

A Report to the Directors of Minnesota Legion Baseball
Dated 10/9/2024
Respectfully Submitted by Bruce Barron

This is a follow up to the presentation that I tried to cram into the time slot available at the September Board meeting. I was asked to send data to back up what I was discussing. When we stated the Legion All Star Initiative, I never expected or intended to be exposed to so much information coming from so many directions. I had made public observations that Legion in my 45 plus years had not changed. But that times seemed to be changing. I publicly pointed out that playoffs ought to be “right sized”. Too many players and coaches had expressed unhappiness that they had no chance against one of the “big schools” and that playoffs were just a death sentence. Kids wanted a chance to succeed it seemed. I had made public observations that our baseball market was changing, and stated that I believed Legion could meet the challenges of change. I fully expected my words to fall on deaf ears.

I am offering you a compilation of data and information that may be useful as you are the ones entrusted to lead Legion Baseball here in Minnesota. You may disagree with what you read. You may choose not to read and simply discard this report. Data has been gathered. Views and opinions of many, many individuals and representatives of organizations have been listened to. Its that data and those opinions that have now shaped my opinions.

Be aware that few if any in the state really know who the directors of State Legion are. Many in and out of Legion baseball think they know a name or two that, to them, run the show. The most common term expressed was a “secret society”. I laughed at first thinking of the Illuminati or the Knights Templar. Then I realized that meetings are closed. Agendas are private. Personal agendas and views are private. Who really runs the show? Who really sets and runs the agenda for D1 or D2? One can guess whether right or wrongly.

This report is not intended to offend anyone. If you are offended, then I can only offer an up front apology. I am trying to provide you with information that is sometimes interspersed with opinions expressed to me or opinions that I know hold. It starts as observation and data with opinions coming as a result.

Legion All Stars

Developing Legion All Stars has been a wonderful project that we hoped would provide a celebration of Legion baseball and a rewarding experience for players, coaches, and families that represent the top talent tier in Minnesota Legion baseball. We hoped that every Legion board member would welcome something new and welcome something that might enhance Legion baseball. We hoped there would be appreciation from the Legion Board for the effort and even the possibility of collaboration with you guys on the State Board. All Stars was nothing radical. Other legion programs run all star programs. The MSHSL runs a big all-star program for graduated seniors. We just had to adapt the concept to Minnesota Legion and develop a working format plus all sorts of administrative systems.

We ran two Beta tests to make certain that we had the right direction and tools. 2023 was the first full scale senior all-star event accompanied by a junior level beta test. The quality of play in the senior tourney was exceptional. The 2024 all-star program had 155 Legion players participating from over 70 communities in two separate tournaments. Crowds were good. Merchandise sold. Two kids got hit by pitches. The events were certainly successful. But concerns surfaced.

We have run all-stars for four years. In that time, we have spoken to and listened to coaches and players and parents and college coaches all across the state. We talk to over 100 Legion coaches a year. We had no idea what would be on people's minds or what their ideas and observations might be. I certainly did not know what was happening in programs across the state and certainly did not know what complaints people might have. Nearly everyone thinks that Legion baseball in Minnesota can be improved and modernized. Many cited issues or problems that they faced or that they observed others facing. The negatives grew substantially in 2024. As the data and information kept coming in, patterns developed, data developed, and opinions were developed and shared.

As unpleasant as it may be, someone was asked to share the information with you, the Legion Board.

Those Aren't All Stars – He Growled

This venerated Legion board member is regarded as an objective judge of baseball talent. As you may know, Minnesota Legion All Stars were the players nominated by their team coaches as their best players that they believe represent the top Legion talent from around the state. These are the players the Legion coaches think that college coaches want to see. At All Stars, we rely heavily on coach recommendations to select the all-star rosters. When this Board member stopped by the senior tournament for a short stay, he said that what he saw just did not measure up, in his view, to an "all-star" level.

So, the best Legion players just did not measure up. They did not meet his expectations. These were the best players according to their Legion coaches. Or the best players available that play for Legion teams. Most observers of Minnesota Legion Baseball, particularly speaking of Division 1, and specifically discussing the metro area, will tell you that the quality of Legion players and teams is dramatically lower than five years ago – pre Covid. Many said that 2024 was the biggest flow of talent away from Legion than had ever occurred previously. We felt that dramatic 2024 outflow at All Stars before we had any data to tell us.

Well if you are an outstate director or if you are focused on the D2 program you might not care. If you are a D1 director and especially if you are a Metro director, then you really ought to care – a lot. In reality, the entire Board should care.

2024 - The Greatest Talent Drain Ever: Where Did All the Boys Go?

