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## Lamorinda's Youth Baseball Season Begins

By Lucy Amaral



MBA, OBA, LLL

Mother Nature cooperated quite nicely, offering up a sunny day for Lamorinda's youth baseball Opening Day on March 7. Most of the fields may not have been play-ready, but there were no damp spirits as teams were announced, anthems were played and first pitches were thrown. Boasting hundreds of boys and girls in each league, Moraga Baseball Association (MBA), Orinda Baseball Association (OBA), and Lafayette Little League (LLL), started their seasons off with festivals, jamborees and thunderous applause.

### Moraga Baseball Association: The Tradition Continues

The teams raced into the Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School (JM) gym, each with it's own theme song blasting from the speakers. Literally sliding into their position on the gym floor, the players were raring to go even if wet field conditions meant no games that day.

"They (the kids) always have a wonderful time at Opening Day," said Joe Rosenbaum, president of MBA. "We want them to have fun. We want these kids to learn how to play baseball the right way, but also learn sportsmanship and teamwork as well."

Speeches, first pitches and raffles filled the agenda for the morning. The Campolindo varsity baseball team was introduced with their coach, Max Luckhurst, who spoke of the importance of education first, sports next. There was even some good-natured ribbing when each Campo player introduced themselves and where they played as a kid. When a few mentioned they played in Lafayette, boo's intermingled with laughter and applause.

Eleven-year-old Caleb Whalen was just looking forward to playing ball. "The best part is that you get to be competitive against other people," he said. "That, and when you get a hit."

### Orinda Baseball Association: Celebrating 25 Years

Balloons, commemorative baseball hats, and a host of past OBA board members were on hand to celebrate OBA's 25th anniversary. Before the ceremonies even began, a festive atmosphere filled the Wagner Ranch campus with team photos, pitching challenges, whiffle ball home-run contests, carnival games and food. When the teams filed into Wagner Ranch's gym they passed through a gauntlet of Miramonte Varsity Baseball players, raking in the high-fives before they took their place on the gym floor.

From the welcome by OBA president Greg Anderson, to the impressive list of awards, including the Curtis Bottomley and Will Newton awards, and finally, the 'first pitch' thrown by event sponsor Orinda Motors, it was all baseball, all the time. "Our mission is to serve the community of Orinda and provide a quality baseball

program for our kids," said Anderson. To celebrate the 25 years of OBA, Bob Hegarty, known locally as "The Father of Orinda Baseball," was given special recognition for his tireless efforts on behalf of Orinda Baseball.

"There is nothing better than a young man playing baseball," said Hegarty. "All you have to do is go to Opening Day and look at those kids with their uniforms on and the smiles on their faces. There is nothing more rewarding in this world."

### Lafayette Little League: Play Ball!

Buckeye and Chaney Fields were open early, hosting a Jamboree play schedule, with limited blocks of time to ensure each team had a chance to play in the two-day opening celebration. Varsity players from the Acalanes baseball team were on hand, illustrating what being a role model is really about. Members of the high school team helped out both days of the event, getting the young players warmed up, assisting pitchers and catchers during the games and even raking and prepping the fields between games.

At noon on Saturday, play stopped and "Unplugged," a rock band featuring Lafayette Little League players, took the stage and performed several songs. After a welcome by LLL president Dan Ventrelle, an a'capella choir, the "Rocktets," comprised of Joaquin Moraga eighth graders, sang the national anthem and then, as most players appreciated, it was back to baseball for the rest of the afternoon.

"Our goal is to provide every kid of every level with the best baseball experience that we can," said Ventrelle. "We are fortunate to have so many positive adult role models to teach them about the game."

That sentiment showed in nine-year-old Ryan Regan of the AAA Division's Angels when asked about his favorite part of baseball. "There's no arguing," Regan said. "It's nice to play baseball. And it's a good team."



Campolindo varsity baseball team at the Moraga Opening Day Photo Andy Scheck







OBA's 25th anniversary

Photo Andy Scheck



One of many Lafayette Little League Opening Day Jamboree Games

Photo Robin Fox

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