

# BIG TRAIN BEACON



*The Official Magazine of Bethesda Big Train Baseball*



## The History of Summer College Baseball in the Washington-Baltimore Region

Issue 5: August 15, 2020

[www.bigtrain.org](http://www.bigtrain.org)





# THE BIG TRAIN BEACON

Fifth Issue – August 15, 2020

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### Director of Baseball Operations

Sal Colangelo

### General Manager

Chris Rogers

[www.bigtrain.org](http://www.bigtrain.org)

@GoBigTrain

### Mailing Address

7211 Exeter Road

Bethesda, MD 20814

### Shirley Povich Field

10600 Westlake Drive

Rockville, MD 20852

## Big Train Beacon Credits

Editor ..... **Chris Rogers**

Layout & Design ..... **Chris Rogers**

Writers ..... **Bruce Adams**

**Erin Byard**

**Bill Hickman**

**Alex Murphy**

**Patrick Sanderson**

**Noah Ziegler**

## A Message from Bruce Adams

To Our Big Train Community:

It has been an eventful ten weeks since our Bethesda Community Base Ball Club retook stewardship of Big Train baseball. There are lots of people who deserve thanks.

I want to begin by expressing appreciation to the more than one hundred individual, family, and foundation contributors to our BIG susTRAINability campaign. With your support, we are closing in on our goal of raising \$60,000 this summer. If you have not yet given, please go to [www.bigtrain.org](http://www.bigtrain.org) and hit the **DONATE** button. We have Big Train face masks left for the next seven donors of \$100 or more.

Thanks to the members of our extraordinary board who are committed to building a strong and sustainable organization so our children and their children will be able to enjoy the community jewel that is Big Train baseball at Shirley Povich Field long into the future (please read their bios [here](#)). My deep appreciation to **Dick Walker** who has contributed his nonprofit capacity building skills as our senior advisor as we stood up this new organization in record time. Congratulations to **Chris Rogers** who really rolled up his sleeves and went to work to earn his promotion as our general manager. And thanks to our Hall of Fame director of baseball operations and field manager **Sal Colangelo** who has guided us every step of the way.

I am very grateful to our six **Tim Kurkjian Sports Journalism Fellows** – **Erin Byard, Alex Drain, Alex Murphy, Shaun Salehi, Patrick Sanderson, and Noah Ziegler**. As Chris Rogers notes in his inaugural *GM's Corner* on page 6, this could have been a lost summer for our six journalism interns. Instead, we created [bigtrain.tv](http://bigtrain.tv) and produced five issues of our online magazine, the **Big Train Beacon**. With their hard work, we were able to provide our Big Train fans with three nights of entertainment each week for June and July. It was terrific to see the former players and coaches and interns and general managers reminisce about the twenty-one seasons of Big Train baseball. What a treat it was to relive the ten greatest games – out of 900 – in Big Train history.

After this difficult year, it is really important that we bring the fun back to Shirley Povich Field for our fans in 2021. This fall, we will be scheduling Zoom Fan Fest focus groups to brainstorm ideas for 2021. We are recruiting now for a new group of volunteers to enhance the welcoming environment at Povich Field. And we are planning a virtual auction event for November so you can do your holiday shopping while supporting the Big Train.

If you are interested in getting involved, I want to hear from you. Please send me an email at [bruce@greaterwash.org](mailto:bruce@greaterwash.org).

Stay well. Be strong. Roll train!

**Bruce Adams**

Founder & President

[bruce@greaterwash.org](mailto:bruce@greaterwash.org)

*Note: The cover photo on the top left is of the 1962 AAABA champion Federal Storage of Washington. The legendary Griffith League manager Joe Branzell is on the far left in the second row. The other two cover photos are identified on pages 3 and 4.*

## Summer College Baseball in the Washington-Baltimore Region

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Bill Hickman is the Big Train historian and Bruce Adams is the founder and president of the Bethesda Community Base Ball Club. This is a summary of an article titled "Summer College Baseball in Maryland" by Bill Hickman and Bruce Adams from the July 2020 issue of The National Pastime (SABR Publications).

The Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) is a wonderful organization that offers a rich variety of opportunities for the serious baseball fan to engage in in-depth explorations of baseball history, either through participating in research or by taking advantage of the reading materials or presentations offered by other members. If you are interested in joining, visit [sabr.org](http://sabr.org) and click on "Join SABR Today!"

For more on this topic of summer college baseball in the Washington-Baltimore region, view the [July 7 episode](#) of "Safe at Home Tuesdays" on [bigtrain.tv](#), a conversation featuring Bill and Bruce with guests Dean Albany and Ben Trittippoe.

**By Bill Hickman and Bruce Adams**

For more than a century, summertime baseball has been a significant part of the lives of young Marylanders. From the Maryland Amateur Baseball League founded in 1909 to the Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League of today, outstanding young ballplayers have sharpened their skills on Maryland ballfields.

The quality of baseball in the region has been exceptional. Teams from the Baltimore and Washington areas have won 39 of the 75 titles at the iconic All American Amateur Baseball Association (AAABA) championship played each year at Johnstown, Pennsylvania with 68 Baltimore alumni and 67 Washington alumni making it to the major leagues.

