

Publisher's Comments

A position in the softball community I hold with great pride is that of chairman of the Norwood Sorrento's Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame.

One reason I enjoy it so much is that for my money, no other softball community in America has anywhere near the legacy and rich history that the Greater Cincinnati area has. No other softball community can claim to have hosted the first ASA Men's and Women's National Tournaments. No other softball community can boast that the first slow pitch male player (Myron Rinehardt), female player (Alberta Kohls Sims), umpire (Ray Ernst) and manager (Commie Currens) inducted into the ASA National Softball Hall of Fame can call their community home. And no other softball community can boast that they have as many Men's and Women's Major Open slow pitch national championship teams. Nuff said.

Another reason our Hall of Fame is so special to me is the actual ceremony itself. Just rubbing elbows with stars of the past and present as well as all the other prominent individuals in our softball community for five hours each January is akin to dying and going to softball heaven. It's hard to imagine a more enjoyable time. Then to watch grown men and women break down and cry at the podium each year when they are overcome with emotion as they're being honored in the presence of their family and friends is a very moving and gratifying experience for me.

One thing that never ceases to amaze me about the Hall of Fame after watching over a hundred people being inducted over the last twenty-three years is that we are still able to find so many towering figures in the softball community to honor. And to this point, I would like to share a few thoughts about those individuals who are being inducted next year on January 25th.

The 2009 class includes Dan DeClaire, Dick Ernst, Jerry Fick, Marsha Friedhoff, Randy Lewis, and Dale Overmann. Every one of these individual's careers have been nothing short of legendary.

Dan DeClaire has sponsored softball teams through his insurance company, DeClaire Insurance, for thirty years. While no one keeps such records, the DeClaire team may embody the longest continually sponsored team not only in Greater Cincinnati, but in the entire country. The team has played in more than 4,000 games under the DeClaire sponsorship, which is most unusual considering the team's success hasn't been all that remarkable other than a pair of World Championships won in the Masters Program.

To put a price tag on the DeClaire sponsorship would be impossible, but we can get some idea of how much money the company has invested over the years knowing that the team competed in 138 leagues and some 570 tournaments. In today's dollars, that comes to about \$200,000 just in entry fees. Just figuring the distance between the team's hometown of Sardinia to Expressway Park in Milford, where they still play league ball,

the team would have driven a minimum of over a half a million miles over the years, burning up some 25,000 gallons of gas.

The team has been ambassadors for their sponsor and the Greater Cincinnati area everywhere they've travelled. And Dan DeClaire will proudly share the limelight with a plethora of former team members when he is inducted into the Hall of Fame in January.

When he is inducted, Dick Ernst will become part of only the second father-son tandem to enter the Hall of Fame. Dick's father, Ray, was the author of the first ASA and USSSA slow pitch rule book, an inestimable contribution to the game that obviously can never be duplicated. Ray is a member of the ASA National Hall of Fame, and the Most Valuable Player award for the USSSA Men's "A" World Tournament is named after him.

Strangely, Dick never picked up a softball ball or glove until he was 55, when he began to excel in the senior program. He has now captured five national titles and been named to ten all-American teams during his 21-year career, and was inducted into the Senior Softball Hall of Fame in 1996. Dick has also played a singular role in the growth and popularity of senior softball in Greater Cincinnati as a league and tournament organizer.

Also of interest is the fact that Dick played both football and baseball at Ohio State. On the football team, he backed up a pair of Heisman Trophy winners, Vic Janowitz and Hopalong Cassidy. He was also a member of Woody Hayes' first Ohio State football team. As captain of the baseball team, Dick was second in the Big Ten in hitting his senior year, and played briefly in the minor leagues in the Cleveland Indian organization. Who knows what might have transpired had Dick not delayed pursuing a professional baseball career to serve his country in the Navy.

Jerry Fick's name has been synonymous with umpiring in the Greater Cincinnati for forty years, the last twenty of which his administrative and training skills have taken him across the country and around the world. Early on in his career, Fick served as a workhorse for Queen City Umpires, eventually leading to assignments in the ASA Men's Major and Super Major National Championships and the U. S. Olympic Festival. He was appointed ASA Cincinnati Metro Umpire-In-Chief in 1979, then was promoted to Midwest Region U-I-C in 2002. His most unforgettable assignments have come over the last three years, when he was sent overseas to teach umpires and work with administrators for the U. S. Military in Germany and Italy in 2006. Then in 2008 he served as U-I-C for the ASA's two largest National Championships ever held.

Fick has attended fifteen National Umpire Clinics, served as National U-I-C in twenty National Championships, served as instructor for over twenty National Umpire Schools, and conducted clinics in eighteen states. His annual Metro clinic is the longest running in the nation with an ASA national staff member serving as a clinician. He was inducted into the Ohio High School Athletic Association Officials Hall of Fame in 1995.

Unlike Dick Ernst, who didn't start playing softball until he was 55, Marsha Friedhoff's career experienced quite a different twist. Friedhoff, who began playing softball in the

6th grade, retired when she was only 22 with two national championships to her credit. While only an 8th grader, she played in the first-ever ASA National Tournament with Rutenschroer Florist in 1961, then in 1962 helped lead Rutenschroer to a runner-up finish in the nationals. In 1965 she moved to another women's national powerhouse, Dana Gardens, for a three-year stint in which Dana finished 4th, 1st and 2nd in the national tournament. Her final two seasons were spent with Escue Pontiac, including 1968, when Escue captured a national title in Cincinnati. In both the 1966 and 1968 nationals, Friedhoff's teams came out of the losers' bracket to win the tournament, and Friedhoff recorded the final out in each event.

