Farewell Message from the President

This is my last message to you as TAA President. Later this month, I will be ending my 2-year term. I am looking forward to my retirement and will be wishing the new leadership all the best as the TAA continues to move forward in supporting our children. I hope that you will continue to provide the next leader the enthusiastic support that you’ve shown me.

During my tenure, there has been a theme to each TAA newsletter. The theme of this newsletter and its many articles pertain to “looking back” at 7 years of administration, 10 years of parent coaching and 8 years of non-parent coaching with the perspective of having been through the whole process. As with everything else in life, the perspective gained from the whole process is often different than when you are in the middle of any particular item. I hope that my sharing will help you guide your children along the best path possible for them.

Finally, I’d like to thank all of the coaches and administrators that keep the TAA running. I’d also like to thank all of the volunteers in all of the other Tewksbury organizations that support the youth of our community. These folks have dedicated their time and talents to the kids of Tewksbury and have contributed to our success. I would also like to thank the parents for your support of the TAA. Together, we can make a difference for our children.

Tewksbury Athletic Association President
John Macchione

Test your TAA Trivia

1. How many simultaneous games played on Saturday mornings last fall?
2. How many Tewksbury parents are on the TAA Board?
3. What is the current number of TAA Programs?
4. How many sports at Voorhees HS are not supported by a TAA program?
5. What year was the TAA founded?
6. Name the Past-President of the TAA?
7. What is the TAA’s largest annual event?
8. How many active fields did we have this past fall?
9. What is the number of active volunteers in TAA programs?
10. What is the cost of copying TAA newsletters and handing them out in the K-4 grades?

See answers on page 6 of this newsletter
Whenever you look backward, you see successes and things you wish you had accomplished. Here are some of the highlights:

As TAA President:

**Accomplishment:** Increased participation among the Tewksbury children in 8 of the 10 programs that already existed.

**Disappointment:** Grades 4-6 are underrepresented in our registrations when compared to other populations.

**Accomplishment:** Introduction of Flag Football, Women’s Softball, Chess, Golf Clinics, and the Golf fund raiser for the Tewksbury Elementary School Playground.

**Disappointment:** Unable to create an opportunity for another choice during the winter for those who aren’t into basketball.

**Accomplishment:** Transition of TAA procedures from a mom-and-pop approach to a sustainable operation. TAA web site, web registration, improved insurance, background check procedures, and annual CPA financial audit are all examples of this.

**Disappointment:** The amount of red tape that an organization of this size must endure from the many levels of government.

**Accomplishment:** The opening of the Christie Hoffman fields, under construction with the Fairmount North field, and under design with the Christie Bartles field.

**Disappointment:** The closures of the OTS middle field, the Pascale middle field, and the Oldwick middle soccer field (must be something with being in the middle)!

As a Youth Coach:

**Accomplishment:** A great record for finishing each season with every player assigned to my teams and for having them come back the following season.

**Disappointment:** That too many parents don’t realize that is the biggest goal from ages 6 to 10.

**Accomplishment:** Having 14 Tewksbury Leopards playing HS soccer this past fall, a Tewksbury record.

**Disappointment:** Because of ever escalating goals, they never realized how good they had become until they reached high school.

**Accomplishment:** Sending two athletes onto scholarships in the Big East.

**Disappointment:** That too many parents think this is the holy grail.

**Accomplishment:** Handing out championship trophies, the first time, the second time, and many more times. Each time was different and just as wonderful.

**Disappointment:** Sometimes trophies became the goal rather than the result.

**Accomplishment:** Having exposed my children to a wide-range of opportunities. They experienced rec soccer, travel soccer, rec basketball, travel basketball, baseball, softball, lacrosse, chess, and field hockey (OTS). From other organizations they experienced Odyssey of the Mind, Reading Olympics, Mock Trial, the 8th grade play, community theater, Scouting, CCD, Jr. Police Academy, and fencing. All of these activities pre-cursor a lifetime of learning.

**Disappointment:** That in a community of Type-A personalities, we often drive each program to a high-level very quickly and neglect the beginner or the social participant.

**Accomplishment:** The creation of open-gym time during the winter months where kids can play and exercise in a non-competitive environment.

As I look forward, I envision many more accomplishments as we evolve our TAA programs.

**Boys and Girls Lacrosse**

Spring is coming! It’s time to register for the 2006 Tewksbury Lacrosse season. Our program offers lacrosse for kindergarteners through eighth grade. We start off with an instructional program for both boys and girls which is offered to the kindergarten, first, and second graders. This group meets on Saturday mornings for one hour from nine to ten o’clock starting in April. We provide a stick, ball, and t-shirt to the players and introduce the sport with a blend of fun and instruction.