Does anyone claim that the quality of Legion players and the quality of Legion competition has maintained, let alone improved in the last five years? Observers, coaches, and data all confirm that top talent and second tier talent has left Legion and taken a lot of their friends with them. The loss of talent is especially evident in the metro areas that comprise 62% of the state's population. Folks – college coaches, team coaches, scouts and just about everybody – observe that Legion talent has been reduced to just a small minority share of the available metro baseball talent. Many say the trend accelerated after the cancellation of Legion baseball during Covid. Observers point to 2024 as the largest move away from Legion to private baseball clubs ever by players in the metro. Many called it the worst defection rate ever in the Metro. There is no reason to believe that the trend has escaped the view of Minnesota Legion Board members. This talent drain existed well before Covid. It has progressed since Covid. Surely the folks that run Division 1 and especially the folks that run the Metro have noticed. It's their job, right?

MSHSL High School Baseball – 4AAAA – The Biggest Teams

Generally, one would expect that success in the spring would carry over to the summer. In the past, the players from the high school team went on to play for their summer Legion team. Today there seems little correlation, just some overlap.

- 2024 MSHSL Tournament Teams: Forest Lake, Farmington, Eastview, East Ridge, St. Cloud, Wayzata, Moundsview and Minnetonka. East Ridge – State champ, Moundsview - Second, Minnetonka -Consolation champ.
 - Of the top eight, only Forest Lake and Farmington made the Minnesota Legion state tournament.
 - Legion D1 champ Farmington; Runner up Osseo.
 - What happened to the others?
- 2023 MSHSL Tournament Teams: Lakeville South, Minnetonka, Moundsview, East Ridge, Rosemount, Anoka, Edina, Sartell. East Ridge State champ; Rosemount runner up; Lakeville South consolation champ
 - Moundsview made it to Legion State – went 0-3; Sartell made it.
 - The D1 champion (repeat) was St. Michael – was a .600 team in high school. The runner up was Eden Prairie – was a .500 team during high school play.
 - What happened to the other top high school teams?

Each season and each team have their own story. However, it is generally known that the top high school teams have the top high school players. Why are so many of the top high school players of the top teams playing somewhere besides American Legion? This is particularly true of the junior and sophomore players who have private club baseball options. Some Legion teams have enjoyed success when they are able to hold on to the graduated seniors, the 18s. Note two-time state champion St. Michael: Most, if not all, of their senior dominated teams were the talented juniors and sophomores that had been playing club ball. They came back as graduates to play Legion with the goal of winning a state Legion championship. Two years in a row St. Michael club kids won the state. We call those “boomerang teams”. A .600 team in high school was our state Legion champ. The St. Mike’s kids saw the landscape and read it well. That and what their coaches reported were very weak pools that allowed them to keep their front-line pitching form the weekends.

What has happened to these Legion Division 1 programs?

Edina	Rogers
Chanhassen	Maple Grove
Chaska	Coon Rapids
Waconia	Andover
Prior Lake	Moundsview (Tri City Red)
Burnsville	White Bear Lake
Hopkins	Woodbury
Wayzata	East Ridge
Maple Plain	Eastview
Orono	St. Paul
Mound Westonka	Minneapolis
St. Louis Park	Bloomington
St. Paul Park	Cherry
Eagan	St. Cloud
Lakeville North	Duluth
Lakeville South	Rochester

What is going on in:

Minnetonka/Excelsior
Farmington
Osseo
St. Michael
Shakopee
Hamel

If you are a decision maker, especially one that concerns themselves with Division 1, then you no doubt already know. Or should know.

What Did Some of Those Team Coaches Tell Us in 2024

Metro Tone – Not Good

A few, very few Legion coaches claim to be winning the battle. Some say they are holding their own. Metro Legion coaches must try to recruit players and convince them that Legion is the way to go for their summer baseball. Many programs make substantial compromises to get kids to at least split their baseball with Legion. Metro legion coaches tell of the lack of additional options beyond the same old offering of the traditional Legion season. The all-star program is not enough to keep kids they say. Several teams promote their programs by attending showcase tournaments as a way to see better competition. That is a ‘let’s play the clubs for better competition” approach. Who takes that approach? Excelsior, Hopkins, Wayzata, Eden Prairie are all in that group. They openly admit Minnesota Legion lacks quality, so they travel to find it elsewhere. Most coaches cite the lack of quality Legion competition as an increasingly serious challenge to recruitment. Any college coach will tell you they look to the club rosters first as that is where the bulk of the talent is today, especially regarding metro players. Today, many Legion teams are focused on their 18-year-olds – the graduated seniors Private baseball excluded 18’s from their programs. Clubs have geared to the underclassmen promising better players, better competition, and national college exposure. Will private clubs continue to ignore the 18’s? If so, for now long? The very loud rumor is that Legion will not enjoy the 18-year-old monopoly much longer.