Interestingly, after an hiatus of almost forty years, Friedhoff resumed her softball career by competing in the senior program in 2008.

Like those of Dick Ernst and Marsha Friedhoff, Randy Lewis' career was relatively brief, especially at the upper level. That's what makes his accomplishments all the more amazing. After eight years spent mostly with area "B" teams, Lewis experienced his breakout year in 1993 with Watanabe Optical. And while Lewis was a newcomer to "Major Open," play, it didn't curtail his momentum towards becoming the area's most prolific home run hitter. Lewis went yard 139 times in '93, exceeding his previous high of 122, and led Watanabe to an ASA National Championship. He was named to his second Men's "Major" All-City team and also the Men's "Major" Rookie of the Year.

Lewis' phenomenal power-hitting ability was just getting warmed up. In 1994 he clubbed 149 home runs, leading both area Major Leagues in that category, and was named Greater Cincinnati "Player of the Year." The numbers finally peaked in 1997, when he tallied 160 homers. Perhaps his most memorable season came in 1998, when he led Watanabe to a "Major" Metro crown, and was named Metro MVP and "Player of the Year" for the second time in his career.

Lewis retired from the game following the 1999 season, but the honors just kept rolling in, as he was named to the All-Decade team for the nineties, the "Player of the Decade," and to the "All-Century Team."

Like Dick Ernst, Dale Overmann's involvement with sports was curtailed by his service in the U. S. military. And like Randy Lewis, Overmann's career at the top level of play was relatively brief. But his success representing the U. S. Army on the All-Service team, competing with Northern Kentucky power Universal Insurance, and later in the Masters and Senior divisions, has clearly earned Overmann the honor of joining the other great softball players of the area in the Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame.

After playing college basketball at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga, Overmann entered the Army and soon found himself organizing basketball and softball leagues for his battalion at Ft. Benning, Ga. After leading his team to the post championship, he earned a position on the "All-Army" team, and went on to lead the Army over the Navy, Air Force and Marines in the "Inner Service Tournament." That landed Overmann a spot on the "All-Service Team," which received an automatic berth to the ASA Major Open

National Tournament in Parma, Oh. in 1972. It was Overmann's first taste of "big time softball."

After being discharged from the service, Overmann was "discovered" playing league ball by Northern Kentucky power Universal Insurance in 1976, and he soon got his first exposure to top-notch softball in Greater Cincinnati. Overmann starred for Universal for four years, leading them to multiple league titles, a USSSA Central Division "A" World Title, and a berth to the USSSA World Series. He was named Most Valuable Player in the prestigious Ohio Valley Classic in 1979, his final year competing at the "A" level.

The next year Overmann turned 35, and he took the occasion to launch a long and illustrious career in the Masters and Senior programs. His Newport Steel team won several state championships in the 35-over division. In 1999 he became eligible for the Senior division, and joined softball legends Bruce Meade and Mike Nye with Florida Crush, which won three national championships that year. Overmann then wrapped up his career with Joseph Chevrolet of Cincinnati, helping them to capture several national titles.

Congratulations to these distinguished members of our softball community, whose extraordinary careers have contributed so much to our rich softball heritage in Greater Cincinnati.

In My Opinion by Ron Jeffers

The use of the re-play cameras in football, then basketball, and now finally in major league baseball is good in some ways. But as a fan, it seems to me to be over used in football, especially at the college level. Replay stops the game for far too long, and the last UC game I attended, and with the down time of television commercial time outs, and the officials with their head in the re-play both, it was going on eleven o'clock before I left the stadium. It actually made a great game far too long and boring.

The most important thing always is to get the call right, but in baseball they seem to have it all screwed up. Surprise, surprise, surprise! This years World Series had five plays I personally witnessed that were clearly missed by the umpire crew, but could not be checked on re-play in slow motion by the multitude of cameras, because these plays were not allowed to be rechecked for umpire error.

Professional baseball is slow to adopt any rule change or do anything different than they have been doing for a hundred years. It was no surprise to me that professional baseball was the last major sport to adopt re-play. Baseball still will only use re-play on foul ball plays or to determine if the ball went over the outfield fence or wall.

When the major league baseball umpires use re-play they have to all leave the field to a room under the stadium where they call New York for help. Someone in an office in New York then looks at the play in question on their television monitors, and they tell the umpires how and what to rule on the play.

In the NFL, the teams get a limited number of times they can appeal the decisions made on the field by the officiating crew, and if the appealing coach is found to be wrong, they lose any further chance to appeal that half. In college ball they seem to use re-play at the discretion of the referee. The final decision is reached by the referee calling for assistance of an official in the press box who has the use of the television re-play cameras. In both college and professional football the re-play decision is made with the assistance of an official on sight in the press box, and it is done quite quickly, even though it doesn't seem like it if you are sitting in the stands.

Major league baseball takes all four or six umpires off the field to a room under the stadium, where they call the New York office for help. Wouldn't you know baseball couldn't make this as simple as basketball or football, and their umpires will only call for help on plays where the foul pole or outfield fence are in question?

