

'08 BETHESDA BIG TRAIN



Tenth Season Recap: Best Big Train Team Ever?

The 2008 Bethesda Big Train (29-13) might have been the best team of our first decade, but they finished second out of eight teams in the Cal Ripken, Sr. Collegiate Baseball League (CRSL) regular season behind a league record breaking season posted by Youse's Orioles. The 29 wins tied the Big Train season record and was the second highest in the four year history of the CRSL.

It was a stellar offensive season with the wooden bats for the Big Train, breaking league and team records for batting average (.278), on-base-percentage (.380), and hits (366), while setting top marks in Big Train history in slugging percentage (.389), RBIs (205), home runs (22), total bases (512), and walks (200). In addition, the pitching staff tallied 320 strikeouts, the most in team history and the third best in league history.

Youse's Orioles (35-7) beat the Big Train in five out of six matchups and pulled away from the field in the last two weeks of the season to take the regular season championship with an eye-popping .833 winning percentage. The Orioles, ranked by *Perfect Game* as the second best team in all of summer collegiate baseball in 2008, swept the league championship series and went on to win a record sixth straight All America Amateur Baseball Association (AAABA) Championship.

Opening night June 6 was picture perfect at Povich Field as the Big Train faced-off against the perennial national AAABA champion Youse's Orioles. The Big Train took a 1-0 lead into the top of the sixth when a two run home run by Orioles catcher Joe Velleggia (Old Dominion) put the Orioles ahead to stay in a 4-1 loss for the home team.

Two wins and four days later, the Big Train traveled to Glen Burnie to face the Orioles again. It wasn't pretty. A come-from-behind 5-4 win on the road against the Herndon Braves the next night and four more wins put the Big Train at 7-2 with a chance for redemption as the Orioles returned to Povich Field on June 20. With a solid start by Justin Wright (Virginia Tech), long relief from closer Matt Hiserman (San Francisco), and a four RBI night by lead-off hitter Drew Lee (Morehead State), Bethesda won a seesaw game 7-6 to take over first place in the Cal Senior League as the season's first two weeks came to an end.

A doubleheader split with the Rockville Express was followed by a June 23 trip to Silver Spring. After a summer hailstorm delayed the game 50 minutes, Big Train catcher Dylan Tonneson (California) launched a first inning grand slam. The Big Train hung on for a 5-4 rain-shortened 7-inning victory. Three more victories later, the Orioles were back at Povich for another Friday night showdown on June 27. A 9-2 Orioles win cut the Bethesda league lead to one-half game.

Saturday night June 28 a fifth inning downpour at Shipley Field in College Park gave the Bombers a 2-1 win as lightning in the area did not allow the Big Train

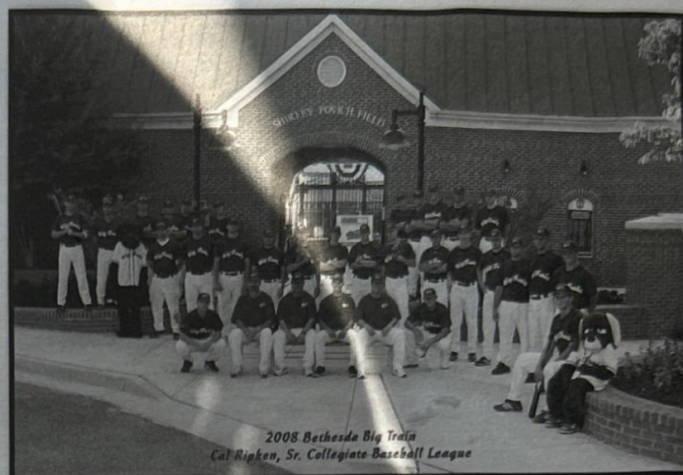


Photo courtesy of Lisa Kammerman, BigTrainPhotos.com

an opportunity to stage a comeback. The next night, the Big Train beat the Bombers 7-4 at Povich Field, but the Orioles swept a doubleheader against the Aces in Alexandria to pull into a tie for first with Bethesda.

