

SUBMISSION TO SAXTON FIELDS COMMITTEE



Submission by - Nelson Heat Baseball

Purpose of submission - to request a permanent home for baseball in Nelson.

Summary

Nelson Heat Baseball trains and plays baseball at Champion Green, Saxton Fields. This has been our home for baseball since the club was founded in Nelson in 2016. Our player numbers have grown more than 350% since 2016 to 64 players in November 2018.

Unfortunately Champion Green has always been a temporary home and consequently any investment the club has made in fencing, pitching mounds and signage, has had to also be temporary.

The current condition of Champion Green is dangerous for any small ball sport, with significant drainage issues and a hard and stoney base. This results in an uneven surface and balls are bouncing randomly in unexpected directions making it unsafe for our players.

In order to provide a safe playing environment for our growing player base, to remain competitive at a national level, and for our players to continue to succeed in representing New Zealand in baseball, we need to find a permanent home for our sport.

We have identified three possible solutions:

1. Significant ground works at Champion Green, with ongoing maintenance and the ability to make Champion Green the permanent home for baseball with permanent dug-out facilities, dirt mound, batting cages, shelter, signage and parking;
2. Allocation of an existing all-weather diamond at Saxton Fields ballpark to baseball, which already includes dug-out facilities, skin surface, fencing, shelter and parking;
3. Another venue in Nelson Tasman that allows for a permanent home for baseball.

Our request is for Saxton Fields Committee to **allocate** one of the four all-weather diamonds at Saxton Fields to be dedicated to baseball, along with access to the shared pavilion facilities.

This option provides the safest and best environment for our players, is the most affordable from both a Council and Club implementation perspective, is a similar scenario to what is happening in other regions around New Zealand and provides more effective utilisation of the existing Saxton ballpark facilities.

Perceived issues

Unfortunately, the best solution is not always the easiest.

The existing booking system for Saxton Field diamonds is dysfunctional, resulting in a double-booking over Labour weekend, leaving Nelson Heat searching for a venue to host our inaugural National baseball tournament a month out from the tournament after Nelson Softball Association (NSA) declined to share access to the diamonds.

Fortunately, Nelson Cricket was happy to collaborate and provided us access to Greenmeadows Fields and Nelson Basketball allowed usage of Jack Robins Stadium for food preparation and an umpire coaching clinic.

Thanks to these partnerships, Nelson Heat was able to deliver a successful tournament for the visiting teams, who have all subsequently committed to returning again for Labour weekend 2019.

Having Marty Grant as one of the founding members of Nelson Heat means we certainly understand the history and significant fundraising efforts undertaken by NSA to establish the diamonds and build the shared pavilion, along with the on-going maintenance and upkeep of the diamonds. However the facilities are owned by the two Councils and we were disappointed that Nelson City Council assigned the decision of shared usage over to NSA.

Facilitated by Sport Tasman, the last two meetings between the codes have resulted in NSA blocking any sharing of access to Saxton ballpark despite declining softball player numbers and, consequently, lower utilisation of the diamonds.

We are seeking a decision from Saxton Fields Committee, as owners and management of the Saxton Fields facilities.

Utilisation of Council assets

Given that sharing the ballpark has not been allowed, we are requesting permanent allocation of a diamond dedicated to the diamond sport of baseball.

We understand this means the responsibility and costs associated with maintaining the diamond would fall with Nelson Heat and we are in a position to afford this obligation.

The all-weather diamonds at Saxton fields are deemed to be one of the best ballparks in New Zealand and consequently an incredible asset to the region.

Our understanding of the current softball season is that only three of the four diamonds are being used on a Saturday afternoon and diamond 4 is only being used for one game, meaning there would still be capacity for growth for more softball teams in the future.

The Nelson Senior Softball Draw for Saturday 10th November 2018.

