

August 15, 2013

Dear RBI Members:

When Coach Graham asked me to help with this organization last January I knew that some donors wanted assurances that RBI funds were being handled appropriately and other donors were concerned about staff changes in the baseball offices. To address these concerns I recruited a diverse group of individuals who love Rice baseball as much as I do to form the new RBI Board. Sarah Longpre, Stephen Reckling, Bob Schlanger, Sandy Benak, Austin Davis, Will McDaniel and Jay Bluthardt all graciously agreed to help provide transparency and accountability in our budget and to assist in charting a new course for the RBI Club. I am writing you today to inform you of our financial situation, tell you about the plans for the coming year, and most importantly offer you my heartfelt thanks for continuing to support our players over the past year.

The Budget

Our board has worked with Coach Graham to place Rice baseball on solid financial ground. Coach Graham decides where RBI funds are spent, but he consults with the board before he releases the funds. The consultation is only a courtesy, but thus far we have not disagreed once. By working with the administration, we were able to help them understand the unique needs of Rice's most successful sport. We argued for our cause, bargained in good faith, and built a good relationship with the administration in the process. No matter who the next Athletic Director is, you can expect more of the same from us on that score. The baseball budget saw significant changes for the better as the Athletic Department produced a more realistic budget and then helped cover the deficits created by road trips to Hawaii and Miami and a long run in the post-season.

We discovered that at Rice, the budget is only half the story. Sports interest groups like the RBI Club are asked to pick up where the budget leaves off. This involves a great deal more than feeding players on road trips. Even with the increased support from the athletic budget, Rice baseball cannot compete with the other top programs around the country without a successful RBI Club. We must ensure that our players are treated similarly to players at other top programs, and we must contribute to the preservation and enhancement of Reckling Park. By keeping our park among the finest college baseball facilities in the country, we provide a wonderful experience for our student athletes. This, in turn, allows us to continue to recruit players who give us a chance to host regionals and super regionals each year. That, in a nutshell, is what we do.

Financially we did pretty well this past year. RBI raised \$265,439 from July 2012 through July 2013. All of these funds have either been spent on the baseball program or

remain in our account for use next season or on interim projects. In the last year, the RBI club spent \$216,578. The major expenditures are broken down by percentage of the total amount spent in the chart that follows.

<u>Expense</u>	<u>% of Total Expenditures</u>
Regular Season Travel/upgrades/meals	43.6
Post Season Travel/upgrades/meals	9.8
Reckling Park Improvements	22.9
RBI Dinner and Gifts	11.8
Player items (Sunglasses and Championship rings)	5.4
Performance Bonuses	3.8

You should note that the improvements to Reckling Park included replacing the netting behind home plate, fixing the drainage problems in the right field bullpen and making upgrades to the home locker room. In addition, the remaining expenditures not reported above were small amounts used for equipment, training, rentals and office expenses.

The Events for The Coming Year

As Coach Graham indicated in his letter last month, the focus of our fundraising efforts is moving to the fall. The gifts you give to RBI this fall will keep your membership current until September 2014. In a few weeks, you will receive renewal information via email unless you prefer a hard copy. Just let us know at ricerbi@rice.edu or call Daniel Watson at 713 348-8864 if you would prefer a different contact method.

This year you will notice different donation levels and a corresponding set of benefits. Since we are no longer limited to asking for the minimum \$1,000 donations, although that amount will ensure you maintain the same benefits previously offered for your gift, we are going to give donors the option to participate at a higher level. If you can give more, we will gladly accept it, and we will offer you additional benefits with each donation plateau you achieve. In our informal discussions with many of you, it seems that the things you care most about are helping Rice baseball continue its success, making life a little bit easier for our student athletes, and having the chance to interact with our players and coaches. This fall we are trying out some new ideas in the hope that we can deliver a better overall experience to our donors.