Of the early leagues, the Baltimore Amateur Baseball League founded in 1918 was the most significant as it provided continu-

ity until the proliferation of leagues in the Baltimore area in the middle of the twentieth century.

In 1936, we started to see a superstructure that would govern the leagues through the middle of the century. That same year, two rival associations united to form the Maryland Amateur Baseball Association. In 1944, the Baltimore Amateur Baseball League came under the aegis of this association. In 1953, a key team, Leone's Café, joined a league under the Maryland Amateur Baseball Association. Future Hall of Famer Al Kaline played with Leone's that year.

### Impact of Walter Youse

Leone's first manager was Ray Muhl. In 1956, Walter Youse joined Muhl as co-manager. Youse was at the helm for the next 47 years. For much of that time, he held the title of general manager, but in reality he was on the field making the in-game decisions and the men holding the title of manager took their cues from him.

As renowned Baltimore sportswriter Jim Henneman told us, "There was no question about who was running the show." Although Youse was in civilian clothes, he was always on the bench or in the dugout and gave every sign and made every critical in-game decision.

It was a highly successful enterprise as his teams' record exceeded 3,000 wins with fewer than 500 losses. Youse's teams won the Baltimore city title 46 consecutive years. At the AAABA tournament in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, his teams won the tournament 19 times. Youse was inducted into the AAABA Hall of Fame in 1998.

More than fifty of Youse's players went on to become major leaguers. One of his most famous, Reggie Jackson, had been torn between playing baseball and football at Arizona State prior to joining Youse's team. The summer with Youse clinched the deal for Jackson and gained him wide exposure to major league scouts at the AAABA tournament. He ultimately became the second overall pick in the 1966 MLB draft.



**1946 Griffith League Championship Game on the Ellipse in Washington, D.C.**

The sponsorship of Youse's teams changed over the years, and the team name changed accordingly. While he was in charge, the team was known variously as Leone's Café, Johnny's, Corrigan's, and Maryland Orioles.

### Clark C. Griffith Collegiate Baseball League

In the Washington area, the history began with the establishment of the National Capital City Junior League in 1945. The games were played on the Ellipse behind the White House, and had the full support of Clark Griffith, owner of the Washington Senators. When Griffith died in 1955, the league was renamed in his honor. In the late 1960s, the league moved its games off the Ellipse to northern Virginia because of deteriorating field conditions.

The Griffith League was a charter member of the AAABA in 1944. The Washington franchise won the AAABA national championship ten times – Marx Jewelers (1947), Federal Storage (1956, 1960, and 1962), Reston Raiders (1986), Prince William Gators (1997), and Arlington Senators (1998, 1999, 2001, and 2002).

Legendary Griffith League Managers Joe Branzell (1995) and Chuck Faris (2004) as well as Coach Jake Jacobs (2003) have been inducted into the AAABA Hall of Fame. Joe Branzell's teams won a total of 13 titles in the Griffith League, including 12 in a row at one point.





# SUMMER BALL HISTORY



**2000 AAABA Champion Maryland Orioles with General Manager Walter Youse (center) and Manager Dean Albany (standing far left, second row). Photo courtesy of Greg Paul.**

In 1993, the Griffith League took the step that moved it from a league of mostly local players to the upper ranks of summer collegiate baseball when it decided to follow the lead of the Cape Cod Baseball League and switch from the aluminum bats used in high school and college to wooden bats used in professional leagues.

Then-league president Mike McCarey explained to *The Washington Post*: “The premier leagues in the country use wood, and we wanted to step up.... Our function is to get kids with a lot of talent the opportunity to showcase that talent before the scouts. Professional scouts like wood because it gives you an idea of bat control, bat speed.”

The league’s representative won the AAABA crown five out of six years from 1997 to 2002.

Marylanders Steve Barber (Takoma Park/Orioles), Tom Brown (Silver Spring/Senators), Jim Rigglesman (Rockville/Nationals Manager), Steve Schmoll (Rockville/Dodgers), and Mark Teixeira (Severna Park/Yankees) are among the 67 Griffith League alumni who made it to the major leagues.

## **Youse’s Orioles Under Dean Albany**

When Walter Youse died in 2002, Dean Albany took control of the Maryland Orioles. In 2005, the team was renamed Youse’s Orioles, and entered the Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League. The Albany-led Ori-

oles won nine AAABA crowns in the eleven years between 2003 to 2013, and Albany was inducted into the AAABA Hall of Fame in 2009.

In achieving this success, Albany’s team had to make two adjustments. First, he noticed that Griffith League competition in the AAABA tournament fared better when they used aluminum in tournament play, because after using wood all summer they could generate greater bat speed when switching back to aluminum for the tournament. With Washington teams winning the AAABA in 1997, 1998, and 1999, the Maryland Orioles switched to wooden bats in 2000.

Second, his team had done well in the past with mostly local players and only a few from out of the area, but that would have to change.

Albany explained to us: “Once the Griffith League teams started recruiting out of town players, we had to follow to stay competitive.”

