

Dear Editor,

Once again, Robin Short has found a way to try to make himself relevant. I guess there comes a point in ones career when you need to write clickbait articles to attract readers – even if some of the comments are at best case inaccurate, and at worst case, ignorant and uninformed.

I find it hard to believe that Robin Short finds the St. John's Capitals Senior Baseball team once again playing in the Senior A Finals to be "a yawner", as he put it. The Capitals players and coaches (both past and present), as well as volunteers, executive members and other personnel have invested countless hours of volunteer time, over the last 20+ years, to ensure they continue to achieve their ultimate goal of being the elite team in the Province. Their record proves that.

I also find it hard to believe that Robin would completely discredit the work of other Senior A centres in that same timeframe, particularly Corner Brook Barons, who have been there year after year right with the Caps. In recent years, Gander, Mount Pearl have also competed with and played against each other for the right to play St. John's year after year, with the Corner Brook Barons having the most appearances in the Senior A Finals. Over the years there have been many very exciting Barons-Caps series.

How does this differ from Challenge Cup where the perennial final is usually Holy Cross vs. St. Lawrence? Or Colin Fewer seemingly winning or finishing near the top of the Tely10 each year? Or Brad Gushue consistently winning the Men's curling every year? Are these as well "yawners"? This in no way is meant to cast a negative light on soccer or Colin or Brad Gushue, but simply to acknowledge their tremendous hard work and commitment year after year to maintain that level of success. The Caps and Barons are the perennial Senior A Finalists because of this same tremendous hard work and commitment. It is not a fluke or coincidence this happens. The Caps and Barons are hardly a "yawner". 2018's final was a 7-game series that produced some very exciting baseball. Robin would know this if he took the time to watch or research it.

The current final – Gander and St. John's – is hardly a fluke, either. Gander Pilots Head Coach, Justin Kelly, has spent countless hours over the past number of years to build and maintain his team. Gander has lost close games to Corner Brook in 2016 and 2017 and could very easily have played St. John's much sooner than now. I am sure that he and his team would rather be playing their home games in Gander but circumstances beyond their control doesn't allow it. The current final is a 2 – 1 St. John's, with Gander winning Game 3 on Sunday afternoon 5 – 0, setting up what should be a great final this weekend.

The current setup that Baseball NL is using for its Senior Provincials was not imposed upon the centres by the Executive. Rather this was discussed and voted on by the Senior delegates from each of the participating centres at the AGM. At the time of the discussions, it was felt that this was the best model. Because of current geographic, demographic, and economic circumstances, it becomes increasingly challenging for players to stay in small towns to find work and play baseball. They are often forced to leave their home towns for various reasons, ie. work and/or school to further their education. It's hard enough for these coaches to field teams in these communities, much less leagues. Should they be forced to give up baseball for this reason? Absolutely not. But I guess if you ask

Robin, it's a travesty this has happened. Are the rules perfect? Maybe not. Is there room for improvement? Maybe so. But remember one thing – as a Provincial Sports Organization, we are chaired with the responsibility to give as many athletes as possible a chance to play ball. This is what we are doing right now, and will continue to do into the future.

I will admit that our record at the National level for the past few years certainly could be improved. However, where was Robin when we finished 4th at the Canada Cup in 2016 and when we finished first in our Round Robin pool and lost a close semi-final game to British Columbia and a closer Bronze medal game to Quebec? Or does Robin forget that Corner Brook native, Myles Vincent, played for the Junior National team well after his references of other Newfoundlanders who donned Canadian colours. In fact, Myles pitched a 3-2 win over Czech Republic at the 2012 World Junior Championships in Seoul, South Korea, striking out 9 batters in 7 innings and allowing just 1 run and 3 hits, and came home with a Silver Medal! While the scores on the field are a part of a successful story, we certainly do not define our success based solely on National Championships results.

Maybe it's time for Robin to focus on some good news story for a change. If he did, he could certainly have plenty of topics. For example, focus on the rapidly developing Female Baseball program in the province, where Female Director, Mark Healy, has put countless hours into developing a program that now creates a pathway for female baseball players to continue to compete and play baseball until they are 19 years old and beyond. He could also focus on our most recent Learning Facilitator Coaching Clinic, where we hosted Atlantic Canada and certified our first ever Female Learning Facilitator. If neither of that suits him, he could focus on Challenger Baseball – a program designed for cognitively or otherwise impaired athletes – to play baseball in an adaptive setting. This year, Challenger Baseball has 90 athletes between our Avalon and Corner Brook programs, with Corner Brook being a new program in 2019. The above examples are just as important, and when added together, make for a much better overall story than isolating one week at a National Championship.

There are much more positives than negatives in baseball, and sport in general, in this province. It is truly a shame Robin chooses to write negative articles when there are so many more positive stories in sport.

Baseball NL is currently in the process of developing a new strategic plan which has some sweeping changes – both constitutional and structural – that is all-encompassing. This includes coaching, high performance programming, umpire development, governance and overall development and promotion of baseball in our Province. We feel that the strides we are making will be reflected in the years to come, and will better position us for success now and into the future.

Kevin Legge
President, Baseball NL