The win over the Bombers started a nine game win streak. One of the highlights of the streak came on Thursday night July 3 at Povich Field when Drew Lee, with his parents at the ballpark visiting from Kentucky for Big Train Family Weekend, stroked solo home runs in his first two at bats. Outstanding pitching by Big Train starter Scott Schneider (St. Mary's CA) made the Lee blasts hold up for a 2-1 win over the Maryland Redbirds. A walk-off single by first baseman Danny Stienstra (San Jose State) capped a 5-4 victory over the Alexandria Aces on July 5. On Sunday July 6, Bethesda maintained its mastery over the Silver Spring-Takoma Thunderbolts winning the fifth straight contest between the Beltway rivals despite being outthit 10-4. Errors and ten walks did in the T'Bolts in a 4-2 loss. An Eli Boike (Michigan State) grand slam helped seal a doubleheader sweep over the Bombers on the road in College Park the next night.

Despite losses in three out of four contests with the Orioles, the nine straight wins put the Big Train at 22-5 and one-half game ahead of the Orioles, setting up an epic weekend clash on July 11-12 at Povich Field. The two teams were running away from the pack as the College Park Bombers at 11-11 were in third place eight-and-one-half games behind.

On Saturday night, Big Train batters hit into three

2008 Final Regular Season Standings

	W	L	%	GB
Youse's Maryland Orioles	35	7	.833	
Bethesda Big Train	29	13	.690	6
College Park Bombers	24	18	.571	11
Herndon Braves	18	24	.429	17
Alexandria Aces	16	24	.400	18
Rockville Express	15	25	.375	19
Silver Spring-Takoma Thunderbolts	15	26	.366	19.5
Maryland Redbirds	13	28	.317	21.5

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double plays and fell one-half game behind the Orioles with a 6-2 loss at Povich Field. The next night, the Orioles were simply better, defeating the Big Train for the fifth time in six games and pulling one-and-one-half games ahead in the race for the regular season title of the Cal Senior League. A standing-room-only crowd was treated to a pitcher's duel with CRSL Pitcher of the Year Scott Swinson (Maryland) beating Justin Wright 3-0.

A three-run home run by Luke Adkins (Mississippi State) sparked an 8-5 win on the road at Herndon on July 14. A ten strikeout performance on July 15 by Big Train starter Cody Allen (Central Florida) helped beat the Thunderbolts 8-3. The season sweep over the T-Bolts allowed the Big Train to clinch the Montgomery Cup competition with Rockville and Silver Spring.

With just 11 games left in the season, the Big Train (24-7), despite losing five of six to the Orioles (26-6), were just one-and-one-half games behind the Orioles. Incredibly, the Big Train was 23-2 in games against the other six teams in the league. That dominance did not continue as the Big Train faded in the stretch, losing three of their next six games and then losing three times to the Alexandria Aces in the last week of the season, denying the Big Train its first 30-win regular season. The Orioles kept winning to finish at 35-7, six games ahead of the second place Big Train (29-13).

As the second seed in the CRSL Championship, the Big Train got a first round bye but were demolished by the College Park Bombers in the team's first playoff game on the afternoon of July 30. Later that night, on the verge of elimination, Bethesda bounced back from a four run deficit to beat the Maryland Redbirds 7-4 thanks to another stellar performance by reliever Matt Hiserman and a five run bottom of the eighth. But the next night, the Bombers were all over Big Train pitching once again and won the right to face Youse's Orioles for the league championship trophy by winning a 16-10 slugfest.

At season end, Manager Sal Colangelo named Matt Hiserman (San Francisco) as the Most Valuable Player for the 2008 summer season. Danny Stienstra (San Jose State) was named Most Outstanding Hitter. Ryan Mulligan (Saint Mary's CA) was the Most Outstanding Fielder. Scott Schneider (Saint Mary's CA) was named Most Outstanding Two-Way Player. Big Train infielder Steven Leach (Jacksonville State) was honored with the Big Train Distinguished Service Award for three outstanding summers in Bethesda. Hiserman, Stienstra, and outfielder Luke Adkins (Mississippi State) earned spots on the Cal

Ripken Sr. Collegiate Baseball League All-League Team and on the Big Train's All-Decade (1999-2008) Team.