No calls to New York are allowed on force plays, trapped balls, fielders coming off the base, dropped balls, balls and strikes, running out of the base line, interference or the multitude of other calls that the umpires must make instantly in every game. This is ridiculous.

Baseball could have a telephone or every backstop where the umpire-in-chief could call an umpire in the press box. With the assistance of a television monitor to see every call re-played in slow motion, and from every angle, they could get far more of the important calls right. Each team could get a set number of calls they would be allowed to challenge in each game, and a quick call by the umpire-in-chief to the press box could get the call either overturned or confirmed very quickly. The game could resume with only a slight delay, and calls that we fans at home already know were blown, because of the wonders of television, could be made right. The umpires could have the same advantage we have to see each controversial call in slow motion and from many different angles.

This simple procedure could happen in every major league game very easily by next season, but it won't. This would require the approval of the major league baseball team owners, the players' association, and the major league baseball umpires association, and this will never happen. These three groups could not agree that Sunday follows Saturday.

Major League Baseball is slow to change, and it took a coach getting hit in the head with a batted ball to get them to require helmets. Does this sound like the powers to be of the Amateur Softball Association?

Well, this again is my opinion. What is yours?

What's Your Gripe? By Ron Jeffers

Q. Ron, this play happened in the ASA National Tournament last month. Our team had a runner on 1st base with n outs. The batter hit a grounder to the 2nd baseman, who tagged the runner attempting to advance from 1st with with glove,

but the ball was in his other hand. The umpire called the runner out. The 2nd baseman then attempted to throw the batter out at 1st, but threw wildly into foul territory down the right field line. The batter attempted to take 3rd on the throw, but was thrown out. We appealed that the 2nd baseman did not have the ball in his glove when he attempted to tag out the runner going to 2nd. The umpire agreed, but let stand the call at 3rd. That didn't seem fair the wrong call by the umpire resulted in the batter being put into jeopardy. Did the two umpires screw this one up?

A. This is not an appeal play. The base umpire responsible for 2nd base should have yelled "NO TAG," and signaled safe as soon as the attempted tag was made. He screwed this whole play up by calling the runner out. The ball should remain alive, and the runner going into third would be out, but since this was all the fault of the umpires, I would call it umpire error, and use the correctable error rule. Put the batter on first and the runner who had started on first base would get second base.

When ASA put this correctable error rule in the rule book, I was opposed to it, but I did not speak up at the time. I now believe it is a good rule to fix situations that some umpires screw up.

All we had before the inception of this correctable error rule was the rule where one of the teams had to tell the plate umpire they wanted to play the game under protest, and that can never be allowed for judgment calls by the umpires. You can only protest plays where the umpire misapplies a playing rule, and you have to announce it to the plate umpire before the next pitch. This is seldom ever done, because the managers of the teams do not know the rules of the game.

Q. Ron, with the world series and playoff games going on, I was wondering how the umpires are chosen, and who decides what base they are going to be responsible for?

A. I am not certain how the commissioner of baseball makes his selection of the umpires, but years ago when I was umpiring, no umpire in his first two years of working in the major leagues was considered. The umpires working in their third were in the selection pool to work the all star game, the playoff series and the world series.

The Major League umpires are working under a one year contract, and their pay is for a 162 game schedule. The umpires who work spring training are hired by the teams, and these umpires are a combination of some major league umpires and some minor league umpires. The world series, playoff and world series games are paid in addition to the umpires regular season salary.

In the all star, playoff and world series games they use six umpires per game, and the crew chief is assigned to work home plate. When there is more than one game, the umpires rotate after each game from home plate, to third base, to second base, to first

base, and then to the two outfield line positions. That way if the series goes to seven games the crew chief will work the final championship game at home plate.

Umpires as a rule do not get but one of these assignments each year, and the commissioner of baseball decides who is going to work any of these games. Again the umpires are paid extra for these games, and they are paid the same if the series goes four games or seven games. The major league umpires work together as a crew until the all star game, then they are assigned to work with three different umpires for the remainder of the regular season.

You now know more about the inner workings of the major league umpires than any of the talking heads that do the television and radio broadcasts.

Q. This question or comment comes from my wife, and I must first tell you that when she goes to a Reds game with me, I ask her on the way back to the car, “what were the names of the two teams,” “what was the final score,” and “who won the game?” If she answers one question correctly she gets to pick the restaurant for the evening.

Although she virtually knows nothing about sports, she gets furious when she goes to any of our grandchildren’ games and some child never gets off the bench. It doesn’t have to be one of ours, but it has happened a few times with one of our loved ones too. She recently asked me to write my article about these coaches who think winning a game is more important than the feelings of the child who comes to every practice and attends every game, but has to sit on the bench and watch their classmates play, but they have to remain on the bench to root for the other kids.

All I can tell her is some coaches think they are coaching in the big leagues, and winning for them is everything. the late Grantland Rice once wrote, “For when the great scorer comes to write behind your name, he cares not if you won or lost, but how you played the game.” I am very fortunate that my grandchildren play almost the entire game, but my heart too goes out for the child who does every thing that is asked of them, but they are not considered worthy of a few minutes of play even when the game is already won or lost.