## **Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League**

Bethesda Big Train and Silver Spring-Takoma Thunderbolts joined the Clark Griffith League in 1999 and 2000 supported by non-profit organizations dedicated to providing community-based baseball on the model of the Cape Cod Baseball League. After the 2004 season, the two teams joined with College Park Bombers, Maryland Redbirds,

Rockville Express, and Youse’s Maryland Orioles to establish the Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League named to honor former Baltimore Orioles manager Cal Ripken Senior. All six of the teams in the inaugural season were based in Maryland. One significant change made by the Ripken League was to expand eligibility from the AAABA’s 20 years old and under to include all players with college eligibility remaining.

Two of the league’s most successful managers were part of the inaugural class of the Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League Hall of Fame in 2019.

Nine time AAABA champion Dean Albany of Youse’s Orioles was a co-founder of the Ripken League. Manager Sal Colangelo has led the Big Train to nine regular season titles and eight league championships with a regular season record of 434 wins and 177 losses for an eye-popping .710 winning percentage. Colangelo’s Big Train was named the nation’s top summer college team by Perfect Game USA in 2011.

## **Future of Summer College Baseball in Maryland**

With the Cal Ripken League featuring elite Division I NCAA players, there is a strong need to provide player development opportunities for other college and elite high school players in the area. The Maryland Collegiate Baseball League and Maryland State Baseball Association help fill this need.

The Maryland Collegiate Baseball League played a compressed 2020 season with eight teams: Putty Hill Panthers, Baltimore Clippers, Rockville Express, Koa Sports Green Wave, Baltimore Chop, DigInBaseball, Maryland Monarchs, and FTB Mid-Atlantic. The leagues in the Maryland State Baseball Association (MSBA) have teams that contain a mix of junior college and high school players.

The tradition of summer collegiate baseball in Maryland has been well established and has laid the groundwork for hundreds of major league and professional baseball careers.

With the continuing presence of the Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League, Maryland Collegiate Baseball League, and Maryland State Baseball Association, the Chesapeake Bay State looks forward to many more years of playing its part in the development of baseball talent and showcasing this talent throughout the state.

## Negro Leagues 100th anniversary

By Patrick Sanderson

In *episode eight of Safe at Home Tuesdays*, Bethesda Big Train founder and president **Bruce Adams** celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Negro Leagues. He opened the show with Negro Leagues Baseball Museum president **Bob Kendrick**. He then spoke with Negro League Legends Hall of Fame founder **Dwayne Sims** and **William “Doug” Foster**, great-nephew of Negro National League founder **Rube Foster**.

Kendrick spoke highly of the museum’s depiction of the history of the Negro Leagues with a vast collection of historic items. He said he wants to make sure everyone who comes through the front doors leaves with extended knowledge of what Black baseball players endured to play the game.

This includes the final stop before anyone exits the museum: the Field of Legends. Kendrick explained that upon entry, it’s visible, but nobody can get to it. In order to view his most prized section of the museum, visitors must first understand the whole story.

“The only way that you are allowed to take the Field [of Legends] here at the Ne-



*The Field of Legends at the Negro Leagues Museum. Photo courtesy of Bob Kendrick.*

gro Leagues Museum, you have to earn that right, and you do so by learning their story,” Kendrick said. “And I’m not kidding. By the time you bear witness to everything that they endured to play baseball in this country, and then the very last thing that happens here is that now you can take the field.”

Kendrick was followed by Sims and Foster, who spoke about the impact of Negro League founder Rube Foster. Foster explained how his great-uncle first became fond of baseball in the latter part of the 19th century, but wasn’t too great as a hitter orig-

inally. After pitching in numerous leagues around the country, his adept skills drew further attention.

“His initial attempts, he started off as a pinch hitter, and he was terrible at it, he was awful at hitting baseballs. But he quickly found his sweet spot in pitching, and he really just loved the game of baseball,” Foster said. “He started to realize how great of a pitcher he was, he immediately became one of the greater pitchers in the early 20th century.”

After discussing Griffith Stadium – the legendary home of the Washington Senators and Homestead Grays in Washington D.C. – Sims shared his thoughts on how baseball in America throughout the 1900s and even through today should be perceived.

Even though the 100th anniversary of the Negro Leagues is commemorated and remembered, Sims believes baseball, in any form, brought a country with some troubled and forgettable history together.

“[Griffith Stadium] was a huge stadium at the time, imagine it being filled to the rim, but filled to the rim with whites and Blacks enjoying the game of baseball,” Sims said.

## In Case You Missed It: Safe at Home Tuesdays

With no Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League Bethesda Big Train games at Shirley Povich Field this summer, Bethesda Community Base Ball Club founder and president **Bruce Adams** hosted eight “Safe at Home Tuesdays” interviews on [bigtrain.tv](http://bigtrain.tv) about some of baseball’s most admirable lives. In case you missed them, all are available at your convenience via YouTube. Use the links below or go to the “*Safe at Home Tuesdays*” playlist in the [bigtrain.tv](http://bigtrain.tv) archives. Thanks to our producer **Patrick Sanderson**, a summer 2020 Tim Kurkjian Sports Journalism Fellow at the Big Train, and our [bigtrain.tv](http://bigtrain.tv) sponsor, the [Dandy-Walker Alliance](http://Dandy-Walker-Alliance.com).



