

Mavericks League managers' roundtable

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Last week we began our sit down with the managers of the four Mavericks League teams. Part one can be found in last week's issue, or the story can be read in its entirety online at keizertimes.com.

Does the roster building this late take focus away from other parts?

Dave Wong (Salem Senators): That's about the only focus right now, getting that roster filled out and seeing where we stand. The start of the season is always the toughest because you've have some guys coming in that are college guys or I've got a guy that's coaching high school and he's not getting out until June. So we'll be missing some guys early on, just trying to get enough numbers to get it going and hopefully keep it together for the first month of the season.

Tony Torcato (Salem-Keizer Volcanoes): We're trying to get the roster filled out, but the highest quality at the same time. It's not easy, but it can be done. I think by opening night all the teams will have their guys, so I'm not too worried, even though I have a couple roster spots to fill. It'll be fine.

Alex Alvarado (Campeños de Salem-Keizer): The whole recruiting process has been about a three or four month process. We

all started in early January figuring out who's who and who can come out. I think we're all picking at the same local guys right now. There's only a handful of local guys that can play at this level. I've made calls where these guys already made calls. One thing I think we can do, I think more host families would make the league a little bit better quality wise so that we can get a whole team of guys from other states, maybe even other countries.

Scott Binder (Portland Mavericks): I would say maybe I'm at a little bit of an advantage versus you three because you three are down in that area, I'm an hour north. I've been able to sign some guys from up in this area which help us with those local signings you guys talked about. At the same time I've got a player coming in from Venezuela, and his cousin just got released last week from the Royals.

Right now I have 11 players that need host families. If I sign him, I have 12 players and we're supposed to be at 10. My hands are tied a little bit, I told him I have to figure out if I can create a roster spot for him.

DW: You've got a big house, Scott. Put him up in your house.

SB: Yeah, he can sleep with my labradoodle. Get the labradoodle off my bed. Right now the goal is just to make sure we have enough bodies so we can produce a pretty good product for the first weeks of the season

when we bring a couple more players in. The last thing I want to do is add somebody for the short term and then turn around and tell them "Sorry, we're going to have to release you."

TT: Some guys don't deserve to be released, but it does happen.

DW: That's the unfortunate side of the business, and it's at every level. If you're in high school you have to cut guys, in college you have to let guys go, in pro ball you release guys. The game comes to an end for everybody sooner or later and everybody that thinks it doesn't is totally messed up because we've all been there and done that. Played the game and been released or what not. There's a time and when the time's the time it's the time.

TT: I've been released twice, designated for assignment, signed late in the year. I've done it all so I feel what we have to do. It's not an easy job to tell somebody that. That's probably the hardest part for any of us.

Heading into the second season of the league, what did you take away from last year?

DW: I don't know if there's any more lessons to be learned. The progress of the league and how things are run, obviously we had some hiccups last year but we have them ironed out before this year. It's an ongoing process that'll never end, there's always better things you can do, better ideas that come up. We just have to find the best way to do it and make this league the best we can. Like Alex said, success wise if you look at the guys that are now playing in different independent leagues, paying leagues, it's a pretty high percentage ratio. I think we're on the right track.

AA: I wasn't part of the league last year, but what I hope for this year is a good competitive game from inning one to inning nine. I think that's all we can ask for. It is hard getting a roster you want to continue with for the entire year because releasing guys is tough and having new guys show up is even harder. I think what has been hard, at least for me personally, is trying to get a roster that I can be committed to until the last game.

SB: I think last year if you look at the Campeños, they had the least turnover, I believe. If you can create a network of men

that are getting to know each other and they become comfortable with each other and know what to expect from each other then it's no different than any level. The team that is in it at the end and wins it, the chances are they've been the healthiest through the season as well.

We hope that we can create a network of guys that at the end of our season, all four of us, that we can look back and say we kept a very strong nucleus of players together and there wasn't a whole lot of turnover. But the fact is there will be turnover. There's guys we're bringing in that aren't going to be who we thought they'd be and you can't help them become a better baseball player going forward. But hopefully the community will support what we're trying to put out there for them and come out to a baseball game.

Who has the best uniforms in the Mavericks League?

DW: Campeños, bar none.

AA: No, definitely not the Campeños. I think the classic Volcanoes got it.

DW: Yeah, I think the Volcanoes' Fourth of July uniform is the best uniform we've seen all year.

TT: I know, I wish we could wear those every game. Those are pretty sweet and the players really enjoyed those. They were like "Thank you so much for letting us wear those." If we wear those a few more than just one game that'd be great.

DW: I think if everyone had two sets of uniforms that would be more even.

SB: I'd like to put a request in that we create a different uniform for the Mavericks.

DW: I love those red pants, man.

TT: You guys were on Netflix for crying out loud.

SB: If you don't ask you don't get. But the problem for us when it was 115 degrees last year and you're out there playing in those thick uniforms.

TT: I like the baggy old school. I love them. Some character, right?



Part 2



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