



Shadowing the Legend of Bruce Gunter

...My years as GM for the Columbus Comets

1996

On October 1st, 1995, I signed a contract to become the General Manager of the Columbus Comets, in the offices of Anastasio Walsh Jr. at 9:17am. Mr. Walsh was you youngest team owner in the CIBL, having just passed his 37th birthday. I was 12 years his senior, yet I couldn't deny the butterflies in my stomach. Walsh was known as an understanding and charitable guy, but his Comets had just completed a 47-73 last place finish which had delivered a pink slip to the former GM.

A few hours later I was sitting in my office after being introduced to my staff, going over the teams current roster - a ramshackle of fill in players that reminded me of a thousand piece puzzle on the dining room table right after you dumped it out of the box. The first step was to build the frame.

I signed extensions for MR Luis Huerta and 3B Luis Alaniz totaling \$3 million. The image of me standing against a brick wall in front of a firing squad crossed my mind.

Glancing over the roster for the Omaha Thunderhead, I noticed 1B/OF Bruce Gunter, a 2nd year 24 year old who had hit .297 and 20 homeruns in the '95 campaign. Gunter appeared expendable since Omaha also had 29 year old 1B Herman Elliott who had posted a .334 batting average with 24 HRs. Three phone calls later, we had assembled a 3 player package for Gunter who was now a Comet. Little did I know that the guy I picked up on my first day of the job would become a legend.

Three players left through Free Agency and three players were signed (one of them MR Michael Maynard) and two more trades combined to complete my roster moves before Opening Day.

The '96 Campaign

The Continental Independent Baseball League was formed after the war and played its first season in 1947. It consisted then, and now of 18 teams, divided into the Northern, Southern, and Western Divisions. The schedule is 120 games long and runs from May 1st to September 9th.

The 1996 season progressed as follows... May 14-15, June 13-15, July 15-11, August 11-18, September 5-3, Total 58-62, 6th Place, 9 games behind.

What saved my job was that five teams in the league did worse than me. In the Southern Division I actually would have been in 4th! We actually won more games away(34-26 versus 24-36), probably because our home crowd was always booing us.

NORTHERN DIVISION

<i>Team</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>PCT</i>	<i>GB</i>
Indianapolis Guardians	67	53	.558	-
Hartford Warriors	63	57	.525	4
Ottawa Rapids	61	59	.508	6
Green Bay Mechanics	61	59	.508	6
Buffalo Freeze	59	61	.492	8
Columbus Comets	58	62	.483	9

SOUTHERN DIVISION

<i>Team</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>PCT</i>	<i>GB</i>
Nashville Grays	66	54	.550	-
Norfolk Dominion	62	58	.517	4
Birmingham Colonels	62	58	.517	4
Charlotte Monarchs	50	70	.417	16
New Orleans Bullfrogs	45	75	.375	21
Jacksonville Tritons	42	78	.350	24

WESTERN DIVISION

<i>Team</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>PCT</i>	<i>GB</i>	
Las Vegas Scorpions	81	39	.675	-	CIBL Champions
Albuquerque Spirits	72	48	.600	9	
El Paso Friars	71	49	.592	10	
Omaha Thunderhead	60	60	.500	21	
Boise Wranglers	57	63	.475	24	
Ok City Engineers	43	77	.358	38	



The highlight of the year, however, was the development of my first acquisition, Bruce Gunter. Gunter batted .337 and popped 37 Homeruns posting a VORP of 57.6. For his effort, he was awarded the July Batter of the Month Award.

Attendance dropped in 1996, but I managed to end the season with a \$3.9 million dollar profit which, in all honesty and when compared to the \$1.6 million profit from the previous GM, saved my ass from being fired.

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Victor Acosta
General Manager, Columbus Comets