

dangers of overusing pitchers, and allows the players a needed break before returning to college.

8. Where do the Big Train players come from and how are they selected?

The 1999 Big Train roster included 28 players from 22 different colleges and universities and 13 different states. While there were three players from Montgomery County and others from Virginia and the District of Columbia, they were outnumbered by players from the hotbeds of baseball talent in California, Florida, and Texas and elsewhere across the country.

On March 16, 1999, less than three months before opening day, members of the board of Montgomery County Baseball Association (MCBA) wrote to the director of Parks to insist that the Parks department not waive its residency requirement. "There are more than enough high quality college players who live in Montgomery County who are qualified to play for the Big Train," they asserted. It was easy to understand their point of view. Why should a team made up mostly of players from outside the county get to take game time in a public park away from local ballplayers? Fortunately, there was a nearby and recent precedent. Prince George's Stadium in Bowie, MD is the home of the Bowie Baysox, the Eastern League AA affiliate of the Baltimore Orioles. The stadium, opened in 1994, was built on park property as a result of a public private partnership between Peter Kirk's Maryland Baseball Limited Partnership and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the same organization with which we partnered.



Our concept was to raise private dollars to create an excellent ballpark that would attract families looking for affordable family entertainment right near home. Obviously, we argued, a lot more Montgomery County residents would come to watch the Big Train play than would use the field if there were no Big Train. Our plan was to take the money earned from the games and plow it back into improving youth baseball and softball fields. With all due respect to the local baseball talent in Montgomery County, it was very clear

that a team of Montgomery County All-Stars would not have been able to compete in the Griffith League with teams drawing players from across the country. The controversy died once youth baseball supporters realized the talented players from across the country were role models for their players and that our plan to raise money to improve youth fields really worked.

The Big Train does not have the financial resources to scout college players from across the country. Our managers, first Derek Hacopian and now Sal Colangelo, have developed contacts with college baseball programs. The colleges know what we want — good young players who want to develop their skills over the summer. And we know what the colleges want — a good experience for their players to develop their skills without exhausting them or, in the case of their pitchers, ruining their arms through overuse. By building relationships of trust with ten to a dozen colleges at a time, our managers build their core roster. Things happen, of course — injuries, summer school, family priorities — and the roster is in flux especially during the early weeks as players arrive at different times after their college seasons end. As coaches and situations change, the core group of colleges our managers rely on has changed. In the early years, Jacksonville State, Miami, Middle Tennessee State, and San Francisco were more prominent on our roster than now. Mississippi State, Sacramento State, St. Marys-CA, and Stetson have been significant sources of Big Train talent for the last decade. Florida Atlantic, Kentucky, and Maryland have provided players throughout our 20 seasons.

Recruiting is the key to success in summer college baseball. While the players come to Bethesda to improve their skills, our managers are well aware of the fact that if a college coach sends us a player and we try to change his mechanics and it doesn't work, we won't be getting another player from that college. Putting the right players on the field at the right time and inspiring them to believe in the importance of these summer games are absolutely critical, but recruiting is the key. Sal Colangelo has proven to be a master recruiter. After an exhausting summer of rising early to drive to Bethesda from his home in Lorton, VA to open summer camp five days a week and ending games at 10 p.m. or later six or seven nights a week and doing this for two straight months, Sal takes a well deserved family beach vacation. Except that he takes his cell phone. The core of the next year's roster is in place by mid-August. It is because of Sal's dedication to excellence that the Big Train has been able to maintain its winning tradition.

9. Where do the players stay during the Big Train season?

While recruiting is the key to success in summer college baseball, our host families have been our secret weapon. Over the two decades, the Big Train has had a fabulous group of host families. Our players have come here from different backgrounds and cultures from all across the United States. We pride ourselves in Montgomery County as a welcoming community, and our host families have year-after-year generously welcomed our players into

Big Train Players Have Come From 139 Different Colleges

Florida Atlantic	27	High Point	6	East Carolina	3	Moorpark College	2	Christopher Newport	1	Gonzaga	1	Penn State	1	Trinity Christian HS	1
Maryland	19	Kent State	6	Jacksonville	6	New Mexico State	2	Coll. of San Mateo	2	Houston	1	Pitt. - Johnstown	1	Tusculum College	1
San Francisco	19	Michigan State	6	Lipscomb	3	North Carolina	3	Columbia	1	Indiana University	1	Pittsburgh	1	UC Santa Barbara	1
Saint Mary's (CA)	18	Mount St. Mary's	6	Maryland - Balt. Co.	6	Old Dominion	3	Columbus State (OH)	2	Kenyon College	1	Rutgers	1	US Naval Academy	1
Mississippi State	16	San Jose State	6	Radford	6	Rider	3	Connors State	1	Lewisburg JC	1	Sacred Heart	1	Va. Military Inst.	1
Middle Tenn. State	13	UNC - Wilmington	6	Tennessee	6	Saint Leo	2	Cornell	2	Louisville College	1	San Diego	1	Vanderbilt	1
Southern Mississippi	10	George Mason	5	Va. Commonwealth	5	Salisbury State	3	Davidson	2	Lubbock Christian	1	Seton Hall	1	Ventura	1
Virginia Tech	10	James Madison	5	Ark. - Fort Smith Col.	5	Tallahassee CC	2	Eastern Michigan	2	Maine	1	Shepherd	1	Vernon College	1
Kentucky	9	Morehead State	5	Belmont Abbey Col.	5	Alabama	2	El Camino College	1	Marshall	1	Sonoma State	1	Virginia	1
Miami (FL)	9	Princeton	5	Bryant	5	American	2	Evansville	1	Meridian College	1	South Carolina	1	Washington	1
San Diego State	9	Richmond	5	California - Berkeley	5	Appalachian State	2	Ferrum	1	Methodist (NC)	1	South Carolina - Aiken	1	Western Carolina	1
Stetson	9	Clemson	4	Creighton	4	Auburn	2	Findlay	1	Miami (Ohio)	1	South Eastern CC	1	Western Maryland	1
Tulane	9	Sacramento State	4	Duke	4	Belmont	2	Florida	1	Mont. College - Germantown	1	Southern	1	William & Mary	1
Jacksonville State	8	Santa Clara	4	George Washington	4	Big Bend Comm. Col.	2	Florida Southern	1	NC State	1	Stanford	1	Yale	1
UNC - Charlotte	8	Towson	4	Georgetown	4	Cal Poly - San Luis Obispo	2	Frederick (MD) CC	1	New Mexico JC	1	Texas	1		
Central Florida	7	Cal State Northridge	3	Hofstra	3	Cal State - Stanislaus	2	Frostburg State	1	Northern Illinois	1	Texas at Arlington	1		
Coastal Carolina	7	Campbell	3	Illinois	3	Centenary College	1	Furman	1	Occidental College	1	Texas State	1	TOTAL	436
Bowling Green State	6	Catholic	3	Liberty	2	Chesapeake	2	Georgia	1	Ozarks	1	Texas - Pan American	1		