Comments From Metro Coaches

- 1) Champlin is making a comeback. St. Michael says they are getting a few of their better kids to play Legion after a few years of being nearly all-club. Excelsior says they have few club players. Osseo has held up and so has Farmington. Shakopee has a lot of club kids but fewer conflicts with their Legion team.
- 2) Edina finally “blew up to club” in the words of Gene Larkin. It was the worst Edina team I have seen in 45 years. They dropped out of the Gopher Classic and have doubts about competing next year.
- 3) Eden Prairie had all nine of their top junior class leave for club.
- 4) Minnetonka/Excelsior reported renewed health with a large feeder program and changes in leadership.
- 5) Burnsville had no quality junior class players.
- 6) Prior Lake - most all of their best players were club both juniors and sophomores
- 7) Eastview says its all club there.
- 8) We are on our own. You know who runs the show.
- 9) Rosemount says they are banking on the 18 year olds (which isn’t working out that well) but the quality players in the sophomore and junior classes aren’t p[laying Legion
- 10) Wayzata - with the exception of one top player in the 25 class, their best players went club.
- 11) Hopkins coaches try to recruit their top players. Barely any stay.

- 12) St. Louis Park reported that they had their best sophomore class ever with nine players. One played Legion, the other eight went to club.
- 13) Legion state champ Farmington had three ranked players (P,C,SS) that played club (and they still won the Legion state tournament!).
- 14) High school powerhouse East Ridge is barely a recreation team. Powerhouse Woodbury (Blue) dropped Legion altogether.
- 15) Large sections of the metro geography have little to no Legion presence or keep Legion alive with what one coach called the “wont ever play varsity” crowd
- 16) Many more coaches say they have no top talent available. That’s what we heard from Moundsview. And from many others. “Those players are in club, not on my team.”
- 17) Coaches are powerless beyond their community. They have no say, are not consulted, and have little to no visibility of any matters that are the focus of the directors of Division 1. The State Board is a remote concept with no transparency they say. Only a couple of state director names are known to most of the coaches. There is little hope that what one fellow called “the secret society” would ever take any action beyond repeating the past. Coaches feel disconnected.

Outstate Tone

Coaches outstate raise flags of concern even though they generally do not feel in immediate danger. Already many of the top talents from out state Legion teams are shared players with clubs. They seek better competition and seek to play on better teams as all club teams are multi-community. Outstater seem interested in being in a communications loop and wanting to be heard and listened to. They say there is no transparency. They don’t know who meets when or what will be discussed. There is no agenda nor are there minutes. Some say they have raised issues to an officer or a director before. Many would like to implement some new option that can add to the Legion offerings, especially for their better prospects. Many want more opportunities for their players. Outstate coaches often think there are more things that can be done with Legion baseball to enhance their programs. Outstate coaches have zero belief that they can win a Division 1 state championship.

- 1) Outstate coaches are excited for Legion season.
- 2) Outstate coaches worry that the Metro is so far eroded in quality that most metro teams offer poor competition. They talked about being unable to get a competitive game when they come to metro tournaments. Why spend the money for travel and hotels for Legion tournaments held in the Metro? Why not spend more and go to club tournaments? After all, the biggest Metro teams do play in club or showcase tournaments out of state and now say they want to be able to play in club sponsored tournaments in-state. I know a couple of you have heard the requests and the interest directly for a couple of coaches.
- 3) One outstate coach that hosts a 4th of July Tournament expressed his surprise that they won their own tournament. And then told of how lousy the other teams were – mostly metro.
- 4) Many out-staters worry that they will be the next round of targets as clubs expand territory and age groups.
- 5) Several cite kids around them that have been “picked off” by clubs – full time.
- 6) More and more outstate coaches believe that clubs are coming after them too. That the metro problems are spreading.
- 7) Many coaches that have top outstate and D2 talent mentioned that many those boys are split-rostered and play with the local team when the Club team isn’t playing. In other words, Legion is not meeting the added demands of their families and players.

- 8) If you believe that being outstate or being a D2 program makes you immune or if you believe that issues only affect a segment of the legion team spectrum, then you are not in step with the more forward-looking views held around the state.

Minnesota Twins Spoke

- I received a nice call from the Minnesota Twins. They wanted to endorse the development of a Legion All Star program that reached across the entire state.
- They seemed a little surprised to see such tepid support from Minnesota State Legion Baseball.
- The representative spoke with alarm that private club baseball showed accelerated growth (programs, teams and players) in 2024. That the growth has gone unchecked. They were concerned that community baseball at the high school level was threatened at a level not seen before.
- Legion has not responded in the past. Could they or would they now?
- The representative warned that geographic and demographic expansion of private baseball is in the offing. After all, business ventures seek growth and are willing to innovate while expanding their product lines.

