

America's National Pastime

Baseball

by Marilyn Thomas

On city streets and alleys, in grassy backyards and on neighborhood sandlots, millions of kids have engaged in the American Pastime of baseball with the dream of playing in the big leagues. If you weren't fortunate enough to play on a community or school baseball team at some point in your life, you were exposed to baseball in some capacity. Many have worked behind the scenes in concession stands or served water in the dugouts, listened to a game on the radio or watched on television, cheered from the sidelines, cleaned team uniforms, or collected cards, stamps and other interesting memorabilia. Baseball is one of the few multi-generational games that invites individuals of all ages and backgrounds to grab a bat and take a swing!

Blowfish Baseball

March is the beginning of the season, and The Blowfish are at the forefront of Lexington County baseball action. Although the Blowfish originally played for the city of Columbia for about nine years, in 2014 they relocated to Lexington and

were soon maxing out the newly constructed \$3-million Lexington County Baseball Stadium on Ballpark Road. With a seating capacity of more than 2,500, the stadium was designed with baseball enthusiasts in mind to promote a satisfying experience for the spectators.

"The Blowfish begin their eighteenth season in 2023," says Bill Shanahan, co-owner (along with wife, Vicki) of Shanahan & Company Sports Management, the parent organization of the Lexington County Blowfish Baseball Club. "The Lexington County Blowfish are a summer collegiate team in the Coastal Plain League [CPL]," explains Mr. Shanahan, and the team has won the title of CPL Organization of the Year three different years, including 2022.

"Our players come from the University of South Carolina Gamecocks, Clemson Tigers, College of Charleston, and other colleges and universities from across the nation," he says. "In addition, many of our players attended local high schools like Lexington High, River Bluff, Dutch Fork, Gilbert, and many others."

"We will be continuing our commitment to promote the towns and cities in

Lexington County," says Mr. Shanahan, "as this will be the third year in a row that the player jerseys will have an emblem proudly representing each community." As in previous years, these one-of-a-kind jerseys will be auctioned off, and the proceeds are then donated to selected charitable organizations within the community. As they have in the past, the Blowfish will also sponsor a "plethora" of exciting promotions throughout the summer for the fans. "Our season theme is 'An All-Star Summer in Lexington County,'" says Mr. Shanahan, "as the Blowfish will be hosting the 2023 CPL All-Star Game, Wednesday, July 19." The Blowfish will continue to provide wholesome family fun and entertainment at an affordable price," says Mr. Shanahan. The 2023 game schedule is posted online along with ticket sales and special event details.

D-BAT

For those who take a more hands-on approach to the game, baseball training facilities such as D-BAT provide specialized instruction. This company was founded in 2019 by Dave Medeiros and Al Michalowski, both lifelong baseball players and

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friends who met while attending Coastal Carolina University. Mr. Medeiros discovered the opportunity of founding a D-BAT training facility franchise when he visited their website to order his son a baseball bat. “We believed it would be more than a business investment, but something great for the community,” he says.

The name of “D-BAT” is an acronym for Developing Beliefs, Attitudes, and Traditions. “This is what we stand for,” says Mr.

Medeiros. “We established ourselves as a resource for this community—a resource that can be trusted and relied upon for our athletes. We offer many different services to our players and parents,” he explains. Although not required, “We are a membership-based facility, offering lessons, individual and team cage rentals, camps, clinics, and automated pitching machines. We have a fully stocked Pro Shop and have recently become official Rawlings and Easton distributors of both

lexingtonlife.com

Whether you are considering joining a neighborhood adult team, a community recreational team or have a child desiring to play amateur or professional baseball, there are many local resources, networks and facilities in Lexington County to help you along the journey.