### Here’s the “Safe at Home Tuesdays” lineup:

- **Mike Veeck** (Saint Paul Saints) on the life of [Bill Veeck](#) and how Veeck’s “Fun Is Good” philosophy has inspired Big Train baseball at Shirley Povich Field;
- **Maury Povich** and **George Solomon** (former *Washington Post* sports editor) on the life of [Shirley Povich](#);
- **Hank Thomas** (Johnson grandson and biographer) and **Tim Kurkjian** (ESPN) on the life of [Walter Johnson](#);
- **David Maraniss** (Clemente biographer) and **Duane Rieder** (founder of Clemente Museum) on the life of [Roberto Clemente](#);
- **Dean Albany**, **Ben Trittippoe**, and **Bill Hickman** discuss the [history of summer college baseball](#) in the Baltimore-Washington region;
- **Will Geoghegan** (author of *Summer Baseball Nation*) joins **Bruce Adams** (author of *Fodor’s Baseball Vacations*) on a [virtual baseball road trip](#) to iconic summer college ballparks;
- **Aviva Kempner** discusses her documentary films about the lives of [Hank Greenberg](#) and [Moe Berg](#);
- **Bob Kendrick** (Negro Leagues Baseball Museum), **Doug Foster** (grandnephew of Rube Foster), and **Dwayne Sims** (Negro League Legends Hall of Fame) celebrate the [100th anniversary of Negro Leagues](#).





## GM's Corner: Thank you, interns!

The sports industry is all about adaptability. Six months ago, we hired a group of media interns to broadcast games and produce written content for the 2020 Big Train season.

But, our plans changed when the coronavirus pandemic wiped out our season in May. When the Bethesda Community Base Ball Club took over operations on June 1, we transitioned to an unprecedented online season, keeping fans engaged at home with [bigtrain.tv](http://bigtrain.tv) and the [Big Train Beacon](http://Big Train Beacon). We asked our media interns to step out of their comfort zones into new roles.

Radio broadcasters became on-air anchors, feature writers became video producers, and seasoned sportswriters learned to recap TV shows. The products they put out – nearly 30 bigtrain.tv shows and five issues of the *Beacon* – elevated Big Train in a summer when we couldn't take the field.

As the summer wraps up, I feel confident that all six of them – now known as **Tim Kurkjian Sports Journalism Fellows** – are better writers and producers than they were three months ago.

To thank them for their dedication and flexibility, I want to shout out all their work.

**Shaun Salehi** served as one of our radio play-by-play guys last summer, and came back expecting to be in the Povich Field booth again. Instead, he produced and co-hosted "[Talkin' Baseball](#)" with manager **Sal Colangelo**, interviewing news anchors, college coaches, host families, and so many others who make Big Train special.

**Alex Drain** was supposed to join Shaun on the radio broadcast for a second summer, but instead hosted and produced our "[Top Ten Thursdays](#)" series, looking at the greatest games in Big Train history. He interviewed players, coaches, staff members and fans from Big Train's first game in 1999 through the most recent game in 2019.

**Patrick Sanderson** was brought on board as a writer, but took a sharp left turn and dove into the world of video, working with **Bruce Adams** to produce eight "[Safe at Home Tuesdays](#)" shows. He got to dabble in print content, too, recapping those shows and writing features on [Tim Kurkjian](#) and

[the impact of the coronavirus](#).

**Noah Ziegler** and **Erin Byard** originally came on board to cover live game action. They adapted, instead recapping bigtrain.tv shows of games from years past. Noah also worked on two longform stories, covering [the coronavirus](#) and [Kelli Jenkins](#).

**Alex Murphy** wrote profiles of every founding board member, painting a picture of why each of them is so valuable to the Big Train organization.

I feel very fortunate to have worked with these six talented Tim Kurkjian Sports Journalism Fellows this summer. Their willingness to adapt and find creative solutions should be an inspiration to the entire Big Train community.

To the fellows: thank you for your hard work, and I can't wait to see what's next for each of you!

**Chris Rogers**  
General Manager

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The Dandy-Walker Alliance is a proud partner of Bethesda Big Train Baseball.

Top Ten Thursdays is a weekly [bigtrain.tv](http://bigtrain.tv) show that highlights the ten greatest games in Bethesda Big Train history, as voted on by team historian Bill Hickman, manager Sal Colangelo and founder Bruce Adams. Visit [thebigtrain.tv archives](http://thebigtrain.tv/archives) to watch the full countdown.

## #3: June 4, 1999: Big Train 7, Senators 2

By Noah Ziegler

*An early June 1999 matchup* saw the work of team founder **Bruce Adams** and many others come to fruition. Bethesda joined the Clark Griffith Collegiate Baseball League, and its first opponent would be the Arlington Senators, who were the reigning league and national champions. It would be a tough task for the Big Train, but a good measuring stick to see where the team stood as it began its existence.

"June 4, 1999, was just such an exciting day," Adams said. "We had worked for two years. We created the Bethesda Community Baseball Club. We had gotten permission to put a team — the Bethesda Big Train — into the Clark Griffith League ... Everything was so perfect."

**Sal Colangelo** was recruited to be an assistant coach when he ran into soon-to-be-manager **Derek Hacopian** at Westfield Montgomery mall.