Conclusions

There is no rocket scientist needed here.

- o The quality of Legion players and Legion teams in D1 has dropped consistently and dropped dramatically.
- o The Metro areas have been hardest hit but do not mistake the Rochester, St. Cloud, and Duluth areas.
- o The loss of talented players, the reduction in quality teams, and the reduction of quality play is dramatic.
- o I have no doubt that the Directors of Division 1 Metro know very well of the deterioration of the Legion brand in the Metro.
- o No one that I have spoken to believes that the people running Legion baseball and in particular those that run Division 1 and even more particularly run Division 1 Metro, is ignorant of the conditions.
- o **The leading Division 1 expert on the Board has stated – “We have lost the war” (with the clubs). What battle was ever fought? What steps have ever been taken?**

The Big Question

Does anyone care?

PBR Data: The Talent Market Share – Legion and the “Others”

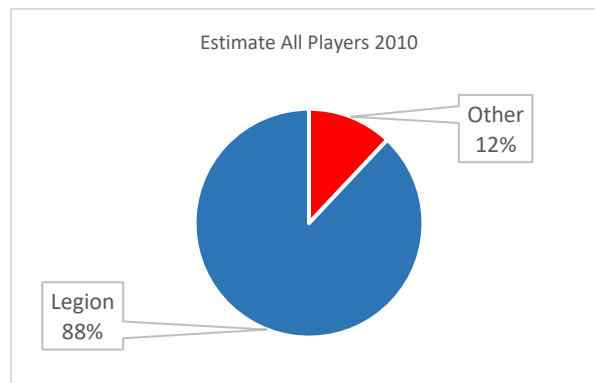
Back in the Day – Not So Long Ago

Legion baseball as THE place to play. The best players, the best teams, and the best competition was in Legion baseball.

All a Board needed to do was administer the program: Sign up teams, chase down paperwork, set up play offs and state tournaments.

Great pride went with the statement that “Minnesota had the most Legion teams in the country”. So, Minnesota made sure that it created the largest, most complex, and most expensive Division 1 state tournament possible – the 16 team, four site, double elimination tournament.

Size seemed everything, or at least a major source of pride. Quality mattered back then as well.



2024 Market Share – PBR 175 Top Rated Players

Competition started small in 2004 with the beginning of club baseball.

At its core, club is nothing more than a multi-community team – just like a college team that many players aspire to.

Early clubs appealed to the “elite players” as they promoted national exposure to college recruiters. Clubs also promoted that the players would face better competition by playing against more elite teams (multi community teams) on a national tournament circuit.

More clubs opened and more facilities opened. More players joined.

Clubs dominated the Elite player level. Clubs further expanded to different age groups and ability tiers.

In 2024 – if you were a talented sophomore or high school junior, you had to consider non-Legion baseball either for full time or for a shared experience.

Minnesota Legion required its players to play only with their base high school.

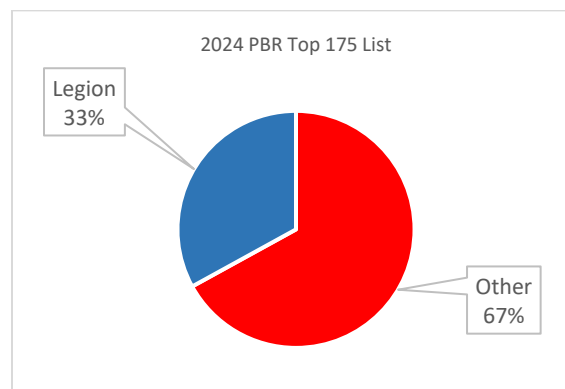
But the market has shifted dramatically to multi-community models meaning a kid has to leave Legion to play with kids from other communities.

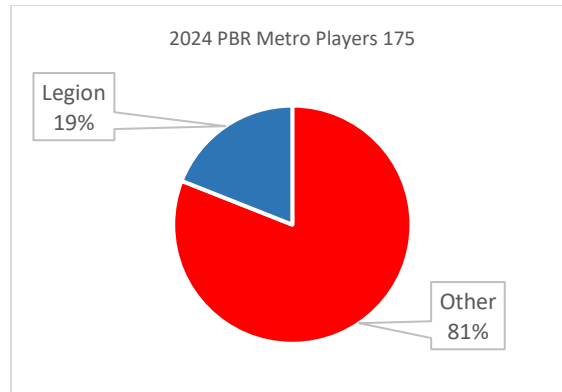
If you were a top player in the Metro, the attraction to multi community clubs was almost unavoidable.

And its not just the top tier players that are joining the multi-community programs.

75% of the top tier Legion players across the state also played club.