When the children enter third grade, the girls and boys graduate up to Tewksbury’s girls or boys lacrosse clubs and learn gender specific rules and styles of play. When both the girls and boys clubs offer teams through eighth grade. Both clubs welcome beginner players at any grade level. Grades 3 through 8 begin practicing in March and start their league season in April and finish on June 11th. Each team practices twice a week with games on Saturdays and weekday evenings in May. Tewksbury Boys Lacrosse is a member of the New Jersey Junior Lacrosse League, playing teams such as Hunterdon, Long Valley, and Somerset Hills.

For questions about boys lacrosse please call program director, Kelsey Bennett at 236-2144 or our registration coordinator, Lizzy Staller at 439-9158. For questions regarding girls lacrosse, please contact the program director, Darcy Harp at 236-6626. Registration will be done on line through the TAA website: http://tewksburyathletics.sportsoffice.com.
Congratulations to TAA alum Justin Kamine on being chosen to the New Jersey High-School 3rd team all-state. Congratulations!

**Baseball Clinics**

We are now in the midst of winter but it’s time to think about baseball. The Tewksbury Little League winter clinics will begin shortly. They will be held right here in Tewksbury at the OTS gym. **Mark your calendars for the following dates:** Jan. 29th, Feb. 12th, Feb. 26th, March 5th and March 12th.

All in-town children from the age of 5 to 12 are invited to participate even if they have not played Little League before. There is no separate fee for the clinics as it is funded by the Tewksbury Little League as part of the registration fee. Check the TAA website for the clinic schedule for each age group.

The 2006 Tewksbury Little League online registration will begin on Jan 16th. Registration is not required to attend the clinics but a signed permission form must be completed. **The 2006 season registration must be completed by the March 2nd clinic to allow for evaluations and team selections.**

The age cutoff for little league has changed this year and will be April 30th. The age of your child on April 30th 2006 will determine his/her baseball age. For a child to play in the T-ball program they must be 5 by April 30th. If your child is 12 or under on April 30th 2006, he/she can participate in the 2006 program. This is a change from last years July 31st date.

**Special Thanks!**

A special thank you to several of the parents with children that have aged out of the program. Michael Eulo has coached Little League for more years than I know. He also in the past been Safety Director and Training Coordinator. We will miss Michael’s dedication and the contribution he made to the Tewksbury Little League program. Also leaving us this year are Doug and Heather Brown. Doug has been a coach for many years and was also our Safety Director. Heather has been the Umpire Coordinator for the past several years. We thank Doug and Heather for their contributions.

**Volunteers Needed**

We are always in need for new volunteers especially when we lose valuable old ones. We currently have openings for Umpire Coordinator, Equipment Coordinator, Girls Softball Director and for Safety Director. If you are interested in assisting with these positions or just want to get more involved please contact Ed D’Armiento at lorined@patmedia.net.

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**Turnpike League**

The TAA Turnpike League is off and running. A total of 225 children have registered to play basketball under the TAA this winter. The Turnpike League will be doing basketball skills and drills in addition to games.

This new league will be playing in the gyms at the New Tewksbury School and well as OTS. Games and practices are posted on the TAA website.

**Late registrations will be accepted.** If you still want to register, go to website and complete the registration forms. The season will be over March 31st.

**See everyone on the courts.**

**TAA Alum Excels at Soccer**

Congratulations to TAA alumnus and Voorhees Junior Justin Kamine on being chosen to the New Jersey High-School 3rd team all-state. Congratulations!

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To receive regular TAA communications including the newsletter on-line, send an email to taa-news@patmedia.net.

http://tewksburyathletics.sportsoffice.com/
Facility Update

Fields

Big news on the field front: We are beginning to approach the end of the building cycle of ball fields, yet we are having difficulty keeping existing fields in operation.

The Good News

• Pascale, 2 New Diamonds
With the opening of the new school, the 2 baseball diamonds at Pascale will be re-opening this spring. We started to use them this past fall for the youngest of our Community Soccer players.

• Fairmont North, New Fall Field
The construction at Fairmount North is complete. With the cycle of rain, drought, rain, that we have had this year, the contractor has had difficulties getting grass to grow. At this time, we look to a fall 2006 opening.