In order to start the franchise off on a high note, the Big Train needed to assemble a team that could compete right away. **Matt Swope** (Maryland) said the rivalry with the Senators began with that first game, and it was an immediate battle from the first pitch. In front of a packed Shirley Povich Field, the Bethesda community came in support to see its new team make a name for itself.

"It was a sell-out crowd. In fact, it was a standing-room only crowd that whole season," fan and volunteer John Daniel said. "There was so much excitement about having a summer team right there in Bethesda."

With temperatures in the mid-80s, the Bethesda bats came out just as hot. Hacopian's team plated five runs in the bottom of the first, immediately stunning the Senators, one of the best teams in the country.

Meanwhile, **Kyle Sparkman** (Middle Tennessee State) tossed eight innings of two-run ball for the Big Train. In the late innings, Bethesda increased its lead to 7-2,

which would finish as the final score, and the first victory in team history. Opening with a win over a storied franchise like Arlington meant less pressure going forward, Colangelo said.

"To me it was like [all the excitement] is over... now we can just play baseball."

The win let fans and players know that the Big Train were serious contenders, and proved to be a glimpse into the future of the franchise. Since then, Bethesda has earned 11 regular season titles, nine league championships and one national championship.

The night was special. It was the beginning of Bethesda's home team — one that the community could rally around and support.

"I was just playing catch in front of the dugout and there were over 1,000 people there, I think that in itself made me feel special in some type of way when I was 18 years old," Swope, who is now an assistant coach at Maryland, said. "I did realize in that moment how special it was."

## #2: July 31, 2019: Big Train 6, T-Bolts 4

By Erin Byard

The 2019 Big Train finished atop the Cal Ripken League with a 31-7 record, and the only thing standing between them and a fourth straight championship was a formidable Silver Spring-Takoma Thunderbolts team.

In the first game of the series, the Big Train suffered a stunning 9-0 loss at home. They rallied on the road in game two, beating the T-Bolts 6-3 to even the series and set up a winner-take-all game three at Shirley Povich Field.

*In the decisive third game*, the Big Train got off to a shaky start, giving up three first-inning runs. Attempting to limit the damage, Bethesda made a change on the mound, bringing in **Ryan Okuda** (Virginia Tech).

Okuda stepped up to the task, allowing only one additional run across six innings. While he delivered an impressive outing to

keep his team in the game, the Big Train offense struggled to get going, remaining scoreless through the middle innings.

The Big Train turned to reliever **Greer Holston** (Ole Miss), who held the T-Bolts scoreless through the seventh and eighth innings. But still trailing 4-0, the Big Train bats were running out of time to mount their comeback. Momentum finally began to build for Bethesda when two runners got aboard in the bottom of the eighth inning, setting the stage for **Matt Thomas** (William & Mary). He came up huge, cracking a three-run homer — his first of the summer — over the scoreboard in left-center.

"[The pitcher] left it right over the plate, and I didn't try to do too much. I just took a good swing and it ended up going over the fence" noted Thomas.

The home run completely changed the momentum of the game, electrifying Big Train fans and giving the players the confidence they needed.



With the bases loaded and two out later in the frame, all eyes at Povich Field focused on **Gio Diaz** (St. Mary's CA). He delivered, lining a single up the middle to score two runners and give Bethesda the lead for the first time. **Christian Jayne** (East Carolina) doubled to drive in another, giving his team a 6-4 lead heading into the ninth inning.

Big Train manager Sal Colangelo turned to closer **Chase Lee** (Alabama) to seal the deal. The sidewinding right-hander set down the Thunderbolts in order, and the Big Train's thrilling comeback was complete as the team won its fourth consecutive Cal Ripken League championship.





# THE GREATEST BIG TRAIN GAME

## July 28, 2011: Big Train 5, Nationals 4

Come-from-behind victory propels Big Train to first-ever national title

By Erin Byard

To close out our Top Ten Thursdays series, we look at [game #1, from July 28, 2011 against the Southern Maryland Nationals](#). You can watch [the whole series](#) on the [bigtrain.tv](#) archives and read the full [Top 25 countdown](#) on our website.

The final episode of the Top Ten Thursdays countdown takes us back to 2011 for the greatest game in Big Train history. The Big Train took on a formidable Southern Maryland Nationals team at Shirley Povich Field in the second game of the Cal Ripken League Championship. Bethesda bested the Nationals, 5-4, in thrilling, come-from-behind fashion, and would go on to win the league title and earn the top ranking in all of summer baseball.

The 2011 Big Train squad was a championship caliber team from the start, maintaining a core group of players from the previous season, in which they had also won a title. The team proved themselves by claiming the regular season championship, and entered the playoffs as heavy favorites to win it all.

Only two wins away from capturing a third straight title, the Big Train faced their biggest test of their run on July 28 in the second-seeded Nationals.

Bethesda turned to **Martin Agosta** (St. Mary's CA) to start the game on the mound. Agosta was able to hold the Nationals offense scoreless in the first three innings, allowing the Big Train to take the early 2-0 lead on RBI singles by **Brennan Middleton** (Tulane) and **Michael Aldrete** (San Jose State). Aldrete played a key role in this game at the plate, and was one of the most versatile players on the Big Train squad, also serving as the team's closer.