Relief ace Matt Hiserman of Mission Viejo, California had a record-breaking season for the Big Train in his second season with the club. Hiserman became the first qualified pitcher in CRSL and Big Train history to finish the season with a 0.00 ERA. Hiserman led the league with 10 saves while also going 3-0, and finishing with an incredible 37 strikeouts to only 2 walks in almost 34 innings of work. Hiserman did not walk a batter for 30-and-two-thirds innings to start the season, the longest streak in league history. Big Train Manager Sal Colangelo said: "Matt was our go-to guy on the mound this season. I could put him in whenever we were in tight situations, needed a big out, or a strikeout." Hiserman's 18 appearances tied a Big Train record, and his .148 opposing batting average set a new league and Big Train record.

First baseman Danny Stienstra of Redwood City, California also set a few records en route to being named the Big Train's Most Outstanding Hitter. "Stienstra is the most fundamental hitter I have coached while at the Big Train," said Colangelo. The freshman All-American tallied 50 hits, one more than the all-time Big Train record set by 2007 MVP Bert Smith. In addition, his .391 batting average was the highest in Big Train history by a great margin and was only surpassed in league history by the extraordinary 2008 performance by CRSL MVP Mike Celenza (College Park Bombers). Stienstra's .487 on-base percentage tied him for best in Big Train history and third best in league history.

While individual Big Train players set numerous records in 2008, Manager Colangelo was most impressed by how these players came together as a team from the first minute they arrived in Bethesda. "There was no 'I' on this team. It was just an unbelievable group of players and young men. This team was the single-most blue collar, hardworking, dedicated, passionate team I have ever been around in a decade of coaching Big Train baseball. Their personalities and respect for the game and our organization were remarkable."

As always, the Big Train was a box office success in 2008. In twenty home dates, the Big Train hosted 12,898 fans for a nightly average of 645. With exhibition games, the Cal Ripken Senior League All-Star Game and Playoffs, more than 15,000 fans watched summer college baseball at Povich Field during the 2008 season.



2008 MVP Matt Hiserman

2008 Big Train Honors

MVP

Matt Hiserman (San Francisco)

Most Outstanding Hitter

Danny Stienstra (San Jose State)

Most Outstanding Fielder

Ryan Mulligan (Saint Mary's CA)

Most Outstanding

Two-Way Player

Scott Schneider (Saint Mary's CA)

Distinguished Service Award

Steven Leach (Jacksonville State)

CRSL 2008 All-League Team

1B Danny Stienstra (San Jose State)

OF Luke Adkins (Mississippi State)

RP Matt Hiserman (San Francisco)

CRSL 2008 League Leaders

Drew Lee

7 Home Runs (ties CRSL record)

Matt Hiserman

0.00 ERA (CRSL record)

30.2 consecutive innings before walking a batter (CRSL record)

10 saves (CRSL record)

37 K's, 2 BB's (CRSL record for K/BB ratio)

.148 opposing batting average (CRSL record)

Scott Schneider — 6 wins

Baseball America's Top Ten CRSL

Prospects

#7 Cody Allen (Central Florida)

CRSL 2008 All Star Game MVP

Jordan King (Meridian CC)

CRSL 2008 All Stars

OF Luke Adkins (Mississippi State)

P Cody Allen (Central Florida)

3B Michael Cipolla (St. Mary's CA)

RP Matt Hiserman (San Francisco)

INF Jordan King (Meridian CC)

INF Steven Leach (Jacksonville State)

C Ryan Mulligan (St. Mary's CA)

P Scott Schneider (St. Mary's CA)

P Andrew Smith (Charlotte)

1B Danny Stienstra (San Jose State)

P Chase Tigert (San Francisco)

P Justin Wright (Virginia Tech)

CRSL 2008 Hitter of the Week

July 8 Drew Lee (Morehead State)

CRSL 2008 Pitcher of the Week

July 8 Matt Hiserman (San Francisco)

July 22 Matt Hiserman (San Francisco)