• Christie-Bartles, Possible New Field
The Township Committee has designated the Christie-Bartles property for the final athletic field of this build out. The engineering effort to design the property has begun. The Quarry has made an offer to pay for the field construction. Whether the Quarry deal goes through or the Township builds the field, look for construction to start in the spring.

• Tewksbury Elementary School, Gym Capacity
With the opening of the Tewksbury Elementary School, we have raised our capacity for gym space. The basketball program is already benefitting from the larger gym space

The Bad News

• Loss of Sawmill School
With the closure of Sawmill school by the Hunterdon ESC, the arrangement for continued use of the T-ball diamond and the gym was lost.

• Middle Field at OTS, Unauthorized Usage and Damage
We will be unable to use the middle level field at OTS this spring. This field is shared among 6 different school and TAA sport programs (including the sport most sensitive to ground conditions, Field Hockey). However, it was damaged by adults playing football this fall and will need further repair before we can use it fully again.

• Pascale Middle Field Short
The middle field at Pascale was left by the School's contractor as unplayable and too short for Lacrosse. We are working with the school and town to seek remedies to make this field playable. The field can not be lengthened at this time, so will end up with restricted usage.

• Oldwick Improvement Plans
At Oldwick, we will create a plan to improve the fields once we have more of the other facilities on-line and have the ability to rotate fields for work.

Special Thanks for Brady
We would like to thank Mr. Brady for the continued usage of his property at the Life Camp. Without his support, it would have been impossible to maintain many of our programs over these past 4 years.

Parking
Parking at the Pascale fields is strictly in the parking lot. Cars should not be using the emergency entrance to drive up to the fields. Parking at Christie Hoffman should only be on the flat surfaces. The sloped surfaces will erode if cars continue to park on them.

Consideration and Respect
As always, we ask that you treat the fields as your own. Clean up after yourselves. The owners of the facilities, Mr. Brady, the school district, and the town expect that of us.

Travel Soccer

The Tewksbury Travel Soccer Club (TSC) is getting ready for another great season of soccer. Within the next few weeks, each of our eight teams will receive their spring season flight status from the Mid-New Jersey Youth Soccer Association (MNJYSA). Games will be scheduled to begin in late March (weather permitting).

We would like to give special recognition to our U-13 Cheetahs. The Cheetahs posted a first place finish in Flight 2 after beating both Union and Millburn in the final week of their fall season. The first place finish should move the Cheetahs into Flight 1 for the spring season. Congratulations to the Tewksbury Cheetahs travel soccer team!

Players or coaches interested in getting involved with travel soccer are encouraged to contact any of our club representatives. Simply visit the TAA website and click on the Travel Soccer section and contact any of our representatives.

Happy New Year,
Tewksbury Travel Soccer
As I prepare to retire as TAA President, many folks have asked me how (and why) did I get to this point. Like many of you, I made one critical mistake! When my son signed up for Kindergarten soccer in Piscataway, I checked the box that said “Assistant Coach”. I had made the decision to support my kids in whatever activities they joined.

Within days, I received the phone call asking me to become the head coach in a sport that I had limited knowledge. Since I had coached in the past, I thought it couldn’t be that bad. I took the approach of wanting to ensure the kids have fun, and set a goal of having the kids continue to play the sport through the years. I had the top record in town for kids re-signing up to play each season.

As my kids progressed, I coached sports I was more familiar with, basketball, baseball, and softball, sometimes I was head coach, often I was an assistant.

I learned how to work the clock and handle penalties in Lacrosse and Basketball. When the Travel Soccer Club needed someone to help with game scheduling, I volunteered. I also created web sites for a number of teams. I had discovered a number of ways that non-coach parents could help out.

Since I was able to learn about so many different sports and field usage, Bill Richardson asked me to help him work with the town to identify our field needs. I helped represent the TAA on the Tewksbury Township Communications Committee and chaired the Parks Committee (the year the Oldwick playground was built) since our kids are the parks biggest users.

All this time, my wife was also active as a community volunteer. She volunteered at the Sawmill library, was a class mother, chaperoned on class trips, coached Odyssey of the Mind teams, did makeup for the OTS play, and helped me with my teams and TAA activities.

When Bill retired as TAA President, he twisted my arm to take his place. I knew that no one could take his place, I could only define a new place for me to fill. Two years later, after having partnered with the town, the school, other volunteer groups, two dozen great volunteers who make up the TAA board, I’m ready to move on to support my kids, and their mates through their high school years.

Yet, just as I coached in my teens (baseball, softball, swimming), my twenties (intercollegiate women’s football & swimming), and my thirties and forties, I expect to return to coaching in the future. I would also suspect that you will continue to see me active as a community volunteer.