Good players are looking for more than what they have available to them at Legion. Including Outstate and D2.





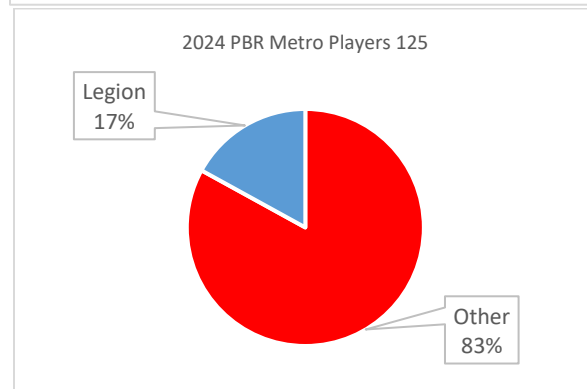
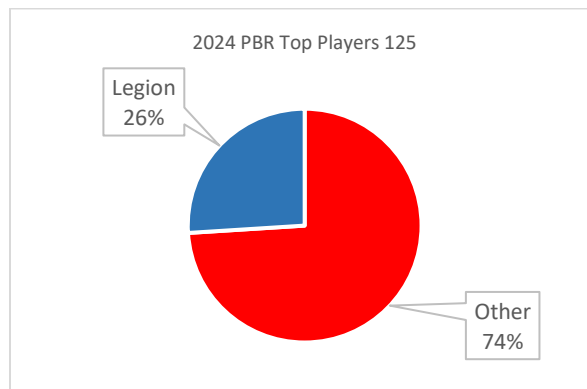
2024 Market Share – PBR 125 Top Rated Players

Reduce the player pool to the top 125 ranked players at PBR.

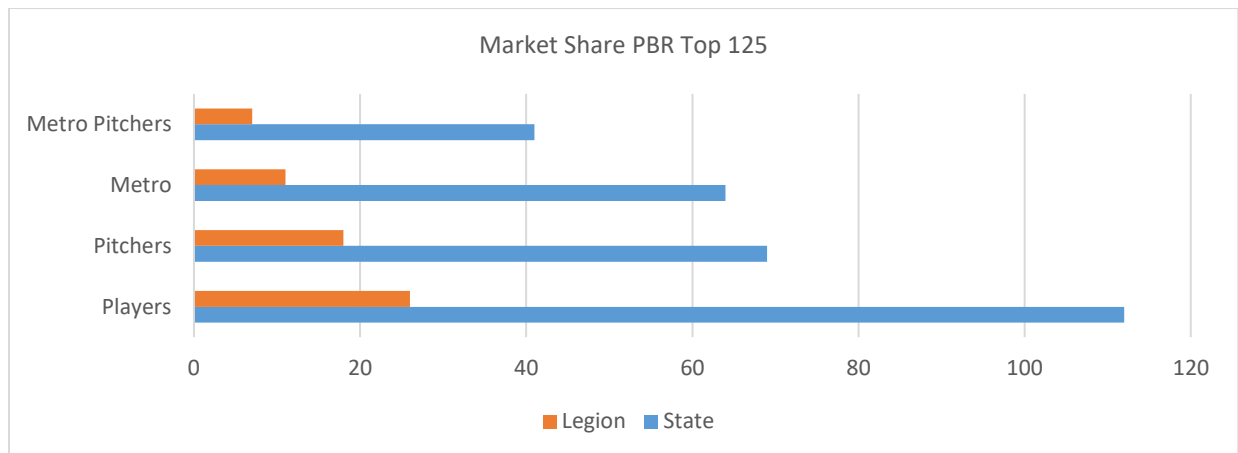
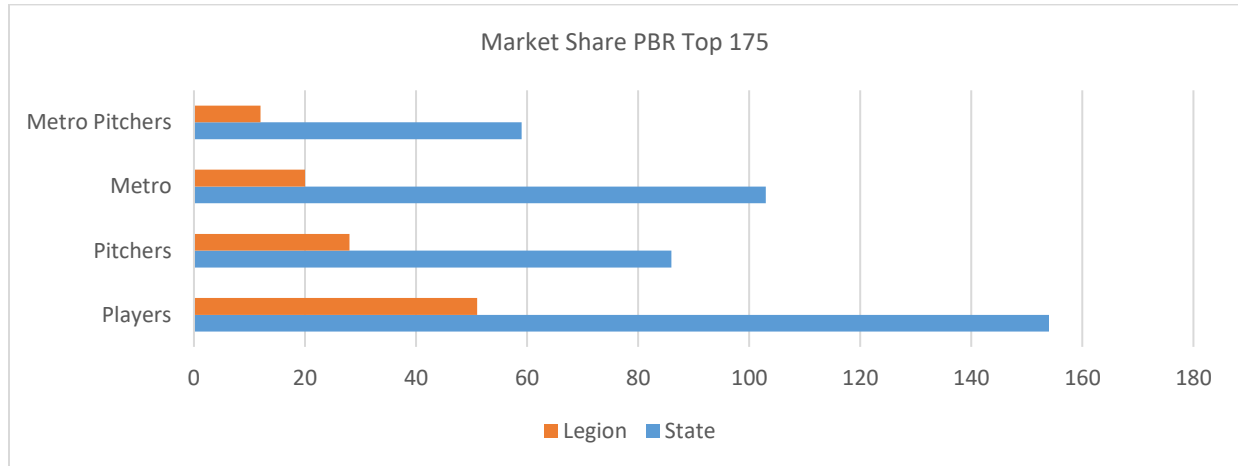
Statewide Legion market share drops from 33% to 26%.

