

Research on Issues and Main Reasons for Dilemma in Baseball Development in Universities of Chinese Mainland

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Abstract: *Objective: to explore the main reasons for the slow development of university baseball on the Chinese mainland. METHODS: A search of domestic and international literature on university baseball was conducted between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2021 using the CNKI full-text journal database, Web of Science and Baidu Academic, respectively. RESULTS: The main reasons include insufficient capital investment, lack of effective athletes and coaches training mode, lack of cultural identity and supportive policy. CONCLUSION: There is great potential on the Chinese mainland, and there are also many development obstacles. The development of university baseball requires more investment and concentration.*

Keywords: *Baseball; University Sport; Development Model; University Baseball League*

1. Introduction

Baseball is a sport with a deep cultural heritage and a unique charm. It is widely carried out internationally and has a great influence. It is particularly popular in the United States and Japan, and has a high degree of popularity in South Korea, Australia, Cuba and other places. The mass base of baseball in China is relatively weak. In recent ten years, Chinese baseball has performed in intercontinental and world competitions, but on the whole, the mass base of baseball has not improved significantly. Baseball has a positive effect on the athletes' logical thinking ability and physical health. It is very suitable for university students. Since the establishment of the Baseball and Softball Branch of Federation of University Sports of China in 2003, the university baseball in China has developed from unorganized and loose to organized and led, but it is facing great resistance in many aspects.

This article investigates the current situation and difficulties of university baseball on the Chinese mainland, and provides theoretical support for the development of university baseball in China.

2. Research Methodology

The literature on university baseball from January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2021 was searched using the CNKI full-text journal database, Web of Science and Baidu Academic. The search criteria were keywords or title, "university baseball", "baseball league", "baseball development" and "baseball culture" were used as keywords, and "and" was used as the operator to search for a total of 79 articles.

3. Main Issues and Reasons for the Dilemma in University Baseball in China

3.1 Insufficient Capital Investment

3.1.1. Insufficient Capital Investment in the Construction of Baseball fields

From the distribution of baseball fields' construction, the number of standard baseball fields owned by colleges and universities in China is very small. The distribution of baseball fields has regional characteristics and is concentrated in the universities in developed areas, mainly including Tsinghua University, Beijing Sport University, Tianjin University of Sport, Shanghai International Studies University, Nanjing Tech University, East China University of Political Science and Law, Xiamen University, Guilin Tourism University, Guangzhou Sport University, Xi'an Physical Education University, etc. Some universities without standard baseball fields have to use football fields and track

and field fields for training.

3.1.2. Insufficient Capital Investment in the Establishment of University Baseball Teams

According to the data, the annual training fee, transportation fee, equipment fee and other costs required to establish a baseball team in colleges and universities are about 150,000 Chinese yuan, which is one of the important factors that China's colleges and universities do not carry out baseball at this stage.[1]

Since the establishment of the Baseball and Softball Branch of Federation of University Sports of China in 2003, the baseball of Chinese university students has developed from unorganized to organized. In the 19 years since its establishment, the number of members of the Baseball and Softball Branch of Federation has been increasing. However, from the analysis of the number of colleges and universities across the country, according to the query information on the official website of the Ministry of education of the People's Republic of China: as of February 2022, there were 2756 colleges and universities with the enrollment qualification of general higher education, of which about 140 colleges and universities carried out baseball, accounting for only 5.1% of the total, with a low proportion.

According to the questionnaire survey conducted by Luo Tiantian on the top eight college coaches in group B of the finals of the 2019 national college baseball and softball league, only 25% of the colleges and universities surveyed have a large investment (more than 100,000 yuan), and 50% have an investment of less than 20,000 yuan.[2]

3.1.3. Insufficient Industrialization of University Baseball League

At present, the university baseball games in China are mainly divided into three levels: one is the finals of the Chinese University Baseball League hosted by the Federation of University Sports of China (FUSC) and its Baseball and Softball Branch; Second, the regional university baseball games organized by the regional university baseball associations; Third, various forms of baseball international and inter-school friendlies. The main problem of university baseball league in China and related games is that there is no long-term fixed enterprise sponsorship and a stable sponsorship chain. It is difficult to ensure that more universities participate in the baseball league, which seriously restricts the development of Chinese college baseball teams. A large part of the funds for the activities of university baseball teams need to be raised by university students, which also limits the development of university baseball in China to a great extent.

In the United States, where baseball is booming, American universities are closely related to commercial activities. The funding source of university sports, on the one hand, is inseparable from the financial support of the university, on the other hand, is mainly from the huge benefits brought to the university by the National College Athletic Association (NCAA) [3].