I have friends who had children on the football teams at two of the big GCL schools, and they did not play a minute of their senior and final year. These schools had outstanding teams, and they won most of their games by huge scores, but they left their starters in the entire game to run the score up. This was more important to these coaches than the feelings of the kids who work their rear ends off every day, and they make all the sacrifices, but they are not allowed to play no matter what the margin of the score.

How can a kid practice all summer and all fall for a school they love, and yet the coach does not allow some kids to play one minute the entire year. I could not do this, and I can’t understand these coaches. Do these coaches not have any heart or compassion at all? They say they are doing all this for the kids. I think that is a bunch of bull. I think

the only person these coaches care about at all is themselves. How can you say you love these kids and not let them on the field for one second of a game the entire season. Love them my butt. I never gave this much thought until it happened to one of my grandchildren last year, and this child was not on a great or even a good team.

Coaching any sport or team is commendable, but with this comes the responsibility of having some compassion for the players who are always there when you need them. Every player needs to get in the game some time so they, too, can feel they truly were a part of the team. What difference does it really make if the score is 50-0 or if it is 50-21? Have a heart and let the kids on the bench play a little so they can truly feel they are a part of the team.

Playing sports in grade school, high school or college, at any level, should be a tremendous experience for every kid who is on his or her school team, but when they are never allowed to get in the game, no matter what the score, it is a humiliating experience that is so unnecessary. Sometimes it takes a bystander, like my wife, to give me a perspective on the game that has escaped me for sixty nine long years. I have always been so caught up in the officiating and the playing rules of the game that I lost the true meaning and the value of sports.

Q. I have noticed while watching the major league baseball playoffs and world series that when a fielder catches a ball that is in the stands, and in so doing he falls in to that area, the umpires do not award the base runners any extra bases. This past summer, while playing on my softball team, I caught a fly ball in foul ground near the dead ball area, and my momentum carried me into and across the imaginary line the umpire had declared to be the dead ball area. The umpire awarded each base runner an extra base. I can't remember if it was one or two bases, but I know he awarded each runner extra bases which cost us the game.

I know you oftentimes write about differences between baseball and softball rules. Is this one of those situations?

A. In baseball, if a fielder steps or slides into either dugout and catches a batted fly ball, the batter is out, but if a thrown ball is caught by a fielder after stepping into or sliding into that same dugout, it is a dead ball, and every base runner would be awarded two bases from the time of the throw.

In baseball they treat a batted ball caught while falling or running into the stands or dugout differently than they do a thrown ball. I can only assume your umpire called your play correctly since I do not know how many bases he awarded each runner.

In softball, it is a dead ball if you carry a batted or thrown ball into any dead ball area, and bases will always be awarded to every base runner.

This was great observation on your part, and a rule difference most people do not know exists.

Eggleston Park: New Ownership, New Name, New Energy

Colerain Township, Oh.--Two players from the men's major softball program and the owner of an Indiana Chevrolet dealership have purchased Eggleston Ball Park in Colerain Township.

Brian Wegman and Brett Helmer, members of the 2008 USSSA Men's Major World Series Champion Dan Smith/Menosse/Benfield/Combat, and Larry Broerman, owner of Broerman Chevrolet in Evansville, In., are the park's new owners.

Wegman, a Hamilton, OH, resident, and former Greater Cincinnati Player of the Year will be the managing partner.

Helmer, a 2007 inductee into the USSSA Hall of Fame, resides in Cicero, NY. He is the head of softball promotions for Easton Sports.

Wegman orchestrated the purchase, largely, he says, due to his "passion for the game.

"I also like the potential this complex has," says Wegman, the Defensive Most Valuable Player at this year's USSSA World Series. "As long as I've been playing softball, Eggleston Park has been my favorite place to play from an atmosphere standpoint.

"People are already coming to the park to play," he says. "My goal is to keep them coming back. Also, from a player's perspective, I have a few things I'd like to do with regard to the fields and other things to help the park reach it's potential."

Three things Wegman wants to stay the same at the park are its management, its atmosphere and its tournament program.

"My offer to the bank was contingent on retaining Dave Maury as park director," says Wegman. "He has eight years experience running Eggleston Park, and I have not heard any negatives in dealing with him. His knowledge of Cincinnati softball is respected by all the owners involved."

Wegman says the atmosphere at Eggleston is "like no other.

"Maybe it's the trees, maybe it's the bar, maybe it's the deck, but when you play on field one there on league nights, it's the same feeling you get playing on field number six during the Metro at Rumpke," says Wegman.

Wegman says that when Jeff Wallace, a member of the 2008 Resmondo/Worth team that captured the USSSA Men's Major NIT at Eggleston last July, found out that Wegman might be purchasing the park, Wallace commented that "there's not a person who doesn't love playing at Eggleston during the Conference USSSA event held there."

The Conference NIT will be the marquis event on Eggleston Park's tournament calendar once again in 2009, says Wegman. Most of the park's other events will remain intact, including the ASA Metro Tournament, USSSA events like the City Slam and several National Invitationals, and a variety of baseball tournaments.

Something that Wegman promises will be different are field conditions.

"We've met with the owner of Greenspan Sod Farms, and he's going to work with us to get grass in the outfield and eliminate the dirt spots," says Wegman. "In the infields, our goal is to mix Turface in with the dirt. It's a natural ground leveler that requires less maintenance and less time to dry out and overall provides a much smoother playing surface. Those transitions will start this off-season and will progress through the 2009 season. We want our fields to be another reason teams come to play at our park."

