

To: the BBF Membership

from Jonathon Pearson, former Northern Youth Commissioner and BBF Board member.

Having read the numerous motions put forward to the imminent BBF AGM and the forum articles and propaganda that are being posted on various websites, I feel compelled to write of my own experiences and concerns for the future of British baseball.

Many of you will be aware that I came to baseball as a parent of two sons at Cartmel Valley.

In the last 10 years my growing interest in the game led me to become a Youth Coach, Club Chairman, General Manager to GB Cadet and Junior teams and, until my resignation in August last year, League Commissioner on the BBF Board.

I have witnessed first hand the ridiculous claims of 3 members of our community, the abuse and bullying of hard-working and talented volunteers, both on the Board and at BSUK, and the damage this has already done to both the work of the Board on behalf of BBF members and to the reputation of our sport.

During my time on the Board it became apparent that any progress would be frustrated at almost every turn by petty personal attacks and the twisting and misrepresentation of communications, both within and outside the Board. I felt I had to resign to preserve my sanity at a time when the interests of my family and club became more important.

The main protagonists have been in conflict with virtually every member of the BBF Board, past and present, for many years.

I have little doubt that their conduct has led to the resignation of many good people, and prevented others from coming forward to contribute to the considerable workload of the Board and to the development of our sport.

It is important that the BBF membership is made aware of the whole picture, and not distracted by rhetoric, playground insults and empty promises.

I believe that everyone has the right to express their views, but I also believe that this must be done in a professional, respectful way that enhances our Federation and the reputation of British Baseball and does not cause offense or intimidate others.

Having a 'passion' for baseball is no excuse for such behaviour.

We need talented and committed professionals to work constructively and in concert to further our cause, promote our strengths, and attract new participants and funding.

Our objectives to have well-run, growing, and sustainable leagues, both youth and adult, for improved standards of play, and, ultimately, for success at International level, will not be achieved in the short term.

Our community is so small, and the challenges so great, that we cannot afford to be pulling in opposite directions.

I support the adoption of a Code of Conduct, as it seems unlikely that anything will change without one.

It is essential that we recognise those developments and achievements that have occurred against the tough reality of our present financial position and realise there is a part we can all play to help. Some of us are attempting to build things up, not tear down what we have for the sake of some personal agenda.

There is no pot of money to hand out, Sport England holds the purse strings very tightly.

The GB Team, and the excellent coaches in the Adult and Youth Programme, are making real progress in raising the standards of play at all levels, including delivering coach education and coaching at Academy and Youth Team Camps.

Only last week GB World Cup player Matt McGraw volunteered his time to provide 5 days coaching to GB Junior and Cadet players. His advanced hitting analysis and one-to-one tuition produced incredible individual improvements and made a lasting impression on the players and coaches who were there.

And in 2008, Brian Essery, one of GB's top pitchers, took a sabbatical from his job in Canada and brought his family to London to spend the summer coaching the young players in the London Meteorites organisation. I understand that Brian has always considered his selection to the GB Programme as a privilege, and that he saw this as a small way of 'giving back' to the GB community.

In recent years there has been a steady rise in the number of young 'home-grown' talented players who can provide inspiration and be role models for the next generation.

My boys have benefitted greatly from the knowledge and experience of GB Team players and coaches from overseas who are volunteering their time and effort to help them jump to a higher level.

In turn, my sons and other young players are giving back to their club team mates, and so the ripple spreads out. Cartmel Valley is the richer for this, as are the adult teams who eventually recruit our players to their teams.

Our kids need something to aspire to, and our leagues need to provide the environment for play and development of all players whatever their ultimate goals. This won't happen overnight or even next year if we don't have the calibre of people involved who can make a difference.

Let's hope they will not be driven out of our game – we need them too much!