"He could play short, he could play second, he could [play] left, he could throw 90 off the bump, he got everything out of his God given ability... he was special," manager **Sal Colangelo** said.

In the top of the fourth, the Nationals responded with a pair of RBI singles and a sacrifice fly to take a 3-2 lead over the Big Train. The game went back and forth from



**ABOVE: The Bethesda Big Train 2011 National Champions banner hangs on the outfield fence at Shirley Povich Field.**  
Photo by Chris Rogers.

**RIGHT: Alex Hudak hits a two-run single in the sixth inning. This proved to be the decisive blow in a come-from-behind victory over the Nationals.**  
Photo by Lisa Kammerman.



there. The Nationals added another run in the following inning, which the Big Train then responded to with a tally of their own, bringing the score to 4-3 in the Nationals favor.

Bethesda rallied though, when **Alex Hudak** (Florida Atlantic) delivered a big two-out, two-run single in the bottom of the sixth to put the Big Train up 5-4.

Though the Big Train had the lead, there was plenty of drama still to come. The Nationals managed to put a runner in scoring position in the seventh, eighth, and ninth innings.

The Big Train first looked to relief pitchers **Mike Frank** (Bowling Green) and **Mike Kent** (Clemson) who each put up scoreless innings against the tough Nationals batting order.

Aldrete then stepped onto the mound to finish the game in the ninth, and although Big Train fans were nervous when two runners got aboard, he was able to close out the contest unscathed. The Big Train won the game 5-4, advancing to the championship game where they would face the Baltimore Redbirds.

"Everybody was so talented to begin with, but also pitched really well that summer that they didn't feel like they had to go out there and throw three or four innings, just by the number of players that you had listed in the box score they only had to throw one inning. They were talented #1 and they didn't have to throw a lot of innings so they were able to go out and give it everything they had," Big Train infielder **Brennan Middleton** said.

The team won the championship over the Redbirds, which was reason enough to celebrate.

However, the real bonus came in the following days when Perfect Game Baseball named the Big Train number one in the nation among all collegiate summer teams. This stands as the first and only time the Big Train has carried out this feat in franchise history.

"Something about that team felt different from the beginning, it was clicking on all cylinders and winning at a rate that seemed unsustainable yet they were sustaining it. It was so fun to be a part of and bring that energy to the stadium. It just worked all year," then-general manager **Jordan Henry** noted.



## Chris Rogers: The new man in charge

By Alex Murphy

Baseball is at its best on twilight evenings in a bustling ballpark.

Big Train baseball has been exactly that and more for general manager **Chris Rogers**, who started going to games in middle school.

"[Games at Povich Field] were a nice way to have a little independence," Rogers said. "...It was just a big part of growing up here in the summer."

Years later, he studied journalism at the University of Maryland, where he found his niche covering sports. In the summer after his freshman year, he returned to Povich Field as a Big Train writing intern for the 2015 season.

A lifelong baseball fan, he followed his passion for the sport through college as well, serving as the managing editor for the Maryland Baseball Network, a student-run writing and broadcast organization. During his time with MBN, he managed the organization's website and supervised students who came through, like current Johns Hopkins radio broadcaster **Connor Newcomb**.

"He was very helpful in getting us acclimated with the team and just knowing what we needed to do," Newcomb said. "He was a good person to know early in my college career."

In 2016, Rogers became the Big Train head intern and volunteer coordinator. At this time, he realized that he enjoyed the management side of the organization even more than sports writing.

After the 2017 Big Train season, he was named assistant general manager, a role in which he served for two seasons.

"Chris, he was a guy that was a doer," Big Train manager **Sal Colangelo** said. "...If you asked him to do something, you never had to worry about anything. It was done."

Rogers' commitment to Big Train continued after his graduation in 2018. His contributions and forward thinking made impactful impressions on future board members, like Vice President **Eric Cole**.

"He's got an extremely strong work ethic and an outstanding attitude," Cole said. "It's fun to work with people like that."

Once the COVID-19 pandemic hit in mid-March of this year, though, he didn't know what his future with the organization would be.

When **Bruce Adams** and the Bethesda Community Base Ball Club planned to retake club operations, Rogers was asked to be part of the new team. In the time since, he has helped expand the organization's online presence, and on July 29, he was named the club's permanent General Manager.

"I was excited that all the work I had put into the organization over the past five years had paid off and I was excited to work with Bruce and the board," Rogers said. "Now, I am more excited about Big Train than I've ever been, and I can't wait for the 2021 season and beyond."



## Dick Walker: Non-profits and baseball

By Alex Murphy

A crowd of 48,013 fans slowly filed into Camden Yards on September 20, 1998 for the final home game of the Baltimore Orioles' season, a matchup against their AL East rivals, the New York Yankees.

Arriving just on time for first pitch were **Dick Walker** and his daughter, Jessica.

Walker is a lifelong baseball fan and Yankees fan, but on that night he and Jessica found themselves witnessing baseball history: the end of Cal Ripken Jr's 2,632 consecutive games played streak.

"We looked around thinking, 'This is weird,'" Walker said. "Every member of the Yankees got up out of the dugout and stood in a line in front of the dugout. Then, I looked at third base and saw Ripken wasn't there and said, 'Holy crap, Ripken isn't playing.'"