Park manager Dave Maury says Eggleston also has plans to improve on its already celebrated reputation for atmosphere.

"There will be more opportunities for teams to take advantage of our bar with team meetings and fund raisers, and there will be monthly events at the bar to help us stay in touch with the ball players and teams and to keep them in the loop on what is going on at the park," explains Maury. "We're also going to have a more user friendly website, and we intend to open a small pro shop for equipment and accessories, although it may not be done in time for next season."

Wegman says the park's overall goal is "to make sure that every time the players walk into the park that they're proud to be playing there."

Maury says Eggleston is currently "conducting business as usual" and is already booking leagues for 2009.

"Our tournament program will be announced in mid or late-November," says Maury.

For additional information, contact Eggleston Park at 513-385-5304, or email dmaury14@aol.com.

Amrein, "Friendly Staff" Revitalize Burgeoning Rivershore Sports Complex

There's an old adage that goes like this: "Choose a job you love and you'll never work a day in your life."

That quote, which is attributed to the ancient Chinese teacher and philosopher Confucius, perhaps best describes Patty Amrein's five years managing Rivershore Sports Complex in Hebron, Ky.

Her journey there, and the success she's made of the park, are stories about following one's dreams, defying the odds, rags to riches, and pure determination.

Born in Marietta, Oh., Amrein grew up in southern Kentucky on Dale Hollow Lake, where her parents own and operate Hendricks Creek Resort. After moving to Canton in the early eighties, she fell in love with umpiring softball. That love would eventually bring her to Cincinnati.

In 1985 Amrein attended the Amateur Softball Association's "All-American Umpire School," which was started and run by then ASA Deputy Umpire-In-Chief Ron Jeffers of Cincinnati.

"At the time, I could only get a couple games (umpire assignments) a week in Canton," recalls Amrein. "Mr. Jeffers told us that if any umpires from the school wanted to come to Cincinnati, he'd make sure they got games. And games I got."

A year later, Amrein took on the responsibility of developing the ASA's fastpitch program for the Cincinnati Metro area.

She would prove to be the perfect choice.

"In 1986 I started the youth fastpitch program with six teams because of my contacts with high school coaches," she remembers. "I went to the Cincinnati Recreation Commission and said I needed a field, and that's the way it all started."

CRC hired Amrein in 1987, and within seven years she had built the program to about 150 teams. During that time, in 1992, she started a tournament that would launch her into the national limelight. It was called "Slugger Fest."

"It began as a fundraiser for the Cincinnati Sluggers, the first girls traveling fastpitch team in the area," she says. "We held it at Schmidt and had fifteen teams the first year. Over the last seventeen years, we've had as many as 223 teams in the tournament."

Slugger Fest evolved into a four weekend showcase event with anywhere from 45-60 teams participating in each age group, and attracted as many as 75 college coaches.

The Cincinnati Sluggers disbanded in 1995, but Amrein has kept the event going "because of my goal of helping youth athletics and giving them opportunities at the local level," Amrein explains. "Quite a few kids have received scholarships over the past seventeen years, which is why I continue to run the tournament."

In the late nineties, CRC's Athletic Department downsized and Amrein found herself without a job. She continued to meet demands for league ball for area fastpitch teams by renting fields and operating leagues, then in 2001 she took a job managing Riverfront West in Miamitown. She quickly distinguished herself there, and in 2004 when Wessel

Sports leased Rivershore Sports Complex in Hebron, Amrein was offered the job of park manager.

“I walked into it as green as they come, looking at a six diamond complex, and fell in love with it,” she says.

Drawing upon her own experience at Riverfront West, and with the help and guidance of Wessel Sports owner Jim Wessel and fellow Wessel employees Dave Maury, Stephanie Sebastyn and Bill Chard, Amrein proved up to the challenge of managing Kentucky's largest private softball complex.

She soon found that running the park became more of a labor of love than a job.

“It's not really been a job,” she stresses. “You can't call something you love a job.”

Amrein began growing the park's league and tournament program for the next two and a half years, then disaster struck in the middle of 2006 when a new lessee took over the park from Wessel Sports.

“The lease was sold in mid-season,” recalls Amrein. “Within a few days I realized I wasn't wanted at the park.”

With Amrein out of the picture, operations at Rivershore deteriorated quickly, and the park was closed in early September.

“From what I understand, there were issues not dealt with appropriately, leaving somewhat of a 'sour taste' with most teams,” says Amrein.

Amrein's future was in limbo for the next several months, then near the end of 2006, she got a call from park owner Doug Noll with an early Christmas present.

“I found out the Friday before Christmas that I'd be running the park again in 2007,” she says.

The next year was “worse than starting over,” says Amrein.

“It was a rough year...very rough. I didn't know I was going to run the park until late December. By then all the league information and tournament schedules were late going out. I'm sure we lost a lot of teams who didn't know what was going on at the park.”

The situation was further complicated because “a lot of teams didn't want to come back to the park because of the way things were handled by the new management the last half of the previous season. Luckily, I had built a good rapport and reputation with them.

“I had to regain the teams' trust,” she says. “And a lot of them did come back because I was there and they knew I would try to take care of them.”