Diamond				Umpire Duty	Competition
Diamond 1					
1.30pm	Teal Eagles	vs	United Wairua	Purple Eagles	Senior Women
3.30pm	Teal Eagles	vs	Purple Eagles	United Wairua	Senior Women
Diamond 2					
1.30pm	Stoke Eagles	vs	United Titans	Eagles Reserves	Senior Men
3.30pm	Eagles Reserves	vs	United Pirates	Shirley H / James M	Senior Men
Diamond 3					
1.30pm		vs			
3.30pm		vs			
Diamond 4					
1.30pm	United R&B	vs	United Hawks	United Pirates	Senior Women
3.30pm		vs			

NOTE: Teal Eagles have a double header.

Requirements

- the ability to extend the existing diamond to accommodate a full baseball diamond for U16 and mens games. To do this we would use a portable mound which provides flexibility between the two age grades (U13 and U16), as well as accommodating U11 and tee ball grades. Existing base holes would be plugged and we would use floating bases. These adjustments do not involve permanent changes to the diamond surface;
- access to another grass field that can be used as a second diamond for our Nelson Heat Invitational tournament;
- access to toilet facilities, meetings rooms, etc.

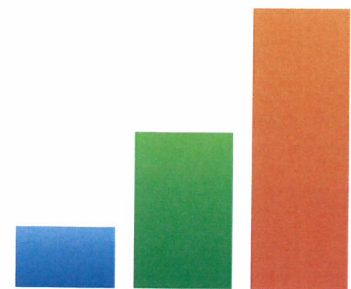
Growth of baseball in Nelson and New Zealand

Alongside the growth of player numbers, Nelson Heat has developed a stronger understanding of the game with attendance at national coaching weekends in Auckland and initiating national-level scoring and umpiring clinics in Nelson.

Two Nelson Heat Baseball players currently represent New Zealand in age group baseball and the development of talent in our region has seen a Baseball New Zealand Selector hold an U12 trial in Nelson.

The Nelson Heat Committee has strengthened from four to five, along with the addition of a paid Coach offering an in-schools baseball programme and two executive roles held outside the Committee, being Grants Officer and Events Facilitator.

NELSON HEAT PLAYER NUMBERS	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Teeball	0	10	15
U13	14	14	23
U16	0	12	16
Adult*	0	0	10
Total Players	14	36	64



Baseball New Zealand has continued to strengthen and now boasts a professional team playing in the Australian Baseball League (Auckland Tuataras). The pathway for baseball players in New Zealand has never been stronger and the investment in the sport continues to grow.

HIGHLIGHTS 2018/19 TO DATE

Month	Activity	Description	Venue
September 2018	New Zealand Scoring clinic	Held Scoring clinic, delivered by Baseball New Zealand Head Scorers Carol & Beverley	HNZ board room
September 2018	Teeball tournament	School teeball tournament held with more than 200 players from across eight schools in the Nelson Tasman region.	Champion Green

October 2018	New Zealand Umpiring course	Held Umpiring training, delivered by Baseball New Zealand Umpire Martin Hunt Collaboration with Nelson Basketball with umpiring course held at Jack Robins Stadium	Jack Robins Stadium
October 2018	Nelson Heat Invitational Tournament	Hosted the inaugural Nelson Heat Invitational tournament with visiting teams Levin Hustle U13 and Christchurch Astros U13 & U16. Collaboration with Nelson Cricket with tournament held at Greenmeadows Fields due to safety concerns with Champion Green	Greenmeadows Fields
October 2018	New Zealand U12 Trial	Held New Zealand U12 trial in Nelson, with Baseball NZ Selector & Coach Toshiki Nakao	Champion Green
November 2018	MLB Pitcher coaching clinics	Hosted Steven Brault in Nelson, a professional baseball pitcher for the Pittsburgh Pirates. - Coaching clinics held at Nelson College & Waimea Intermediate - Public coaching clinic at Champion Green	Champion Green
10 November 2018	First mens game	The first mens game was played in Nelson, with a team fielded against the U16 team.	Champion Green