That game took place nearly nine months before the first game in Bethesda Big Train history, something that would take on great meaning for Walker.

He discovered the organization through its two co-founders, **Bruce Adams** and **John Ourisman**. The two are alumni of Landon School in Bethesda, where Walker taught for more than four decades.

Ourisman helped renew Walker's love of baseball, as the two helped to coach Landon's middle school baseball team.

"I've known Dick for over 40 years," Ourisman said. "We've had a great many adventures together and an integral part of our relationship has been that shared love of baseball."

Along the way, Walker started taking his kids to Big Train games, frequenting Povich Field in the summer.

"I really came to know Big Train more through John," Walker said. "John is one of my best friends. When he got involved with Bruce, he told me about it, and I said 'Well, I'd like to help out!'"

Walker retired from working at Landon in 2005, the same year the Washington Nationals came to the Washington D.C. area, and his focus switched to helping nonprofit organizations' board development, fundraising and strategy.

Nearly 15 years later, he reconnected with the Big Train when Adams re-established the Bethesda Community Base Ball Club to take over Big Train's operations.

"[Walker] was one of the first people I talked to after BCC suggested this possibility," Adams said. "I remember meeting with him in late December and telling him what I wanted to do, and he was just fantastic. He knew all the questions to ask, all the tasks to do."

Walker agreed to come on as a Senior Advisor for Big Train, and in his short tenure, he's been very impressed.

"I have never seen a nonprofit board come together so quickly and so effectively as this one," Walker said. "It's really been an absolute pleasure to work with Bruce and the board."



## Alex Thompson: Coming full circle

By Alex Murphy

It started with a letter from Brandeis University freshman **Alex Thompson** to Big Train founder **Bruce Adams** in the early months of 2001.

Growing up in Montgomery County, Thompson knew of Big Train and attended a few games in the summers leading up to college – the organization's early years. After working as a student in Brandeis's sports information department, his vision for his future was clear.

"I knew that I wanted to have some sort of career in baseball or associated with baseball, and I was working toward a more active career in that direction," Thompson said.

Adams received his letter and invited Thompson to meet during his spring break. At that meeting, Adams asked him to intern with Big Train for the 2001 season.

Thompson ended up working in Bethesda for five seasons, eventually becoming assistant general manager and then general manager.

"I'm so glad I answered that letter," Adams said. "He's so talented and so focused and so reliable that he just kept moving up the pecking order."

Thompson dedicated long days and nights at Povich Field, and the chaos of stuffing hundreds of envelopes and running in-game promotions hooked him on Big Train even more.

As GM, he helped create a high school student leadership council for those pursuing a career in sports, kept score for Big Train games, and modernized the Big Train website.

"It was very crazy and fun. It was awesome," Thompson said. "...Big Train changed my entire perspective of the game."

As his college career came to a close, so did his Big Train tenure. His experience helped him become the first Executive Director for the Cal Ripken Collegiate Baseball League.

Eventually, he became the CRCBL's acting commissioner in 2013. During this time, he helped recruit current commissioner **Jason Woodward** and president **Brad Rifkin**.

"Alex is very level-headed, very even-keel, and he gets it when it comes to the Ripken League and what's best for the league," Woodward said.

Meanwhile, Thompson's full-time job as an executive at a local premium wine and spirits distributor grew. Thus, he took a step back with the league and joined the board of directors.

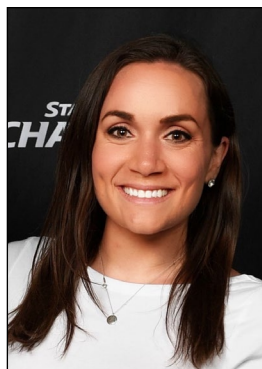
Now, he found his way back to Big Train when Adams asked him to join the board of the reconstituted Bethesda Community Baseball Club.

Despite his busy schedule, he makes time for Big Train, the place that gave him his start. He wants to help build its future as it did his.



## Rachel Northridge: From Povich to the Ice

By Alex Murphy



Growing up, **Rachel Northridge's** life revolved very much around Big Train baseball.

The Northridges were regulars at Shirley Povich Field and Rachel and her twin brother, Sam, shared a deep passion for the game.

So did her family, volunteering at Big Train games and eventually in 2002, hosting players for two summers.

When Northridge was in high school, her family took a break from hosting players. But she continued volunteering with Big Train and eventually joining a new high school sport management internship program created by then-general manager **Alex Thompson**.

"It was a no-brainer," Thompson said. "When she applied, we just knew for sure we wanted her."

She ended up attending James Madison University after hearing about the school through a fellow Big Train intern. In Harrisonburg, she worked with the JMU baseball team as the team scorekeeper.

While she was in college, her family began hosting players again, including San Jose State infielder **Danny Stienstra** (Big Train 2008-10), who she has stayed close with ever since.

"If I was selling the Big Train [to other players], it would start with the host families," Stienstra said. "Being a young kid going across the country, it's comforting knowing that every aspect of the summer is taken care of."

After graduating from JMU, Northridge had the opportunity to work at the Red Sox spring training facility in Fort Myers, Florida. But despite her family's loyalty to the team, she decided to forgo the opportunity and get her master's degree in sports industry management at Georgetown.

