

# On an Indian mission

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Nov. 16: There was no protective mask to guard the players from the hard ball which could smash their faces, nor were there enough bats or balls. And as the officials of the West Bengal Baseball Association would admit, there were definitely not enough sponsors.

But that did not deter the enthusiasts of a game. And their passion was reflected in the sizable crowd who cheered them on and wanted to know a bit more about the game that the Americans are passionate about.

The WBBA, along with American coaches Mr David Palusz and Mr Jeff Brueggeman, organised an exhibition baseball match between Uttarpara Baseball Club and Bhawaripur Baseball Club at the



Coach Mr David Palusz (left) and his colleague conducting a training session at Mohammedan Sporting Ground in Kolkata on Thursday. ■ SNS

Mohammedan Sporting ground here today. This was preceded by a two-day baseball clinic.

"Of all the countries we

have visited, I think India has the greatest potential to come out as a major baseball nation. Simply because the people here

can find so many similarities between baseball and cricket and also most of them speak English," said Mr Palusz, who

along with his colleagues, will be travelling throughout the country to promote the game.

Asked about the difference in reaction between Kolkata and Manipur - which was their first destination - Mr Palusz claimed "It's a huge difference. In Manipur, baseball is very popular and has become a way of life. They have the same level of interest as the Americans. There were about 200 kids at Imphal alone. While here, it still has to gain popularity."

Mr Palusz was looking forward to go to Goa, his next destination, as he believes that baseball is very popular there.

"We have not come here to force people to play the game. Anyone who is interested is welcome. And so far, the results have been more than satisfactory in India," he said.