



# PBATS NEWSLETTER

The Annual Publication of the

**PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL ATHLETIC TRAINERS SOCIETY**

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: FRANK NEVILLE

### Making a Difference

By: Magie Lacambra, M.Ed., ATC



**W**hen the love for a game and a network of great mentors leads to a successful career, one doesn't have to look further than Frank Neville.

Neville grew up in Kentucky playing high school baseball while also juggling time as a student athletic trainer. Neville went on to Western Kentucky University, under the guidance of athletic trainer Bill Edwards, where he majored in Health Education with a Minor in Athletic Training, and then the University of Kentucky, with graduate studies in Health Education. Having stayed close to home for college proved to be a fruitful choice for Neville as he was surrounded by many outstanding athletic trainers, including NATA Hall of Famers Al Green and Sue Stanley.

First there was Russ Miller, former Head AT at WKU and then with the Detroit Tigers. Also, Bobby Barton, legendary head athletic trainer at Eastern Kentucky University who hung out a lot at the UK training room. Richie Bancells was a GA for Barton at ECU and went on to be Head AT with the Baltimore Orioles with Brian Ebel as the Orioles' Minor League Medical Coordinator. Ebel hired Neville as the athletic trainer for the Orioles' Rookie Ball team in Bluefield, WV. This took place while Neville was still a graduate student at Kentucky, then as the assistant athletic trainer at WKU, requiring that he spend 9 months at school and the summer months in Bluefield for three consecutive years.

Neville's next move came in 1995 when the Orioles' assistant GM, Doug Melvin, took a job with the Texas Rangers and took Frank with him. Neville was given a clean slate with the Rangers as they did not have a minor league medical coordinator at the time, so he created the position as he thought it should be. In 2005 Melvin joined the Milwaukee Brewers as GM and once again took Neville with him. This year will be Neville's

20th season with the Brewers.

Since getting into professional baseball, Neville has worked tirelessly to give minor league medical coordinators a voice to help improve the lives of minor league athletic trainers and give them the necessary tools to provide appropriate medical care to the athletes they work with. "It is important for the MLB physicians to know and understand that we cannot have an ambulance on standby at the stadium during a game in Helena, MT. Having onsite physicians at games in Latin America is another challenge we face," expressed Neville. Together with Ron Porterfield (then of the Tampa Rays) this focus resulted in a minor league medical coordinators meeting taking place at the annual MLB Winter Meetings, where league medical personnel can hear directly from Minor League ATs regarding their needs. Initially only 8 teams sent a Minor League representative, growing to members from all 30 MLB teams attending now.

Another example of Neville's commitment to Minor League ATs is the Minor League Athletic Trainer of the Year Award. While this award dates back to 1990, it was when Neville became Committee Chair for this award under Richie Bancells's PBATS Presidency in the mid-2000s that the award achieved 100% voter participation and the committee was headed solely by minor league athletic trainers. Voted on by Minor League ATs for all 16 Minor League divisions, the final award is approved by the PBATS Executive Board. "Minor Leagues is where some of us want to be and where we feel we can make a difference," said Neville, "while some aspire to get to the Major Leagues. Your hard work and commitment recognized by your peers is what makes this award so special." Interestingly, several winners of the Minor League AT Award have gone on to join Big League medical staffs.

In addition to the award, Minor League Athletic Trainers also receive the 20-Year Service Award and 25-Year Service Ring from PBATS in recognition of long distinguished careers.

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As I talked with Frank, he couldn't help but recall the many people who helped shape him as an athletic trainer. He spoke of Roger Caplinger, VP, Medical Operations, Health and Safety for the Brewers, and how Caplinger empowers him and lets him know how valuable his contributions are to the Brewers organization. How Jamie Reed, Senior Director of Medical Services for the Texas Rangers, helped him evaluate a hamate fracture as a young athletic trainer. How often Mark Letendre, former Head AT with the San Francisco Giants and MLB Umpires AT, has taken his calls and served as a valuable sounding board. "This level of willingness to help is a direct result of the bond that PBATS members have, and how important it is for the history of PBATS to be shared with younger athletic trainers so they are aware of what it took to get where we are," said Neville.

Just as all of these mentors helped Neville shape how he identifies good skillsets when hiring athletic trainers, how he teaches young athletic trainers, and how he continues to advocate for the Minor League AT in particular, Frank wants to be remembered as a mentor himself. "I genuinely want to help and always be part of the solution. I took a big stand on helping develop the Minor Leagues and making conditions better for everyone," said Neville.

While Neville has no plans to leave the game anytime soon, he can rest assured that he has made a major impact on the profession for years to come.