Last year, I had the privilege of watching my parents receive honors from the US Congress and NJ State Legislature for a lifetime of volunteer efforts within their community. One of the speakers talked about all of the volunteer activities that their children were involved in. He spoke about how their volunteerism set an example for us and others around us. I hope that I have also helped to set an example for my children and those that I have coached and led.

There are many ways for the parents of our community to come together for the betterment of all of our children while also setting great examples for your own. I encourage you to travel the path that Veronica and I have taken by finding the places where your skills and talents can be best used.

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The Tewksbury Chess Club meets every Wednesday evening from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm at the Tewksbury Elementary School when the school is open. Master Scott Massey directs the club and teaches the 40 members.

When there is not a special function, the classes are 7:00 for the Novice section and 7:20 for the Advanced group.

Since the club started in late October, there have been 2 one-night tournaments with a trophy to the winner in each section. Third grader Carter Christie won both Novice tournaments. C.B. Garrett won the first one-night tournament for the Advanced group while Michael Stefkovich won the second tournament held during our holiday party on December 21st.

Great Job!
The new year will have plenty of activity; teaching, tournaments, mate contests and our championship. If you would like to play or learn, stop by on Wednesday evening.

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Thanks to our logo contest winner, DeAnna Stephan, the TAA now has a new logo. The logo will be displayed on the website, print materials and clothing as appropriate. DeAnna won a $50 gift certificate to Darrow’s Sports Store.

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To provide feedback or to submit an article send comments to taa-news@patmedia.net.
Email

Email has helped to make the TAA Board and our program directors very accessible to our parents. This has helped our program directors be able to fix problems and respond to issues with great speed.

However, it can also be used in haste to spread incorrect messages. Recently, there has been a trend for parents and coaches to blast emails to large groups. Often these emails are based on the views from one coach or one team without all the facts correct. In an organization that supports 14 programs and 1500 registrations with 1000 parents and 300 coaches on over 100 teams, that singular point-of-view is often out-of-sync with the needs of other kids, teams, and sports. The demands that are being placed on the TAA board to correct these emails is becoming quite large. We ask that you work issues through with the Program (sport) Director before sending large emails.

The effort required to run this all-volunteer organization is more than most folks expect. For example, TAA board members were involved in over 20 meetings during the month of October. It is not possible for all communication to be answered instantly. Please take into account that our volunteers have lives that include their own children, plenty of meetings, lots of paperwork, and jobs (some of which include travel). I’m sure that all of our volunteers will respond to reasonable requests in a reasonable amount of time.

One of our goals is to have long-term volunteers running our programs because, as in most things in life, we all do things better the second time around. Part of the way to achieve that is if they feel appreciated and respected in their positions. Sometimes I think they could all use a hug!

Answers to TAA Trivia

1. 8 simultaneous games were being played during several time slots each Saturday.
2. 23! The heads of each of our sports programs, the TAA officers and directors who head up each of the major infrastructure activities.
3. Soccer Squirts, Community Soccer, Travel Soccer, Flag Football, Chess, Recreational Basketball, Travel Basketball, Golf Clinics, Baseball, Softball, Boy’s Lacrosse, Girl’s Lacrosse, and Women’s Softball.
4. Tennis, Swimming, Volleyball, Fencing, Field Hockey, Wrestling, Track, and Cross Country. Field Hockey, Wrestling, Track, and Cross Country are all available at OTS.
5. The TAA was founded in 1992 and has seen almost straight line growth in the number of registrations ever since.
6. Bill Richardson! After years of service to the community, Bill is enjoying a well deserved retirement.
7. $2000. Some other expenditures that most folks don’t think about when they register are the annual audit, the cost of the web site, and the cost of credit card transactions.
8. A trick question, because it’s all in how you count. We have 14 sets of lines painted on 12 fields at 5 locations.
9. Over 250. Coaches, Assistant coaches, TAA Board members, volunteers running each of the programs. It takes over 25,000 hours of volunteer time each year to give our children these athletic opportunities.
10. Little League day! Each spring all of the baseball and softball teams gather at Oldwick for ceremonies and pictures.

Fire alarms

There have been recent instances of pulled fire alarms during TAA activities. Having a child pull a fire alarm in a non-emergency situation causes unnecessary use of emergency resources and in fact can prevent them from answering a real emergency. This is a serious matter.

Please, ensure that your children are supervised during all TAA events and that they are not left unattended or play near the fire alarms.