**LEXINGTON COUNTY
BASEBALL STADIUM**
474 Ballpark Road
Lexington, SC
(803) 254-3474
GoBlowfishbaseball.com

D-BAT COLUMBIA
4350 St. Andrews Road
Columbia, SC
(803) 756-3228
www.dbatcolumbia.com

P27 PERFORMANCE CENTER
5347 Sunset Boulevard
Lexington, SC
(803) 360-1517
www.p27baseballacademy.com

PALMETTO CARDS
404 West Main Street
Lexington, SC
(803) 399-1208
palmettocards.com

**LEXINGTON DIXIE YOUTH
BASEBALL**
501 Ballpark Rd., Lexington
board@myldyb.net
803-359-0825
Lexingtondixiebaseball.com

**LEXINGTON COUNTY
RECREATION
& AGING COMMISSION**
An Affiliate of
Dixie Youth Baseball,
boys and girls ages 4-18
563 South Lake Dr., Lexington
info@lcrac.com
803-359-4048
lcrac.com



equipment and uniforms. Kids can also celebrate their birthdays with a party at our facility.”

Players of any ability level who are seeking to improve their baseball or softball skills would be challenged through D-BAT’s coaching. “We cater to kids playing rec ball, travel ball, high school, college, and even professional baseball,” says Mr. Medeiros. Because they “recognize that everyone’s goals are different,” the staff of instructors, who specialize in “all aspects of developing a player’s skill set,” is “committed to helping athletes reach their goals.”

“What makes us feel successful and an asset to the community is seeing the progression of all the kids that come into D-BAT to train, take lessons, participate in clinics, and work on their own,” says Mr. Medeiros. “So many of our kids are making all-star teams, making high school teams, and signing with colleges. Watching players develop as they lean on us for direction is a wonderful thing to witness,” he concludes. “Seeing smiles and the jubilation on a kid’s face when they accomplish something for the first time is infectious, pure joy, and so worth the time, money, and effort spent!”

P27 Baseball Academy

Specifically for advanced players, “P27 Baseball Academy is an elite training academy for high school and post-grad students to perfect their skill with premier training and coaching, gain exposure through our competitive game schedule, achieve academic success, and grow through mentorship plus discipleship,” says Corey Warner, company founder and head coach.

“P27 attracts players from all over the country and world,” says Mr. Warner. “With on-campus living and an unmatched baseball training program, athletes develop an experience to hone their skills at the highest level possible on and off the field.” Last year, for example, Logan Wagner was the first Blacksmith to be selected in the eighth round of the Major League Baseball draft pick.

Mr. Warner is a Lexington native who played for the White Knoll Timberwolves before advancing to college ball where he won three consecutive national championships as well as the World Series MVP in 2012. “Corey gained his personal training certification after college and spent years coaching baseball for all age groups in the community,” says Tina Owens, P27’s director of player support. “After years of dream-

ing and prayer, Corey opened P27 Baseball Academy in 2018.”

Ms. Owens explains that the “P27 Blacksmiths” derives the name from Proverbs 27:17, which states: “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” She adds, “Not only do we care about training and developing the baseball skills of our players, but we care about the young man as a whole. We want to develop his character through mentorship and discipleship.”

To that end, “We teach our young men about service in the community and life after baseball,” she says. During the off-season months, the P27 Blacksmiths have volunteered for programs such as The Scooter Scott Project and Ollie’s Warriors. “The guys really enjoy the opportunity to serve in the community!” says Ms. Owens. “We hope it will be something they will continue to do after they are older and back in their own communities.”

Baseball Card Collecting

Did you collect baseball cards as a kid? Have you ever witnessed an avid adult collector get excited showing his favorite or most rare cards? According to a recent study, the sports trading card market is expected to hit \$98.75 billion by year 2027. Baseball cards have been around since the 1880s and, as people tire of digital entertainment they are going back to nostalgic, more interactive hands-on activities. Some of us have been lucky enough to receive cards that have been passed down from generation to generation, and carry on the tradition of gifting/trading cards on special occasions. If you are returning to card collecting as an adult, know that the game has changed since then. Long ago it was easy to get inexpensive sports cards from convenience stores; today prime brands are almost impossible to find in retail stores. Most of your shopping will be online through manufacturer’s websites, dedicated online card retailers or secondary markets like Ebay.

For those who enjoy collecting cards and other baseball memorabilia, Palmetto Cards in downtown Lexington is a destination to explore. “Our store is a one-stop shop for collectors,” says Aaron Cordero, the establishment’s proprietor. “We can take care of all trading card needs. We sell individual cards in raw or graded condition. Raw is a term within the hobby for ‘not graded.’ We also sell unopened boxes and packs of various brands as well as some memorabilia.” ■