The Metro drops slightly to 17% from 19%

Of the Legion players in the top ranked 125, 90% also play club baseball.



2024 - A Different View



In the Data – Big Picture

- 1) The Legion market share of talent has suffered. The Top Talent 125 has the Legion market share at a dismal 26%. Expand the top list to 175 and Legion garners a 33% market share.
- 2) That means statewide – between two-thirds and three-quarters of Minnesota’s best ball players say no to Legion.
- 3) But the D1 heavy Metro is far worse – 17% and 19% respectively. Four out of five say No to Legion.
- 4) Moreover, 75% to 90% of the top tier kids playing Legion are saying “Yes” to clubs as they are shared players.
- 5) Why can’t more players find more opportunities playing Legion baseball? The answer to that question is on your Board. It is in your hands.

Legion All Star Data Confirms Observations and PBR Data

All Star Data was a virtual mirror PBR data.

- 26% of Legion All Stars came from Metro teams versus PBR 19% being Legion players.

- That was 22 players that will graduate in 2025 out of an All-Star roster pool of 85.
- This represented a new low for our program.

More Data – Top Tier Minnesota Legion Players Also Play Club Baseball

PBR Top 125 List

D1 Players	Legion D1	Legion D1 %	Club LD1
96	23	24%	90%
D2 Players	Legion D2	Legion D2 %	Club LD2
15	6	40%	100%
Metro Players	Legion Metro	Metro Legion %	Club LD1
64	11	17%	91%

PBR Top 175 List

D1 Players	Legion D1	Legion D1 %	Club LD1
135	39	29%	74%
D2 Players	Legion D2	Legion D2 %	Club LD2
19	11	58%	73%
Metro Players	Legion Metro	Metro Legion %	Club LD1
103	20	19%	75%

The Legion Talent is Shared Talent – Outstate & Metro Alike

Clearly better players are seeking additional opportunities beyond playing with the kids from their base high school.

Shared Players: The vast majority of talented Legion players are also choosing to play club.

- Supplement their Legion team experience (Legion comes before Club)
- Or alternatively, supplement their Club experience by filling in with Legion.
- D2 players participate with private clubs just as often as D1 players play on club teams.
- Players have NO CHOICES provided by Legion Baseball to play with better players from surrounding programs.
- Younger or lesser talents fill what used to be varsity uniforms keeping Legion team count up. Many coaches call the kids the “hopeless” in that that have no chance of making the high school varsity team.

Legion baseball essentially forces players and families to join club teams if they want an enhanced baseball opportunity.

All Data Sources Intersect

All available data sources aligned and corroborated each other

- There is observational information.
- There are coach statements.
- There is all-star data.
- There are Twins comments.
- The PBR data is completely correlated to all the other sources.
- And frankly, that is exactly what operators of private clubs happily share with us. They say their best marketing partner is Legion baseball. The weaker Legion teams get, the bigger their rosters become. There are more clubs and teams being formed for 2025 than in 2024.

What Has Been the D1 Senior Focus Post Covid?

The cancelation of the Legion season for Covid provided a shockwave to the baseball community. Many kids joined clubs to keep playing ball.

The club expansion during the post Covid period has been substantial.

What has Legion done to further develop the program or potentially attract more participation?

What have been the priorities and innovations for D1? Who sets the agenda and priorities for Division 1?