Siblings

There have been recent instances of unsupervised children in the halls during TAA activities. Siblings who are unsupervised during TAA events put themselves and others at risk of getting injured.

Please, ensure that your other children are supervised during all TAA events and that they are not left unattended. Encourage them to watch the game or bring along activities to keep them occupied.
The safety of our children is the responsibility of all of us. Players, parents, coaches, and administrators all share in the responsibility to insure the safety of players, officials, coaches, and spectators.

It has become clear that not all parents and coaches are aware of the safety rules and guidelines for each sport. That’s not a surprise, given that many of us have children signing up for sports that we don’t have a background in. The Rutgers Safety course that we mandate for our coaches provides some basic information.

This article will spell out some of the rules, guidelines, and suggestions that will keep your children safer and happier. It is certainly not a complete list of sport safety, but a quick primer on safety.

Facilities.

When we first put a new facility into operation, it is a safe situation. However, over time things change. Pads disappear, rocks come up through the grass, or goals are moved. Coaches have the responsibility to review the facility before each practice or game to insure it is safe. Parents should lend a hand in correcting situations they observe. For example, the Christie Hoffman fields have had a number of rocks coming up through the grass this past season. Parents can spend a few minutes during warm-ups walking the field and tossing the rocks off. If you notice a large rock coming through, the type that can cause head injuries or broken bones if you land on it, bring a shovel and get it out.

Soccer

In soccer equipment is minimal, but critical to player safety. International rules mandate that all players wear shin guards at every practice and game. Shin guards with hard shell outsides must be covered by a sock to protect the other players.

Cleats are recommended for all players. We don’t mandate them for the Community Soccer program, but players without cleats will eventually get stepped on. While serious injury won’t occur, your child’s enjoyment may be affected by the pain. We recommend that all players always wear cleats. A similar situation with goalkeepers and gloves. Serious injury in unlikely if you play without gloves, however, those stings can add up to your child not wanting to play the position. It is recommended that boys of all ages wear protective cups.

Soccer goals that are larger than the players should be secured to the ground. At all fields, the goals are either staked down or heavy soft objects are provided to hold them down when they are moved. Last year, 7 children in the US were killed by goals that were blown over. Headgear is the newest thing in soccer. Schools like Delbarton, club teams in Bridge-water have mandated headgear in practices and games. I’ve observed collegiate players on top 10 teams wearing them in games. Most players on our national teams wear them in practices. At this point it is not the norm, however as concussions add up, like the skiing helmet, it is likely to become commonplace within the next few years. Darrows will begin carrying headgear this winter.

In Baseball/Softball

While playing baseball or softball, batting helmets should be worn when batting, waiting to bat, or running the bases. Shoes with molded cleats are recommended (most youth leagues prohibit the use of steel spikes).

If your child is a catcher, he or she will need additional safety gear: catcher’s mitt, face mask, throat guard, long-model chest protector, protective cups for boys and shin guards. If your child is a pitcher, make sure pitching time is limited. Little League mandates time limits and requires rest periods for young pitchers.

When sliding, avoid head first slides in the younger leagues. Also, never slide into first base, always run through the bag to avoid injury.

Always be alert and ready for the ball to help avoid bad hops or over throws. Lastly, remember to “call the ball” to avoid a collision.

Basketball

Before the game begins, ensure the courts are clean and free of any sideline obstacles. Children should avoid falling especially outside the sidelines or into the bleachers. Intentional tripping, pushing, elbowing or shoving is not permitted and can cause injury.

Athletes should wear properly fitted sneakers, shorts/sweats and t-shirt or team jersey. Goggles are an option for those children who wear glasses.

In all Sports

The following apply to all sports:

- Spectators need to be (at least) 5 feet from the edge of the field. Chairs, coolers, blankets, and bodies are all hazards if they are closer to the field than that.
- All players are required to remove any jewelry before practices and games. Serious injury can be caused by a ball or stick hitting into the jewelry.
- Bracelets have become popular over the past year. In any sport with close play, leave your bracelets home as other player’s fingers could get stuck inside the bracelet and become broken.
- Learn the basic skills needed to play the game the right way and make sure that you are playing with other kids who are at the same skill level and size that you are.
- Always wear the right safety gear and make sure that it fits you the right way.
- Drink plenty of water before during and after your games or practices to keep your body full of the amount of water it needs to keep you going.

Always remember, the right gear, safe fields or play areas and the rules made to avoid getting hurt are all part of keeping any sport safe for you to play and enjoy.