"The Red Sox would've been my dream, but I wanted to finish my degree," Northridge explained. "That was a big choice. That was probably one of the few times my dad disagreed with one of my career choices."

After working at ESPN 980 AM and the Washington Football Team, she zeroed in on her current job as Senior Manager of Client Services, Suites at Capital One Arena for Monumental Sports & Entertainment.

"It's a lot," Northridge said. "Every day is different, but it's been a thrill. One week, I could be working a concert, Caps playoff game. It just totally runs the gamut."

That experience makes her a great asset as part of the new Big Train board. It's come full circle for Northridge, and she's enjoyed the ride every step of the way.

"If there's one thing I know inside and out, it's Bethesda Big Train," Northridge said. "...I wanna be as helpful to Big Train as much as I can for as long as I can."



## BCBBC elects six new members to Board of Directors

On July 29, the Bethesda Community Base Ball Club announced the election of six new members to the organization's Board of Directors. "We are really excited about the new members. They bring diversity, energy, and expertise to our founding board," founder and president **Bruce Adams** said.

The six new board members are **Katelyn Engen**, **Manny Hidalgo**, **Marjorie Lane**, **Ramin Nejaddehghan**, **Emily Waldman** and **Donnie Wright**. Bios for each of them can be found below. They join the eight founding board members: Adams, Eric Cole, John Daniel, Becky Crowley, Bill Hickman, Dick Lipsky, Rachel Northridge and Alex Thompson.

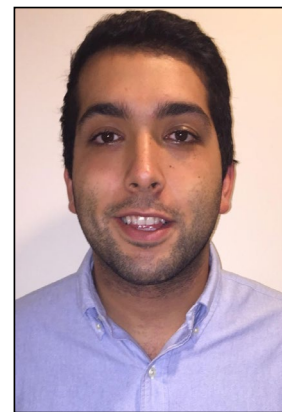
### KATELYN ENGEN

Katelyn grew up in Kensington. In high school and college, she and her friends were often tasked with absorbing Big Train players, hosted by neighborhood families, into their summer activities. This led to many humid evenings at Povich, cheering on summertime friends. She has a bachelor's degree from University of Delaware and master's degree from University of Maryland. Katelyn works at the University of Maryland as an Athletic Trainer for the eighteen collegiate athletic teams.



### RAMIN NEJADDEHGHAN

Ramin is a lifelong baseball fan with a passion for nonprofit organizations. After growing up in Potomac, joining Big Train is Ramin's chance to give back to the community in which he developed his love for the game. Now living in Washington, D.C., he practices commercial real estate finance law at Krooth & Altman LLP. He enjoys all things sports, believes that country music isn't what it used to be, and also devotes his time to a nonprofit organization called Soldiers for Wildlife.



### MANNY HIDALGO

Manny is a second generation Cuban-American from Silver Spring. He has lived and worked in the DC area for 33 years since moving up from Miami to attend Georgetown University. He serves as Executive Director of Shepherd's Table and prior to that served for nine years as Executive Director of the Latino Economic Development Center. He helped organize Big Train's first Latino Baseball Heritage Night in 2009 when Roberto Clemente's jersey number was retired. In 2016, he helped organize the Cal Ripken League's trip to Cuba to play a series of exhibition games against professional teams in Matanzas, Pinar del Rio, and Havana.



### EMILY WALDMAN

Emily has been involved with Big Train baseball since 2013 when her family hosted its first Big Train player. They have continued to host players every summer, and Emily has been the co-Host Family Coordinator since 2016. Emily moved with her husband Todd to Washington DC in 1998, and they now live in Bethesda with their three children Ben (17), Max (15), and Rebecca (13). Emily graduated from Amherst College and has a masters in public health from Johns Hopkins. In addition to volunteering for Big Train, she has served in various volunteer positions at her kids' schools, at MSI Soccer, on the Lombardi Gala Executive Committee, and at Temple Sinai.



### MARJORIE LANE

Marjorie is a Marketing Consultant and Founder of the Lane Marketing Group, specializing in the hospitality industry. She has lived in Montgomery County for over 35 years and raised her two sons in Potomac. Both boys are Big Train Camp alumni. Marjorie and her husband, Bob Fischer, are the co-owners of Bruster's Real Ice Cream of Gaithersburg. Marjorie's love of baseball comes from her dad, who had a tryout with the Brooklyn Dodgers at Ebbets Field.



### DONNIE WRIGHT

Donnie grew up in Bethesda where he played basketball and baseball at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School. Senior year, he was the Maryland Gatorade Player of the Year for baseball and went on to play at Penn State University. At Penn State he was among the Big Ten's top 10 leaders for batting average and home runs. Donnie led the Nittany Lions to within two games of the College World Series in his junior season. After college, he coached the BCC Baseball 14u travel teams. He has coached his four kids in many of the youth baseball organizations in the Bethesda area. He currently serves as a Managing Director of Investments at Wells Fargo Advisors in Bethesda.



**erman**  **Don Graham**

As of August 15, we have Big Train masks for the next seven donors of \$100 or more (includes an individual 2021 season pass for \$100 or family pass for \$150).