

# Research on the Current Status and Development Strategies of College Baseball and Softball Sports

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**Abstract:** Globally, baseball and softball sports are widely loved for their entertainment and fun aspects. These sports not only provide physical exercise but also foster a sense of cooperation among people. Contemporary college students are keen to delve into and personally experience foreign sports cultures and healthy exercise methods. Despite a history of over a hundred years, the development of baseball and softball in China has been slow due to political, economic, and cultural factors, resulting in relatively poor athletic capabilities and levels of play. Thus, incorporating baseball and softball into physical education in Chinese universities can enrich the curriculum and provide students with diverse exercise options and competitive platforms, enhancing their overall quality and competitive skills. Although there are still many challenges in the development of baseball and softball at Chinese universities at this stage, a thorough analysis of the current status and developmental strategies can lead to targeted solutions, offering valuable references for the widespread promotion and popularization of these sports in Chinese universities.

**Keywords:** Baseball and softball sports, Development strategies, Innovative strategies

## 1. A Brief Overview of Baseball and Softball

Baseball and softball originated from the New England game in the UK. By the late 1860s, the Cincinnati Red Stockings, the first professional baseball team, was established in the US, making baseball the national sport and developing it over a century (see Table 1). It is a sport loved by all ages, filled with entertainment and fun, requiring a large number of participants, hence it also promotes social interaction. Although baseball and softball were introduced in China over a century ago, influenced by cultural and economic factors, their popularity is limited, with a weak mass base and generally low levels of sport performance, still needing further promotion and development [1-3]. Until 2008, the successful Olympic bid by Beijing enabled direct participation of the national baseball and softball teams in the Olympics, providing an excellent showcase for the sports and significantly promoting their development in China. Universities have unique advantages in terms of faculty, teaching, equipment, and venues, making it significant to include these sports in university physical education, guiding students to participate actively in popularizing the sport.

Table 1: The development of baseball and softball

Time	History of development
Mid-18th century	Ancient baseball originated in England, and later spread to the United States to develop into modern baseball
In 1887	Softball originated in the United States and evolved from baseball
Late 19th century	Softball became popular in the United States, starting as a recreational sport and developing into a competitive sport
In 1903	Kaiser Stewart, a teacher in Oakland, introduced softball into the school physical education curriculum, making softball gradually become a kind of sports for American students
Early 20th century	As baseball grew in popularity, so did softball. High schools and colleges in the United States began to set up softball teams
The middle of the 20th century	With the popularization of television and media, softball has received wider attention, and the level of softball in the United States has improved rapidly
In 1992	At the 25th Olympic Games in Barcelona, baseball became an official game
2020	In the Tokyo Olympic Games, baseball and softball were merged into one event and became an official event in the Olympic Games again

## **2. The Significance of Popularizing Baseball and Softball**

### ***2.1 Strengthening Physical Health***

Today's college students often face intense academic pressures and may experience a decline in physical health due to prolonged periods of sedentary study. To combat this, sports like baseball and softball can play a crucial role. These sports require a diverse range of physical activities such as sprinting to bases, throwing from various distances, and the dynamic, powerful action of batting. These activities engage different muscle groups, promote cardiovascular health, and improve overall physical agility and strength. The varied nature of the movements in baseball and softball ensures a comprehensive workout that is beneficial for improving students' endurance and physical resilience<sup>[4-5]</sup>. Moreover, the vigorous physical exertion involved helps in enhancing metabolic rates and increasing overall energy levels, which are essential for academic success. Regular engagement in such sports can also lead to better sleep patterns and improved concentration and cognitive function, providing students with a healthy outlet to release stress and maintain mental focus amidst their academic responsibilities.

### ***2.2 Unity of Game and Competition***

Baseball and softball are not merely physical activities but also involve a significant competitive and strategic component that mirrors real-world challenges. These sports teach important lessons in teamwork and strategy, as they require players to make real-time decisions that affect the outcome of the game. The essence of teamwork in baseball and softball is evident as players must communicate effectively, trust one another, and work cohesively to execute plays successfully. This environment fosters a strong team spirit and develops interpersonal skills that are crucial in both personal and professional settings. Moreover, the competitive nature of these games instills a sense of ambition and drive among students, encouraging them to strive for excellence not only on the field but also in their academic pursuits. Engaging in such structured competitive play can enhance students' ability to cope with pressure and adversity, qualities that are invaluable in today's fast-paced and often stressful societal landscape.

