



**BILL
LEFFLER**

\$12 franchise

How would you like to own a major league baseball team?

In 1972 when the Cleveland Indians were sold the new owners forked over \$9,000,000. Last year Ray Kroc, the multi-millionaire hamburger king, bought the San Diego Padres for \$12,000,000.

Mike McClurg of Chesapeake paid \$12 for his franchise.

Yep! Twelve dollars!

McClurg is the owner of an American Professional Baseball Association team. His son, 14-year-old Mike Jr., also owns a team.

There may be other APBA owners in the area but the McClurgs are the only ones we know about.

As you may have guessed, APBA is a game. It's simulated baseball. But it's played on such a scale that the McClurgs feel they actually do own teams.

The APBA game was created in Pennsylvania in the 1950s. About 10 years ago McClurg ran across an advertisement in a national magazine and sent off for one.

Until a year ago it was just family fun.

Then McClurg decided to go into national competition with other owners of similar games. Leagues operate across the nation and into Canada.

McClurg obtained an "expansion team" in a 12-team league in which veteran game owner Bud Funk, a Richmond attorney, serves as commissioner.

McClurg's league includes three lawyers, four college students and a York, Pa. sports writer columnist. The "owners" are as far away as Winnipeg.

Basically APBA is a game of cards and dice. The players' cards are based upon their actual performance the previous year in the major leagues.

The wheeling and dealing in APBA is every bit as serious as the major league bartering that's going on now for Dick Allen. McClurg recently acquired Brooks Robinson for a young player and a 1975 draft choice.

"Actually it's a 1974 draft pick," laughed McClurg.

APBA runs a little behind the real action. The league is currently finishing up the 1973 season.

The Drum Creek Rebels

McClurg figures his team will finish fifth in its six-team division. He has an unique name for his team — Tidewater Tides.

Son Mike begins his first year in APBA in May. His team will be the Drum Creek Rebels. It's another expansion team.

But don't write the Drum Creek Rebels off too hastily. One of their players is a guy named Jeff Burroughs.

The Tidewater Tides include Gaylord Perry, Jim Kaat, Clay Carroll, Bill Buckner, Willie Crawford and Robinson.

It's been hectic around the McClurg household the past few days because the draft was scheduled this weekend.

The teams draft by mail, just as they play.

Each owner gets a pre-printed schedule and the season runs 162 games over nine months. The "visitors" mail instructions to their opponents and the "home team" owner does the playing. Results are sent to the commissioner.

Monthly the commissioner sends out the results, standings and individual statistics.

The McClurgs invite friends for practice games all the time. A baseball-minded individual can play a game in 45 minutes.

When you know the game as well as the McClurgs, a game can be played in less than 20 minutes.

The happenings can be as exciting as watching Tom Seaver spin a no-hitter in Shea Stadium.

Once a player was suspended for three games — for obscene gestures to the fans. An epidemic struck one team, causing five frustrating days for one club owner.

The fever of winning at all costs sometimes strikes APBA owners, too.

A Pittsburgh realtor started making high pressure trades by phone. He was bounced out of the league. And that's how Mike Jr. was able to get off the alternate list and become a franchise holder.

Mike Jr. is a Pony League all-star player himself. He celebrates his 15th birthday this week and would like nothing better than talking Pop out of Gaylord Perry.

The older McClurg is better remembered for his talent with a basketball.

At Norview High School in 1956 he was picked as the outstanding scholastic basketball player in the city of Norfolk.

Right now baseball occupies most of the evening hours for the McClurgs.

"Even my wife loves it," said Mike. "It keeps me home at night and out of the beer parlors."

The McClurgs would love to start their own league.

Are there any more APBA owners in the area?
Dial 488-3873.

Commissioner McClurg. Has a nice ring to it, doesn't it, Mike?