



Melville Minor Ball: Brings the best to the plate

The City of Melville lays claim to one of the most successful minor ball programs in the province of Saskatchewan. The road to success was built with the hard work and participation of many individuals and organizations sharing a

passion for the game.

Melville has a history of competitive teams on both the Provincial and National Level. The late 1960's and 1970's were witness to championship teams in the Sandlot, Bantam and Midget divisions which won the Provincial and Western Canadian finals. The culmination of these teams was the 1973 Melville Midget Baseball club that won the Canadian champion-



ship. The win put Melville on the map as a baseball city. A member of this team, Terry Puhl, went on to play Major League baseball and star with the Houston Astros for over a dozen years keeping Melville in the baseball limelight. This team has been inducted into the Saskatchewan Baseball Hall of Fame in 1993 and was also

inducted into the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame in June of 1999. This is the only baseball team ever allowed entry into Saskatchewan Sports Hall.

Melville encountered a lull in baseball activity for a number of years until 1992 when the system received a complete facelift. The change began with a major fundraiser - the Terry Puhl Sports Dinner which raised \$28,000 and resulted in the formation of the Terry Puhl Foundation. The organization then built a five lane batting cage facility costing \$60,000 with the help of service clubs and organizations within the city. Baseball was back. The program saw enrollment balloon to 525 players with present levels just under 400 participants. Success was evident immediately as a team in the Mosquito division won the 1993 provincial B title. This was an omen of things to come as 1994 was witness to a Pee Wee team winning the Provincial and Western Canadian titles. The following year (1995) had a Pee Wee A team win a Western Canadian title followed by an appearance in the finals of the Bantam A Western Championships in 1996.

The popularity of minor ball in Melville has led to a need for increased instruction for both the coaches and players. Florida's Doyle Baseball School was brought in to run week-long schools in the city. This was done in 1994, 1995 and 1996. In 1997, the

Zerilla Baseball School was utilized to further enhance the ball program. This level of instruction has resulted in both players and coaches attaining skills at a very high level.

The community has hosted a number of Provincial tournaments at all levels including an Atlanta Braves Bantam tryout camp (first in Canada). This year the community will be home to the 16th annual Melville Baseball Tournament, July 11-13 featuring play in the Midget, Bantam, Pee Wee and Mosquito divisions as well as the Bantam AA Sask Baseball Provincial Championship July 18-20 and the Midget AA Sask Baseball Provincial Championship July 25-27 at the Melville Regional Park.

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