



# SUNNY DAYS FOR THE AA

## Commissioner touts stability while exploring expansion for his league

**BRIAN FINLAYSON**  
Special to the Winnipeg Sun



American Association commissioner Joshua Schaub poses at Blue Cross Park before a recent Winnipeg Goldeyes home game.  
**DAVID MAHUSSIER/WINNIPEG GOLDEYES**

Having visited before, American Association commissioner Joshua Schaub knew exactly what to expect when entering Blue Cross Park for the first time in two years.

“The atmosphere is really at the top level of anywhere in the league in terms of how much fun the fans have,” Schaub said. “Generally speaking, it always feels like Goldeyes fans are the happiest fans in the league.”

Schaub, who succeeded Miles Wolff as American Association commissioner in 2019, has been at the helm during a time of great success. Since assuming the role, the league has added three teams and has been able to establish a financial model that encourages further growth.

It's because of that stability that they've been able to afford to drop the paywall entirely on the league streaming service, Aabaseball.tv, making the games more accessible to fans.

“From a commercial perspective, we've grown tremendously,” explained Schaub. “The amount of corporate sponsors we have in the league has grown significantly. Dropping the paywall on Aabaseball.tv is a product of us being financially successful at the league level.”

Schaub has done significant work in moving the league forward, and despite having a global pandemic dropped on them in the middle of his time at the helm, he couldn't be happier with what they have accomplished in the past six years.

Inspired by the vision that the American Association could be bigger than it once was, Schaub found that the goal of growing the league was shared by ownership groups including the Goldeyes' own Sam Katz.

Despite the already impressive growth and realization of that vision, it remains full speed ahead for the American Association, as they look to add more competition throughout the league in the form of expansion.

While not public just yet, Schaub did reveal that there are four markets that the league is in deep discussion with regarding league expansion. A major advantage in this process is knowing which markets should be targeted and why they could find success.

“We know we can survive in markets like Winnipeg, Fargo, Sioux City, Sioux Falls, and Lincoln,” he explained. “We also know that we can survive in the shadows of big-league teams.”

Expansion as a geographical discussion is one thing, but the fiscal responsibility behind it is even more important. The league has turned the existing expansion model on its head, going away from the practice of building a venue before finding a team that would play there.

“We're flipping that and actually picking the markets we want to go to [before the stadium is built]. We're going to bring in the construction, development, and professional baseball team at the same time.”

The assurance of the team and building creates a better environment for success and can bring baseball back to markets that may initially have been ruled out elsewhere for professional baseball.

Expansion isn't the only way the league is growing, as they've had to keep up with the immense technological growth that has taken place in professional sports.

All American Association parks are now outfitted with Trackman technology, which help to provide accurate ball and player tracking data to teams and broadcasts. Following in the footsteps of Major League Baseball, they've joined that data revolution. “This is baseball in 2024. It's all about data,” Schaub said. “In today's day and age, we can measure everything, and any data is good data. We're going to continue to embrace technology, especially if it enhances both the fan and player experience about playing in the American Association.”

The usage of data isn't the only thing the American Association shares with MLB. In 2020, the American Association was named an MLB Partner League, allowing for teams to better market their product on the field

and to benefit players when looking for affiliated opportunities.

Being a member of the Partner League also assists in growing the game off the field, something the Goldeyes have played a key role in over the past several years.

Play Ball Weekend is an initiative meant to inspire participation in baseball among youth.

The Goldeyes have been at the forefront of these efforts, first travelling to Thompson in 2023, then

to Flin Flon and The Pas this season to put on baseball clinics with players and staff.

This season, Goldeyes pitchers Nick Trogrlic-iverson and Grant Townsend made the tripart helped to make this year another memorable experience for everyone involved.

“Truthfully, next [MLB] winter meetings, Winnipeg will get the podium,” Schaub said. “The Goldeyes are going to have a light shone on them here because of those efforts to bring baseball to farther communities that wouldn't normally get those experiences, especially interacting with professional athletes.”

With Play Ball Weekend being

such a success, along with the on-field product being exciting, Schaub sees Winnipeg as a true workhorse in the American Association.

The biggest point of emphasis, however, comes in the form of the amazing fan support.

“I just want to thank Goldeyes fans for their continued support,” he said. “It should be noted that the Winnipeg broadcasts have yielded the highest viewership of any broadcasts in the league. Some of the most hardcore fans we have in the American Association are in Winnipeg.”



**We're going to continue to embrace technology, especially if it enhances both the fan and player experience**

American Association Commissioner Joshua Schaub

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