- 1) **New D1 State Tournament Format- The Gopher Classic Comes to the State Tournament.** The 16-team double elimination tournament that many regarded as an exhausting marathon was replaced with what I would call the Gopher Classic format that a Board Member runs as a 16-site, 96 team summer tournament. It's a hybrid with the Pool Play format offering three games per team in a four-team pool (4 pools) followed by eight teams playing a separate championship tournament using the high school or D2 "left right" bracket system. The decision to change the state tournament is said to have been advanced by a small number of board members and determined by the Board of Directors without outside vetting. In other words, the Board followed the lead of the concept sponsor(s) without bothering to consult anyone outside your board. Has this experiment been successful? Is it more efficient? Are candidates lining up to host the massive event? What sort of annual review has occurred? We know there are issues. After four years, a small group are said to be developing some fixes to address some issues and problems. But, in the words of a prominent Board member, "this (the format) is never going to change."
- 2) **Addition of a New Sponsor – Scheels.** Scheels/ St. Cloud was a prominent sponsor of the 2021 state tournament held in St. Cloud. A small team worked with Scheels to develop a \$100,000 five-year sponsor commitment. Rumors swirl about the stability of the relationship between the parties. It has been said that the Scheels donation is used to support certain state tournaments.
- 3) **Expansion of Division 1 Senior State Tournament Meal Money.** With the new Scheels sponsor on board, it's been said that an additional \$5,000 was appropriated annually in addition to amounts required of hosts for meal money to be distributed to players. Handing out more cash to players has been an apparent agenda priority despite the fact that none of our neighbors do it, despite the fact that it has limited scope and lacks lasting value, and despite the apparent violation of Legion rules – the Amateur rule.
- 4) **Creation of ½ of a Division – Tier 1A.** Recommendation was made in 2021 with a formal proposal in 2022 to split Division 1 into two divisions. The concept advanced was to provide better competitive balance. The spread between population size of 401 and 3,600 was said to be excessive. Direct polling of coaches was undertaken. The Board of Directors voted the proposal down. It has been said that many outstate directors continued to advance the third division concept managing to outvote the opponents. No one outside of the Board of Directors knows who said what or who voted how as there is no transparency to such matters. There is no public agenda posting. There is no public posting of minutes. There are no open meeting. 2023 was the inaugural season for the 35-team division that was created as an all-metro program. There is reported opposition and reportedly the Board does not want to expand the division across the entire state. The host site made a ton of money off the tournament (over \$24,000) with the State contributing \$2,500 to the profit pool. "Right sizing" playoffs remains highly controversial for the Board of Directors. PS – Surrounding states have 3, 4 and 5 divisions with their smaller team bases.

- 5) **Reduction in Substate Sites from 16 to 12.** From what outsiders have gathered, this reduction was not at the recommendation of the D1 Metro directors. Three sites sent two teams to the state tournament. In the future, rumor has it that there will be just eight substates for the D1 Senior tournament.
- 6) **Waivers Provided to Duluth and Bloomington.** These two programs were granted “exception” status to combine players from other high schools in their school district.
- 7) **Support for Development of All Stars.** This support began in 2021 and has continued until today. Support has been limited to an annual grant of \$2,000. Legion Board support for the All Stars program is considered uncertain.

The Wisconsin Story

Strangely, no one at the state Legion would return a phone call. Most of the commissioners (assigned to one of the five tiers) were unavailable. I reached out to one of the successful coaches to learn more about the Wisconsin program. On the surface, our states are about the same in population. Total teams in Wisconsin seemed to be stable at around 260. The program seems to have a strong chain of command structure that is run directly from the Legion office. They have open meetings it seems.

But look at the team numbers! The AAA level (900 – 5000) has just 39 teams, far below past levels. The AA level (400-900) has a dismal 28 teams. And the A level (1-400) has just 43 teams. 110 teams are registered as senior teams. 150 Teams are registered as Junior teams (16U and 17U). The large metro areas are virtual wastelands (AAA programs) – Metro Milwaukee (including large suburbs) has 3 – 5 teams in a given year. Madison has one. LaCrosse has two, one being a private school.

According to the coach, Wisconsin has been “devastated” by club baseball. He says the state officials seem only to care about their total number of teams so if the junior level grows it can offset the loss of teams at the senior level. First the elite players left to get national exposure. The top 18-year-olds went on to play in the Dairyland League in their senior summers. After Covid, clubs got more and more players at all levels of ability despite the cost that he said was \$5,000. He said he has watched games (league games played by clubs) and was not impressed with the quality. Why are they not playing Legion he wondered? Our program is so much cheaper. He said many high school coaches grew to encourage club play as the quality of Legion competition deteriorated. Summer coaches got more and more frustrated as they tried to recruit summer players for their Legion team. Many gave up. A few will form a team for a year or two if they get a group or if the 18 year old crop is big enough.

This coach formed what he called a “county team” before Covid that included kids from surrounding school with his base school. He said they were just under the Wisconsin 5,000 enrollment level. They won the state that year and did very well in the regional, almost moving on to Shelby. Did he get any support or encouragement for his ingenuity from the state folks? No. Were other coaches interested in this combination model? Not many as their thinking went as far as the school boundaries. Why didn’t he repeat the county team after Covid? So many kids had chosen clubs that trying to recruit players was just painful. Nearby high school coaches were pushing clubs to their players, so the “Legion is good, Legion is cheap” argument went nowhere.