### ***2.3 Emphasizing Individual Effort***

Baseball and softball also provide a platform for individual achievement within the team context, emphasizing the importance of personal effort and responsibility. Each player, depending on their role—pitcher, catcher, infielder, or outfielder—needs to master specific skills that contribute to the team's overall performance. This aspect of the sport encourages self-discipline and persistence as players strive to improve their own abilities, which can lead to a deeper self-understanding and heightened self-esteem. Additionally, the requirement for constant mental engagement and tactical thinking during games enhances cognitive abilities, such as problem-solving and critical thinking. This dual focus on physical and mental skills makes baseball and softball excellent for developing a balanced set of competencies that students can apply in various aspects of life, helping them to become more rounded and adaptable individuals.

### ***2.4 Maximizing Existing Resources***

The inclusion of baseball and softball in university sports programs is a strategic approach to maximize the utilization of existing sports facilities. Most universities are already equipped with outdoor fields that can be slightly modified or optimized for these sports without significant additional investment. By adapting existing resources, institutions can offer a broader range of sports options that appeal to different student interests, thereby enhancing student engagement and satisfaction<sup>[6-7]</sup>. The initial investment in specific equipment and maintenance might be offset by the long-term benefits of creating a more vibrant and active campus culture. Such initiatives can also enhance the institution's profile as a hub for diverse athletic programs, attracting students who are keen on pursuing both academic and athletic excellence. Furthermore, a well-rounded sports program can serve as a foundation for building community and alumni relations, fostering a sense of loyalty and pride among current students and graduates alike.

### **3. The Current Development Status of Baseball and Softball in Chinese Universities**

#### ***3.1 Lack of High Attention***

With the continuous deepening of educational system reforms, physical education in Chinese universities has received high attention and has joined the reform agenda. The state has allocated a large amount of human and material resources, increasing investment in university sports venues, equipment, and materials, comprehensively enhancing the quantity and quality of university sports facilities. Observing the current actual development, some universities are already capable of meeting the conditions required for baseball and softball sports. Simultaneously, students are curious about the sport and willing to actively participate, enriching their campus cultural life. However, due to the limited awareness and influence of baseball and softball in Chinese universities, the promotion and popularization of these sports in universities face many difficulties. Even though conditions are initially available, the lack of necessary promotion and support makes it difficult for baseball and softball to take root and flourish in universities, and even more challenging to form a broad influence.

#### ***3.2 Relatively Weak Sport Foundation***

Although baseball and softball have been developed for over a century and introduced to China many years ago, they have not been widely popularized in universities. These sports, being highly entertaining, competitive, and aesthetic, are comprehensive sports with a rich cultural heritage and unique charm, requiring high demands on practitioners, focusing on physical quality and team cooperation<sup>[8-9]</sup>. However, their popularization in China is still in a developmental stage due to limited media coverage and public understanding of the sport and its rules. Influenced by economic and other factors, the number of participants is limited, mainly concentrated among students and athletes, with low participation among the general public. This lack of a broad mass base directly restricts the popularization of the sport in universities.

#### ***3.3 Lack of a Comprehensive Evaluation System***

Currently, some universities lack scientific assessment standards and beneficial evaluation tools when evaluating students' baseball and softball skills, making it difficult to provide targeted assistance to students. Over time, due to teachers' inability to assess students' sports levels, the lack of scientific basis in formulating teaching plans and training methods leads to teaching outcomes that are hard to meet expectations. Students participating in the sport lack clear goals and cannot maintain long-term enthusiasm for the sport. Additionally, a comprehensive evaluation system is a prerequisite for ensuring fair competition results. Without clear assessment standards, judgments and scoring in competitions are easily influenced by subjective factors, leading to disputes and reducing the fairness of the competition, affecting the influence of baseball and softball sports in campuses.

### **4. Development Strategies for Baseball and Softball Sports in Chinese Universities**

#### ***4.1 Increasing Promotion***

Baseball and softball, as sports combining entertainment, competitiveness, and aesthetics, are highly regarded globally for their deep cultural heritage and rich content. However, in China, despite many years since the introduction of these sports, they have not been widely popularized, especially in universities, where their popularity is greatly limited, and many teachers and students lack sufficient understanding and enthusiasm. Therefore, to promote the widespread development and popularization of baseball and softball in universities nationwide, especially in economically less developed areas, vigorous promotion and publicity of these sports should be carried out to increase students' understanding, interest, and participation<sup>[10]</sup>. College students, being intellectually active and interested in new things, can greatly enhance their enthusiasm and interest in baseball and softball through vigorous promotion in universities, encouraging more students to actively participate and enjoy the benefits and growth brought by the sport, ultimately promoting the development and popularization of baseball and softball in universities.