Amrein says that first spring back at the park was a struggle. The park was actually shut down one night of the week during the summer session with no league play. But the fall season picked up and she saw a ray of hope as the season drew to a close.

“Heading into the end of last year, we knew we were going to be at the park again in 2008, so we were able to get things out to the teams in a more timely fashion,” she says.

Amrein's optimism proved well-founded.

“Our season went well this year. In 2007 we had 92 teams in our spring season, 110 in summer and 52 in fall. This year, we had 154 teams for spring, 196 for summer and 62 for fall,” she says.

The tournament program experienced a similar surge, as Rivershore focused on the youth baseball and fastpitch market.

“We were closed two or three weekends each month because we didn't have enough teams to run our events in 2007. But this past year, we were only closed on the 4th of July and Labor Day weekends,” says Amrein.

The increases resulted in Rivershore's gate more than doubling from the previous season.

Service, a dedicated staff, and a family atmosphere are just some of the factors that have helped drive Rivershore's success, says Amrein.

“Teams that come to our park know that our motto is 'our team is here to serve your team.' I have a great, friendly staff behind me. We deal with issues that come up in a professional manner. Customer service is the key to our business. We deliver what we promise, and we're honest with the teams,” says Amrein.

Being visible has also been important, she says.

“When teams walk into a lot of parks, they know they are going to see a manager. Being there and being seen and knowing that you care about the teams and coaches pays off and goes a long way,” she adds. “We get to know the teams and have fun with them.

“Also at Rivershore, it's like a big family, and we have a lot of family teams. This year I've noticed more people bringing their wives and children to the park. We keep the concession prices reasonable so dad can afford to bring his family,” she says.

“We also keep the park neat and clean, and we don't allow any cursing or fighting. Tempers can get out of control,” acknowledges Amrein, “but this year we haven't had to call the police because people know we don't tolerate that kind of behavior at the park because there are children running around.”

But the real key, maintains Amrein, is the park's staff.

“It's not just me that's running the park. It's the whole team behind me, from the assistant manager to the grounds crew to the kitchen staff and gate people. And if we hire someone, they come in the ‘w-i-n’ position - ‘wherever I’m needed,’” she says.

“We try to have a good attitude with our staff, and when you treat people right, and they work well for you.”

Amrein says running Rivershore “has been fun” because of the trust the Noll family has placed in her.

“They said 'here's the keys. Do what you think is best for the park.' That gave me a lot of confidence. I'm not without fault, but by the same token, it's been challenging and it's been fun.”

What does Amrein love so much about the park?

“It's out in the country, and on the water like where I grew up at Dale Hollow Lake,” she explains. “And it's so peaceful. At night you can listen to the critters and see the lights reflect on the water. It's a great layout, and as the park grows, there's room for expansion if we want to add more fields. We plan to add flag football next fall. There's so much potential.”

Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall Of Fame Profiles...

DeClaire Insurance Sponsorship Spanned Three Decades, Boasts Two USSSA Masters Titles

Unlike virtually every other softball sponsor of any renown, DeClaire Insurance will not be remembered for their success on the field, but for their longevity and character.

Believed to be the longest continually sponsored team in the Greater Cincinnati area, the sponsorship has spanned three decades, beginning in 1979. The team's 2,450-1,259 won-lost record and 3,709 games played may be unsurpassed in slow pitch softball.

Getting involved in softball was just the natural thing to do when Dan DeClaire first put on his spikes in the mid seventies.

“Back in the sixties and seventies when I started, that was the thing everybody did, especially if you were a baseball player,” recalls DeClaire. “It was kind of the local thing to do. Slow pitch was a sport that was moving up. You were still looking for competition if you grew up playing high school sports.”

DeClaire says that after a few years of playing with other teams, he found himself sponsoring and managing his own team in 1979.

“We got involved with a new bunch of players and needed a sponsor,” he says. “Early on it was low budget, then it grew over the years.”

After playing primarily in Clermont, Brown, Highland and Adams counties for a few years, DeClaire began to look towards Cincinnati for stronger competition, especially when the complex boom of the early eighties struck on the east side of Cincinnati.

“First we played at Riverstar, then we played at Expressway when it opened up,” remembers DeClaire.

After competing at the USSSA “C” level initially, the team made the move to USSSA “B” and ASA “A.” From 1980 through 1995, they recorded an 1,865-996 won-lost record, averaging 116 wins for sixteen seasons. The team began to travel extensively to play in USSSA “B” NIT’s, especially in 1994- ‘95 when they played in 14 and 12, respectively. DeClaire’s teams were consistently ranked in the top ten both in Greater Cincinnati and Ohio.

In 1987, the DeClaire team began to dabble in the Masters’ program, which would ultimately ensure the future of the team indefinitely. DeClaire won the first of seven Ohio USSSA 35-over State Championships in 1987, and eventually would record four ASA 35-over state titles, then four U-Trip 40-over state championships. They won the USSSA 35-over World in 1997, and the 40-over World in 2000. The team is still active in league play and in the senior program.

Through 2008, DeClaire Insurance had competed in 138 leagues and over 570 tournaments.

DeClaire acknowledges that his team’s 35-over World Championship was “one of the bigger wins of the DeClaire Insurance era,” but says he treasures his experiences playing at the USSSA “B” level more than anything else.

