it brings people together who don't have the opportunity to compete on a 'friendship' level," he said. "For the players, they're rivals growing up and then they get to come together and play on the same team for a weekend. They find out some guy's not too bad after all and suddenly you have a lifetime friendship. Or you may go to college together and get along great but you found out at the All Star Series that your one-time rival is a really nice guy. I think the All Star Series is a positive ending piece for the kids and their friends and families. They get a chance to end their high school careers on a positive."

The All Star process has been refined to the point that Olejniczak said it might be difficult to improve. "What I'm so proud of is the fact that I don't think you could do it hardly any better than how it's done by our association," he said. "I say that with the utmost sincerity. I know what goes on. I like the format. I like how the kids are picked and I like how the games are done. I like all the great food! I do! I'm so proud of this event."

Back in 1977 when the series began, corporate sponsors provided necessary financial support to run the event. Invited players and coaches are now responsible for generating private funding to help defray the cost of room and board.

Umpires are people too

Uniquely, the IHSBCA was willing to include umpires into its membership from the start. Primrose cited one primary reason for this collegial attitude. "Umpires joined because Lanny Peterson (Hall of Fame Umpire from Cedar Rapids) was involved. I thought umpires are part of us. Let's get over this idea that umpires are bad," he said. "At that time there was some animosity so we got key umpires from around the state to be leaders of their districts. The umpires elected a chairman and they would then have an umpires' committee. We gave them the opportunity to elect a Hall of Famer and they learned how valuable our association could be for them."

Having a chance to mingle with coaches is one thing Primrose sees as a huge benefit for umpires in the IHSBCA. "The umpires who are in the association get to rub elbows with coaches and they see what that has done for them. You can make a bad call and if the coach doesn't know you - you're going to get your butt chewed. You can make a bad call and if the coach knows you're trying and you've gone to clinics he won't say a word. The coach will say, 'Get the next one.' And when umpires come through the gate and you've seen them at the clinic your opinion is changed because you know they are trying."

Peterson echoed Primrose's thoughts on the early days of umpire involvement in the association. "I got involved because of Pinky. I don't know if he was looking to me and looking to umpires because he saw a potential source of revenue or not. It could

very well be and that's OK," he explained. "At that time there was a very small cadre of umpires and we got together and we decided that we might put on a clinic of our own. And as I recall, some of the people involved in that were Bob Vrbicek, my brother Larry was involved, Bob Burns from Clinton, Mike Pauly from Des Moines and Gary Paulsen from western Iowa. We went together and were able to get some professional umpires to come and speak but I don't think there were as many guys then who were as involved and committed as you have today."

Toole said that he is frequently questioned about a baseball association that allows umpires to be members. "The fact that we have umpires in our association gets brought up every year when I go to the state advisory meeting with people who head up other sports and other groups. They are always curious how it works and why we do it," he explained. "I think it's just a positive experience because we work so close together during ball games. Coaches have a degree of comradery with umpires and develop friendships and bonds or there's at least a better understanding of how a person works and reacts and relates. I think it helps both sides and when guys sit down at night after the clinic there's always umps and coaches mingling telling stories. So I think that's built some good friendships and helped put coaches and umpires on the same level."

Getting to know one another off the field has done wonders for relationships between coaches and umpires, according to Peterson. "When you talk to some of the coaches, people sometimes ask them about a bad call during a game. 'Well why didn't you get all over that guy's butt?' and the coach will respond, 'Because I know him.' What's wrong with that? I don't see anything wrong with that," he said. "It's not threatening the integrity of the game. It shows a lot about the integrity of the coach."

In recent years, umpires have held their own independent training sessions during the annual IHSBCA clinic. Toole said the umpires have their own agenda but everything is held at the same site. "We're all in the same general location," he said. "But it's not uncommon to see umpires sitting in on coaching sessions and coaches attending umpire sessions."

Sharing information and exchanging opinions on proper techniques at the clinic is another example of coaches and umpires working together for a common goal. "It's really about the fact that we all have talents and it's great that we have a chance to get together off of the field. That's how I look at it," Peterson concluded.