3.2 Lack of Effective Talent Training and Screening Mode

3.2.1 Athletes Cultivation Mode

From the analysis of the organizational form of baseball development in various colleges and universities, in the process of team construction, most university baseball team players in China are basically composed of students who are recruited in university from university entrance examinations. A large number of students only come into contact with baseball after entering university. Therefore, most of the students who play baseball in university do not choose occupations related to baseball after they graduate from university. Actually, professional baseball players need a lot of time for special training. Only several universities recruit baseball students by means of sports special recruitment examination, such as Tianjin University of Sport, Guangzhou Sport University.

By comparison, high-level university athletes have become an important talent base for competitive sports in the United States. For example, in the 2013 draft of Major League Baseball (MLB), a total of 1216 athletes were selected after 40 rounds of selection. About 66% or 806 players are from NCAA. It can be seen that college athletics has made a lot of contributions to American professional sports. The players with sports talents selected from colleges and universities continue to be trained in professional clubs, so as to reduce the burden of the country on training high-level athletes and expand the selection range of professional clubs [4].

3.2.2 Coaches and Trainers Cultivation Mode

At present, the coaches of baseball teams in Chinese colleges and universities are mainly middle-aged and young physical education teachers, who are responsible for both teaching and training. This kind of full-time teachers and part-time coaches is a unique phenomenon in the process of developing high-level competitive sports in Colleges and universities, and it is also the main model of developing high-level competitive sports coaches in Colleges and universities in China at this stage, This model will exist for a long time in the future, which is quite different from the external full-time coaches of overseas colleges and universities [5].

Due to the heavy teaching task, there is basically no time and energy to study high-level training and professional knowledge, so it is difficult to give full play to the educational advantages of coaches. There are too few scientific research coaches and the scientific research level is at a disadvantage, which makes it more difficult to improve the competitive level and performance.

3.3 Historical Reasons and Lack of Cultural Identity

The identity of culture for baseball is the main reason why the baseball development on the Chinese mainland is slow and the mass base is poor.

After the founding of new China, affected by the international situation at that time, baseball was considered as a western capitalist sport so that it was limited. China's sports industry focused on learning from the experience of the Soviet Union, including the experience of sports training and the physical education syllabus. The development of baseball in the Soviet Union was almost zero, so during the period when China learned from the experience of the Soviet Union, Chinese Baseball did not get sufficient development. Nonetheless, the basketball of the Soviet Union was the world's top level at that time. The men's basketball team of the Soviet Union won the silver medals in the men's basketball finals of the 1952, 1956, 1960 and 1964 Olympic Games. In the final of the 1972 Munich Olympic Games, it defeated the USA team who had won the championship of the seventh Olympic Games in a row.

This explains why basketball, which has the same origin from the USA as baseball, has an excellent mass base on the Chinese mainland. For instance, universities in China and even primary schools and secondary schools have sufficient equipment and facilities.

In the 1970s, with the resumption of diplomatic relations between China and Japan and between China and the United States, some universities in Beijing recruited Japanese and Korean students, which continued university baseball.

3.4 Lack of Supportive Policy

In Federation of University Sports of China of and General Administration of Sport, there is no unified agreement and management system for the development of university baseball. Moreover, the Ministry of education has not included university baseball in the plan, which leads to the self-development of college baseball in China. The neglect of authorities also directly affects the development of baseball in colleges and universities. The development of China's sports is closely related to the popularity of the Olympic Games in China. Many sports rely on the Olympic Games to lay the foundation among the masses. Baseball had been an Olympic sport since the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. However, baseball was not included in the 2012 London Olympic Games and the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games. Under the system concentrating nationwide effort and resources on key national undertaking, the development path of professional baseball teams has narrowed, and few young baseball players are able to become professional athletes.

In contrast, ice hockey, which has a weak mass base in China, has received sufficient support from national policies as the 2022 Winter Olympics is determined to be held in Beijing. At the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games, there were many naturalized players in China's National Ice Hockey men's and women's teams. Among the 23 members of China's women's ice hockey team, 13 were naturalized players, and among the 25 members of the men's ice hockey team, 15 were naturalized players. Most of them are of Chinese descent.

On August 4, 2016, the International Olympic Committee voted and approved the proposal on sports at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, including baseball. With the baseball game of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games again becoming a competition sport, baseball has returned to the public's vision,

and baseball in Chinese mainland universities will be valued and developed.

4. Conclusion

This article studies and analyzes the reasons for the slow development of baseball on the Chinese mainland universities. There is great potential on the Chinese mainland, and there are also many development obstacles, such as funds, talents, venues, equipment, policies and so on. With the promotion of the plan of “Outline for Building a Leading Sports Nation”, the popularity of baseball and the activity of college and university baseball will be effectively improved.

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