“After some 4,000-plus games, you always go back to how you did in bigger events, and the highlight for me was when we went to the ‘B’ NIT’s and we qualified for the ‘B’ world a couple of years in a row. It was hard to the World back then because there were lots of teams in those NIT’s.”

While most tournament team sponsors either fail and throw in the towel or get their fill and push back from the table, the DeClaire Insurance team has enjoyed a legacy of that has lasted for three decades. Being ambassadors for his company has made the difference, says DeClaire.

“At whatever level they’ve played and wherever they’ve played, I feel they’ve earned the respect of the other teams and represented our sponsorship well,” he says. “It hasn’t just been about winning and losing. I think most teams would say they’ve been pretty good guys.”

“I don’t mind sponsoring who got along pretty well and who represent you well,” he continues. “It was always my hobby as long as I managed the team. But now I’ve been out of it for eight or nine years, and some of the same guys are still on our masters’ team. And over the years a lot of them have been customers of DeClaire Insurance.”

Would DeClaire have done anything different over the last thirty years if he had it to do all over again?

“For my dollar and for my peace of mind, I wouldn’t have changed much of the way we did things,” he says. “We had an awfully good time.

“My time in softball was not always the most successful, but it was always very enjoyable,” he says. “Since I retired, I’ve missed seeing our players and opponents. But I feel I’ve left softball with tons of friends and I always enjoy seeing them around town. I loved every minute I was involved in softball, and would hope that in years to come, DeClaire Insurance softball will be remembered as one of the teams of the eighties and nineties when softball is discussed.”

DeClaire’s sponsorship will be immortalized in January when he is inducted into the Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame in January.

“Being recognized as one of the best at what you do is special,” he says. “I’ve been to several inductions and it’s a ‘who’s who’ of Cincinnati softball. It’s nice to be one of those people that when they talk about Cincinnati softball, they’ll talk about your team.

“It’s a real honor,” he says. “But really, it’s not about Dan DeClaire, but about DeClaire Insurance. The whole DeClaire softball deal. The whole bunch of players, like Mike Hanselman, the only guy who’s been with me since the team started. Guys like Greg Ballinger and Rory Orr and Dave Shiveley and guys who started with me way back when. It’s the whole package, not just Dan DeClaire.

“It’s a real honor and I really appreciate it.”

Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall Of Fame Profiles...

Five National Titles, Nine All-American Selections, Senior Hall Of Fame Induction Part Of Dick Ernst’s Legacy

When you’re 55 years old and have never picked up a softball glove and bat in your life, no one would expect you’d ever be elected to the Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame as a player.

But that’s what has happened to Richard Louis Ernst.

Ernst, the son of Ray Ernst - arguably one of the most influential men in the history of softball - will be inducted into the Sorrento’s Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame on Sunday, January 25th at the Radisson Hotel Cincinnati Riverfront in Covington.

On that date, Ernst will join his father, who authored the first ASA and USSSA slow pitch rule books, to become only the second father-son tandem to enter the Hall of Fame.

Former Greater Cincinnati Sports star Marty Monterosso joined his father, umpire Sam Monterosso, in the Hall in 2002.

No one could have forecast Dick Ernst's selection back in 1987 when Ernst was 55 years old. The winner of a dozen letters at Withrow High School had quit playing sports thirty years prior to that when he was released from the Cleveland Indians' minor league system.

Ernst's athletic skills were never a question. The captain of the 1950 Withrow Tigers' state championship baseball team played both baseball and football at Ohio State.

As a running back on the football team, he didn't have a chance of seeing much P. T.

"I backed up two Heisman Trophy winners, Vic Janowitz and Hopalong Cassidy," explains Ernst. "Cassidy beat me out as a freshman. I started my first game against Indiana but was injured, and Hopalong came in and made a name for himself. I wound up just helping out and mopping up, and he won the Heisman the year after I graduated in 1955."

Ernst does have one special memory of playing football for the Buckeyes.

"I played on Woody Hayes first football team," he says. "He came there in 1950."

While he was unable to distinguish himself playing football, baseball, however, was another matter. Ernst was captain of the baseball team his senior year and was second in the big ten in hitting.

"I had three offers to sign pro contracts, but I was obligated to military service and went to Norfolk Naval Station and played baseball after the captain found out I was a baseball player," says Ernst.

In 1956 Ernst was released from the service and he signed with the Cleveland Indians. But after playing in their farm system in Fargo, ND and Kekouk, IA, it became obvious to him that his baseball career was over.

"I didn't have a lot of success," he says. "The other players were 17 and I was 24 and I didn't fit in. So I came home and was employed by the Oak Hills School District. The Superintendent told me I'd be the first baseball coach at Oak Hills when it would open in 1959. Then I became their Athletic Director. I was 28 and the youngest A. D. in Hamilton County. I felt like a kid compared to the other A. D.'s"

Fast-forwarding thirty years, Ernst retired from the Oak Hills School District, setting the stage for a new chapter in his life.

“After I retired, a fellow who assisted me at Oak Hills named Johnny Miller contacted me and told me that Dunham Senior Center in Price Hill had a softball (55-over) team and asked me if I would play on the team. And the rest is history from that point on.”

That was in 1987. Two years later his Masters Twelve 55-over team captured the ASA National Championship, the first of five national titles. Ernst won the home run title and was named to the All-American team.