All District and All State Teams to honor players

Prior to the first clinic, it was decided that the association would select five All District teams. "These all district teams would then be presented to the Iowa Daily Press Association (IDPA) and Des Moines Register to help with all state selections," Primrose explained. Additionally, plans were made to present a Coach of the Year award. Each district would elect a candidate for the District Coach of the Year. One of the district candidates would then be chosen Coach of the Year.

In recent years two All District teams have been selected for each of the four classes in each of four or five districts. Coaches from each district in each of the four

classes meet at the end of the season to vote for deserving players within their respective districts. Players selected to All District teams are then in the running to be named to one of the two All State teams selected for each class. Hundreds of high school baseball players are being honored annually by the IHSBCA.

Toole said he sees this recognition for players as a pat on the back for a job well done. "The recognition piece is helped because, at least what I'm hearing and seeing, a lot of colleges go off those All District and All State sheets and start looking at the younger kids and start recruiting and looking at them. So the recognition of being named All District or All State might also begin the college recruiting process for some players. For the seniors it's positive recognition for what they've done during their final high school sport," he said. "That's what makes our sport so unique -- it's the last one. If you play baseball that's it and you get that last pat on the back before moving on."

Academic Awards as well

Since 1984 the IHSBCA has honored high school baseball players for their accomplishments outside the field of play. Initially, the association honored a deserving player with the Vince Meyer Award for academic excellence. Since 1996, after it was re-named, the captain of the Academic All State team has received the Lanny Peterson Award. Additionally, approximately 50 senior baseball players are named to an All Academic first team and honorable mention team every year.

Primrose explained that the award came about as another way for the association to honor players. "That's why it started," he said. "It was a way to recognize kids who were good athletes and also academically gifted. It was just another way for us to honor kids, which was always one of our goals," Primrose added.

Olejniczak said he appreciates the effort the association has made to emphasize academics. "I think that's a great thing because we wouldn't have baseball without kids understanding that school is where we get the co-curricular activity of having the opportunity of having a baseball team. It's important that we make sure kids do a good job in school. I think that's been a really neat thing of our association," he explained.

Peterson, whose name has graced the award for over 20 years, is a former high school English teacher. He was quick to point out that the award is based on much more than grade point average. "I wish there were a way we could change that perception from being an academic award to something else," he said. "Because it's much more than grades. If it were merely an academic award, the recipient of this would have the highest grade point, yada, yada, yada. But there's a committee that sits down to interview three or four young men to determine who should be the recipient. It deals with sportsmanship, it deals with contributions to the community, it deals with the whole person," Peterson explained.

The recipient of the Lanny Peterson Award is a member of the Academic All State First Team who not only excels in athletic, academic and moral standards, but also demonstrates outstanding leadership and participation in a variety of extra-curricular and community activities. These qualities exemplify the generous use of talents, treasures and deeds Peterson exhibited during his career as a teacher, umpire, business-

man and Catholic Deacon. Since 2010 a \$500 scholarship has been awarded by the IHSBCA in conjunction with the award. "I really am honored that this goes on," Peterson said.

Nyhus Leadership Award

In 2018, Gary and Sandy Nyhus initiated the "Gary and Sandy Nyhus IHSBCA Leadership Award," given to a senior player in the annual All Star Series who shows strong leadership qualities. Each of the four All Star head coaches nominates a player who "best exemplifies the game of baseball, sportsmanship, community involvement and the individual's contribution to his team." Those four players are then interviewed by a panel of coaches and umpires to determine a winner.

Nyhus, a past president of the IHSBCA and long-time volunteer, said he and Sandy just wanted to give something back to the association. "After being in the IHSBCA for more than four decades, Sandy and I wanted to give back and pay forward. After consulting six past presidents, we decided to call it a 'leadership' award, so it would not overshadow the 'Player of the Year' award or the 'Academic Captain' award," he explained. "Just another opportunity for an outstanding young man to be recognized."