#### 4.2 Giving High Importance

In the context of diversified development of physical education in universities, enhancing the importance of baseball and softball teaching, and clarifying the resources needed to conduct the sport are key measures for breakthrough development in universities. To effectively promote the popularization and improvement of baseball and softball teaching, specific strategies can be implemented in the following three aspects: first, reasonably increase the course rate of baseball and softball sports in universities, scientifically arrange the number of class hours for baseball and softball teaching, ensuring high-quality implementation of baseball and softball teaching, providing college students with sufficient teaching and opportunities to learn and train in baseball and softball sports, thereby enhancing college students' baseball and softball skills; second, provide necessary financial support for baseball and softball teaching, improve the salary and benefits of baseball and softball teachers, and motivate teachers' teaching enthusiasm and motivation; third, establish a standardized baseball and softball teaching evaluation system, clarify the content, methods, and objectives of baseball and softball teaching, and strictly regulate the evaluation standards for baseball and softball teaching, promoting the continuous development of baseball and softball sports in universities, as shown in Figure 1.

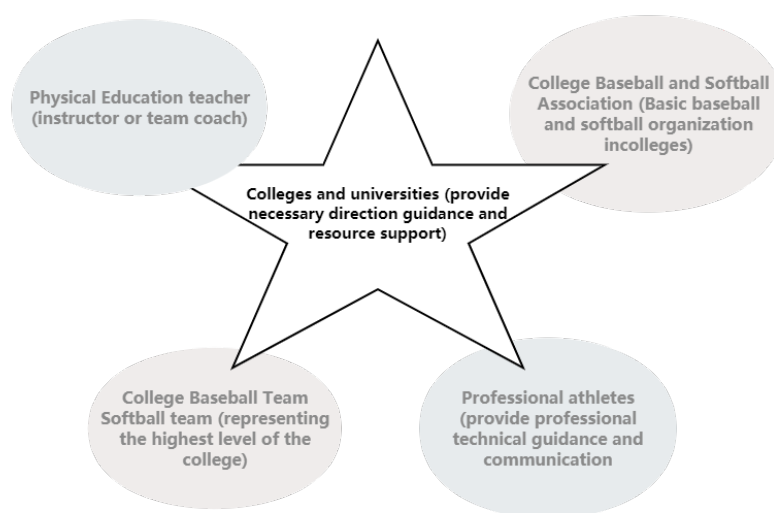


Figure 1: The five resources needed to carry out baseball and softball in colleges and universities

#### 4.3 Building a Professional Teaching Team

The professional ability and comprehensive quality of teachers directly affect students' participation interest and final teaching effectiveness. However, the number of teachers and coaches teaching baseball and softball in Chinese universities is very limited, and their professional level and teaching ability also have room for improvement. The state should increase the construction of baseball and softball sports teaching teams in universities. To enhance the quality of baseball and softball sports teaching, the state has already taken certain measures, such as organizing regular training. However, the existing number of training sessions is limited, and the scope and intensity of training need to be strengthened to effectively meet the professional growth needs of teachers, coaches, and referees. Regarding the training of baseball and softball sports teachers, coaches, and referees, it is necessary to focus on increasing and improving the training methods and approaches, consider increasing the frequency of training, and ensure that every teacher, coach, and referee receives systematic training<sup>[11]</sup>.

#### 4.4 Building a Diverse Evaluation System

A diversified and comprehensive evaluation system is the foundation for the smooth conduct of baseball and softball sports. Influenced by traditional factors, teachers tend to focus too much on skill tests and competition results during the student capability evaluation process, and a single evaluation method is insufficient to fully reflect students' sports levels and development potential. Therefore, teachers should combine actual needs to construct a diversified evaluation system, integrating students' skill tests, competition results, team cooperation, and innovation abilities, objectively reflecting

students' basic skills and sports capabilities, performance in actual competitions, and teamwork and spirit. Compared to traditional methods, a diversified evaluation system can provide more development opportunities for students, allowing them to identify their strengths and weaknesses during participation in baseball and softball sports, further stimulating their creativity. Teachers can also identify students' problems, thus providing more personalized guidance.

## 5. Conclusion

With the continuous improvement of China's comprehensive strength, opportunities for the development of education have been provided. In promoting students' physical and mental development, baseball and softball sports have a positive effect and have risen in popularity in many regions of China. The popularization of baseball and softball sports is an inevitable trend in the development of China's social sports industry and a reflection of following international societal development trends. At the current stage, to promote better development of baseball and softball sports, it is essential to start from universities. Universities should deeply recognize the unique value and potential of baseball and softball sports in universities, base their efforts on actual development conditions, continuously strive and innovate, promote the popularization and development of baseball and softball sports in universities, encourage more students to actively participate, and enjoy the fun and growth brought by the sport.

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