The most important thing you can do is to renew your support next month. It is practically impossible to plan our budgetary needs without understanding our revenue stream, so we need you to give early. In addition, this will ensure your ability to take part in the activities RBI is hosting this fall like the Baseball Banquet.

In addition to renewing your membership, we hope that you will consider participating in our two fundraisers: bOWLMAHA and The Longball Classic. If you don't want to bowl or play golf, there are other ways to help including sponsorships and volunteering with the events. The dates and events are listed below so that you can mark your calendars now.

Fall RBI Calendar

Monday, September 30-Fall Ball starts!

Sunday, October 6- First Annual bOWLMAHA.

Bob Schlanger is the chair of this bowling fundraiser for Rice Baseball. We are strictly limited to 32 teams of four bowlers. A current Rice player or coach and a Rice legend will join each team to compete for gifts and prizes. The foursomes bid for the opportunity to draft their celebrity teammates. For more information, contact Daniel at 713 348-8864 or at ricerbi@rice.edu.

Sunday, October 13-Scrimmage with Sam Houston

Saturday, October 19- Scrimmage with Lamar

Saturday, November 2- (two events)

Noon- The Alumni Baseball Game

This biennial event moves to the fall to provide better weather and greater participation from our alumni who remain active in the game.

6:00 PM The Baseball Awards Banquet on the field at Reckling Park

This event replaces the Cohen House dinner of the past, and will involve a celebration of last year's team with awards given to players and donors as well as providing the members with an opportunity to meet next year's squad and hear from Coach Graham. In addition to the MVP award selected by the coaches, the players from last year will select the recipient of their most valuable teammate award, and RBI members will select their favorite Owl award. You will be asked to cast a ballot with your membership renewal, so start thinking now.

Tuesday, November 12- The Longball Classic

Stephen Reckling chairs the annual Golf Tournament fundraiser for Rice Baseball. The tournament is scheduled for the afternoon of November 12 at Wildcat Golf Club. Start getting those foursomes together now, as we will be limited to 144 players! For more information contact Daniel at 713 348-8864 or at ricerbi@rice.edu.

Sunday, February 9- "The Season is Finally Here" Pep Rally

The Sunday afternoon before the season starts, the RBI members, players and coaches will gather to hear Coach Graham and the players talk about the coming season and share some sweet treats as we get our guys ready to sweep Stanford the following week.

A BIG Thanks

Finally, I want to thank you for your support during a challenging year. Our faith in our young men was rewarded with a deep run into the tournament and the satisfaction of knowing that our donors helped make it possible. I want you to know that we all owe a debt of gratitude to our RBI Board members. You may not know all of these people, but I bet you know at least one of them. As donors, you should understand that we all share a common devotion to doing what is right by Rice Baseball and its donors. When you write that check to the RBI Club, you can rest assured that we are going to ensure the integrity of that gift.

The board, on behalf of the donors, made a commitment to Coach Graham and his team that we would remain their strongest allies. We have kept that faith. I want you all to know that during the past season we have heard thousands of "thanks" from our players who appreciate you and your donations in a way that makes us so proud to be a part of this organization. Our team knows that the RBI Club has their back. They saw members drop everything and fly to Oregon on short notice and then show up in Raleigh to root them on. Finally, when the team got off the bus for the last time in North Carolina, RBI members were there to greet every one of them and make sure that each coach and player knew how proud we were of their effort and how grateful we were that they were a part of our Rice Baseball family.

There is no question that the challenges for a group like RBI are many. We have worked really hard on our program and we are going to work even harder. We may not have as many alumni as Texas, but we have a spirit that the big schools will never have. Maybe it is a spirit that comes from being the little guy who demands a seat with the big boys and refuses to be told that we do not belong. Wayne Graham and Rice Baseball have figured out how to get that seat at the table, and your continued support of RBI ensures that we will stay there.

I look forward to seeing you all at Fall ball and at bOWLMAHA on October 6. As always, go Owls and to Rice be true!

Sincerely,

Greg Thielemann