Nyhus said he and Sandy also felt strongly that the award should include a monetary gift. "We wanted to make sure the award included a scholarship opportunity of \$1,000 to help with college costs. This is a 25-year commitment with the possibility of increasing the stipend down the road."

In 2022 the scholarship was divided into four \$500 scholarships in an attempt to better serve deserving Iowa high school players.

Junior/Prospect Showcase

Unlike most states in the union, Iowa high schools play a competitive summer season which some feel limits the exposure kids can receive as they try to advance and play at the next level. In 2010 the IHSBCA started a "Junior Showcase" which allows approximately 150 select underclassmen to go through a professional-style workout in front of numerous college coaches and professional scouts.

Toole said the Junior Showcase operates on a simple premise that provides huge potential. "The concept behind the Junior Showcase is to help players get exposure. We've given kids a showcase to present themselves and show off their skills," he said. "It also gives a lot of college coaches the chance to see our kids in a better light. For college coaches we can say 'Hey, you have 150 kids to come and watch in one location' so it's a great deal for coaches. Players have an opportunity to shine and see if they can get a baseball scholarship. Plus, it can be instructional for kids when they compare their skills against 150 other guys and learn that if they want to compete at that level they'll have to get better," Toole added.

In 2023 the Junior Showcase was changed to the Prospect Showcase in order to accommodate younger players who could benefit from the experience.

Future looks bright

As the IHSBCA moves into its second half-century of existence, Primrose said he feels very good about the organization maintaining the level of success he and his peers set out to achieve. "If the organization can stick to the goals that we started with back in 1968, to honor players, coaches, umpires and contributors then there's no reason it won't be successful for many years to come. Take time to honor the folks who contribute to the game of baseball," he stressed.

Olejniczak said he thinks the IHSBCA continues to be pointed in the right direction. "I look for our association to stay strong because there are enough younger to middle age coaches that are going to keep this association just like it's been," he explained. "We've been fortunate to have two great executive secretaries in Pinky and Lee Toole. I think there's always going to be a great Iowa High School Baseball Coaches Association."

Toole said he is hopeful the IHSBCA torch can be passed on to a younger generation. "One thing we have to do is get younger people involved and get them to come to some things and help at the All Star Series and help at the clinic so they can form some kind of unity with the older guys so they take this thing over and keep it going. I think our membership is up and our name is out there so people new to coaching know there's a group that can help them grow. In the old days, I don't think new coaches had any idea that the association existed."

Having been on the ground floor of the IHSBCA's 50-year development, Freese said he now sees an organization that is copied by many entities. "The Iowa High School Baseball Coaches Association is now a model for other states' baseball organizations, as well as basketball and football associations. Through the work of our association, not only have coaching, teaching and facilities improved, but it has also encouraged participation and involvement in the sport." In addition to helping coaches, Freese said the IHSBCA has done a lot for the development of players in the state. "It's fantastic what has happened in Iowa in the development of high school ballplayers. Whether they make the big leagues or not is immaterial. Our coaches these days take kids and make average ballplayers better ballplayers. They have the opportunity to play in small colleges, junior colleges and major colleges--every one of those. It's just been fantastic," he emphasized.

Looking back at his 40-year involvement with the IHSBCA, Primrose said he is proud of how things have evolved. "We started off with nothing. Back then we would see if something worked and if it didn't we would change it. In other words over the years the changes might not have been as fast as some guys wanted but we did have changes. We always changed for the benefit of the program not for the individual," he explained. "I'm happy that the association is still honoring a lot of people. They're still keeping reasonable costs. The organization is doing what it was supposed to do and that is great," Primrose added.

Fellow charter member Freese echoed Primrose's sentiments. "The organization has done it one step at a time, thanks to our leadership over the past 50 years," he said. "We never rushed into things which allowed us to build a foundation that remains strong today."

Reflecting on the growth and development of the IHSBCA, Toole pointed out that one thing hasn't changed. "The association has done a lot and grown tremendously over the past 50 years, but the thing we continue to do is promote the sport of high school baseball and honor our coaches, umpires and players. I'm proud we've been able to maintain that emphasis," he concluded.

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