What’s the chance for a rebound? What’s the chance for new ideas or programs? None. At least so long as the Legion people who have been in charge forever stay on the job. They have their agenda and paycheck. They are happy to stage state tournaments and call it a day.

Wow. Depressing. On the surface numbers looked stable and strong. On the field level its just a disaster.

The coach did add – so where do you think all these junior players end up?

Conclusions

- Minnesota Legion baseball has lost significant ground, most especially in Division 1 and most dramatically in the metro areas.
- Baseball talent across the entire state has found other outlets beyond Legion baseball. It would be a mistake to believe that outstate or Division 2 is somehow immune.
- Minnesota does not follow National Legion formats – Plan A or Plan B.
- 3,600 max enrollment versus 5,000 in Wisconsin (they haven't bothered to adjust their maximum to meet the National level) and 7,500 in all other nearby states.
- Minnesota team construction is the most restrictive of any state in Legion baseball.
- Players, especially the better talented players, want to play with kids from other communities. There is no corner of the state that is untouched.
- The market has dramatically shifted.

We believe that Legion Baseball CAN meet the challenges of a changed world WITHOUT fundamental changes.

Rather, we believe that supplemental programming can and will succeed.

This is not rocket science. Its kids wanting to play baseball with other kids and coaches wanting to rally Legion baseball in their communities.

The baseball world today offers you clear paths.

We believe that D2 and Outstate is not broken. But D2 and Outstate can be IMPROVED and ENHANCED.

We know the interest is strong.

The only defeatist attitude I have encountered has come from Legion leadership – “We have lost the war.”

If “we” lost the war, it’s been your choice and your priorities.

We do not think any war has been lost – yet.

If the war does end up in the loss column, the stain will be on you – the Leaders.

There are programs in the Metro that understand that what happens in Wayzata affects Excelsior/Minnetonka. Coaches are trying to create challenging seasons with good competition for their players.

Some Metro are willing to step forward.

There are more guys in the outstate areas that want to step up and further develop Legion in their areas, too.

Every one of the coaches and program directors want to know – what about the Board? And they don’t even know who is on “The Board”.

If Directors do not fight for Legion baseball, who do you expect to step in for you?

- **If you do not understand that there are serious issues;**
- **If you do not understand that there are potential remedies and things to try;**

- If you think you can just put it off because you are Outstate or you are D2;
- If you have been running D1 and have just been unwilling to get beyond your personal vision or agenda that has allowed unchecked deterioration;
- If you can't fight for Legion baseball and develop fresh programs and ideas;
- If you think meal money or hotel rooms are proper priorities;
- Is keeping status quo structures as they are now or even pushing them back to yesterday what you think is important?
- Leaders are supposed to take us somewhere. To Take us forward into the future.
- Defenders of a past that no longer exists prevent a better future.
- Please be a Leader

2025 is around the corner. It is here now!

- Decisions in the fall determine what will happen in 2025.
- The State Board operates in virtual secrecy.
- No one knows what you say or what you decide or who voted this way or who voted that way.
- No one knows your agenda.
- 14 people control 1,000 coaches and 5,000 players.
- Put those players and coaches and parents #1.
- Put providing Legion opportunities #1 on your personal agenda.
- Lord knows a lot of ground has been lost with more to come.
- Please put up a fight.

Questions to the Legion Board Members Responsible for Division 1

What steps have you taken that might have fed this exodus? What steps did you take to address any circumstances that might relate to this outflow? What steps or innovations or program developments did you promote or undertake in from 2020 through 2024? How have you monitored what has been happening? This has been the subject of continuing conversation right along. What have you seen or heard or investigated?

Question to the Board – What process has been utilized to examine, document, or discuss matters that are being put before you here?

Legion was THE place to play baseball. Today its troubled.

Where is it most troubled? Most clearly in the Division 1 level and especially the metro.

There are opportunities even amongst the trouble spots.

Division 2 rests its head in the smaller towns which are affected of course, but has more ability to further develop Legion baseball as it has little ground to make up.

In The Old Days You Just Had to Manage

There May Be Structural and Process Issues

So How do you become a director? How do you keep the job? What is expected of a “director”?

Who provides input on selection or appointment process

No apparent criteria for review

- a. How was this substantial change vetted?
- b. Who pushed for the pool play format and would claim to be its author?
- c. The theory advanced publicly was that teams had to play too many games under the 16-team double elimination bracket. A winner could win in 5 games with 6 being the maximum. A loser bracket team would need more.
 - i. The Pool Play requires 6 games.
 - ii. The apparent advantage wold