

# American Legion Post #199 Celebrates Baseball Team's Return

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**EDWARDSVILLE** - The baseball team of American Legion Post #199 wrapped up their first season back on the field after a hiatus following their coach's death.

Nick Steele, who restarted the team this year under the name "Blacksox," is looking forward to rebuilding the program in coming years while honoring the man who started it. He hopes the kids who played this season have enjoyed Legion Baseball as an alternative to high school or travel ball, all while giving back to local veterans.

“As a Legion, we represent veterans,” Coach Steele said. “And to have the boys come out and show the gentlemen respect, be a part of the Legion, it breathes life back into the local Legion...Those kids are going to be a part of the Legion growing up.”

[American Legion Baseball](#) is a major tradition in the organization. Steele said he was excited to restart the program at Post #199 because it’s affordable and fun for kids who “have the passion and want to put in the work.” He added that the coaching, competition and exposure is comparable to a high school or travel team, but at a better price. This year, junior league players ranged from ages 13–17, and the senior league welcomed players aged 17–19.

Post #199’s baseball team wouldn’t exist without the late Coach Ken Schaake. Schaake coached the team for almost 40 years and had [a long list of accomplishments](#). The Ken Schaake Memorial Golf Scramble takes place every May to honor his memory and raise money for the team.

“I’m definitely not trying to take place, because no one could ever take that man’s place,” Steele explained. “A lot of our coaching staff actually played under Coach Schaake his last few years as the legion manager. We’re trying to keep that tradition alive and rebuild that tradition within the program.”

For Steele, that tradition is built on passion and respect. He has spent 26 years and counting in the Army; his military duties, on top of a full-time job, meant he had to move “a mile a minute” to restart the program. But as he reflects on the season, he knows it was worth it.

“I want to give back to my city,” Steele said. “Being able to give back to the community and working on getting the community — not only of Edwardsville, but Collinsville, Bethalto, all the surrounding Metro East locales — back and involved in Legion Baseball is important to me.”

The response they received has only added to Steele’s devotion. In addition to their regular players, outfielder Nicholas Bobinski-Boyd explained that the team picks up a few extra players every game; they invite anyone who wants to join in, and there are always a lot of kids who are eager to play.

“It’s just a good environment,” Bobinski-Boyd said, adding, “We had these 14-year-old kids playing with us, and they weren’t too bad, really.”

Moving forward, the Blacksox are looking forward to building on this season’s momentum. The Post #199 team racked up several wins in previous years, and Steele plans to get his players to that level while feeding their love for the sport.

“It’s absolutely a passion for all of them,” Steele said. “It’s something that we care a great deal about, bringing this program back up to the glory that it once was. Our goal within the next five to ten years is to go to nationals again and try to win another national championship for the city and for the surrounding area.”

Tryouts for the 2024 season will be held on July 28 and 31 in Edwardsville; click [here](#) for more information. To learn more about Post #199’s baseball team, visit [their website](#).