“Lloyd Smith got the team together, and we finished second in the first ever senior national championship in Alabama,” says Ernst. “Then the second year we won the tournament hands down. We really had a fine ball club which has stayed together and won several national championships.”

During his 21-year career, Ernst has been named to ten All-American teams in the 55-over, 60-over, 65-over and 70-over programs. He was inducted into the Senior Softball Hall of Fame in 1996.

Ernst says being a member of the area’s first national championship team and his induction into the Senior Softball Hall of Fame have been his greatest thrills in softball.

“Hall of Fame members Whitey Brown, Hal Wiggins and Early Berryman played on the team, and it was exciting to be playing in my first major softball tournament with these high quality players” says Ernst of winning his first national title. “Due to intermittent heavy rains, we played the quarter finals at 3 AM and then resumed at 9:30 AM in wet uniforms. Everyone was beat, but I was proud and happy to be a part of it. The championship made it special.”

Primarily a middle in-fielder, Ernst has compiled a lifetime batting average in the senior program of over .650. His primary strengths as a player have been his speed and his throwing arm, he says.

“I’ve been quicker than most athletes. I could juke a guy playing high school, and if I could get a step on him, I’d be gone. I could also steal bases and had a very strong throwing arm.”

On the local level, Ernst has been active in softball as a player coach and at the organizational level.

“After moving to Dillsboro, In., I was assisted by two friends - Ken Boatright and Joe Glascock - in starting a senior team in Harrison,” says Ernst. “The Whitewater Senior Center agreed to sponsor our team and for thirteen years beginning in 1992, I was player-coach. Our teams began an incredible run of success and compiled a record of 243 victories and 36 defeats.

“The thing I’m most proud of playing senior ball in the Whitewater program,” he continues, “is that we had a span from 2002 through part of 2004 when we won fifty-one straight games. We were finally beaten by Anderson for the regular season title, but we beat them in the tournament. They had about four players who are in the Hall of Fame.”

Ernst has won numerous league titles and league batting titles.

Ernst has also been active at the organizational level, serving as a league commissioner for over ten years. He is chairman of his league’s rules committee, which standardized an official rule book. In the fall of 2005, Ernst initiated Indoor Senior Softball at Champions Baseball Academy in Sharonville. The league has grown from four teams to eight, and has players ranging from ages 65 to 82. Ernst developed the playing rules for the league. Most recently he organized and serves as league director for a 75-over age group, which play at G. E. Park.

“I am proud of having played a small role in the growth and popularity of senior softball,” says Ernst. “Seniors now have the opportunity to enjoy softball, and the quality of play keeps improving.”

Looking back on his career, Ernst remarks that “beginning my softball career at age 56 has been a wonderful outlet for me, both mentally and physically. Competition motivates and stimulates me. Finding softball has elevated my quality of life. I have made lasting friendships, maintained good physical fitness and look forward to my tomorrows. Life is fun and meaningful. I am indeed fortunate.”

Ernst says he is “humbled and honored” by his election to the Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame as the first player from the Senior category, and calls it “one of the great thrills of my life for two reasons.

“First, I’ve always wanted to emulate my father in some way or another, because I admired him so much. His first love was softball, and I know he is smiling down. He accompanied me to many games and activities, but never saw me play softball. He would have been pleased that seniors are playing softball and are able to enhance and lengthen their lives with ‘his game.’

“Secondly,” says Ernst, “while I do not place myself in the same category as the many others who have previously selected, I am thrilled to be associated with players of that caliber.”

Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall Of Fame Profiles...

Jerry Fick Excelled As Both An Umpire And Administrator During 40-Year Career

It’s no secret that an umpire’s contributions to the game are usually overlooked.

So that makes it all the more special that Greater Cincinnati will celebrate the career of Metro Cincinnati Amateur Softball Association Umpire-In-Chief Jerry Fick next January when Fick will be inducted into the Norwood Sorrento's-Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame.

Few people in the history of area softball have been more instrumental in improving the game for both players and umpires.

And Fick's legacy extends far beyond the tri-state, as his expertise in training umpires has taken him not only around the country, but around the world.

Fick's career as an umpire began early and inconspicuously.

"I was only fourteen when I started umpiring youth games in Springfield Township, and somebody referred me to Ron Jeffers," he remembers. "He was training umpires for a youth league and I did that through high school."

Four years later Fick joined Queen City Umpires and became one of the groups many workhorse officials during softball's booming growth of the seventies and eighties.

"I umpired a lot of games when I was younger," recalls Fick.

Several years later as his skills improved, Fick began earning some prestigious assignments.

"I umpired my first national championship in 1979 in York, Pa.," says Fick. "It was the Men's Major slow pitch division."

Other notable events included the 1986 U. S. Olympic Festival in Houston, Tx., and the Super Major National Championship in Oklahoma City in 1989.

"I also umpired a lot of Metros and other tournaments around here along the way," he notes.

In the late eighties, Fick's career took a dramatic turnabout as he discovered that his strengths as an administrator and teacher were even stronger than those he possessed as an umpire.

"About 1989 I really stopped actually umpiring much softball other than here and there when I was needed," he says. "Since then I've devoted most of my time to the administrative end and helping Danney (ASA Cincinnati Metro Commissioner Danney Saylor) run the Metro and to training umpires. I've especially enjoyed the work I've done over the last twenty years training umpires."

As an umpire, Fick feels his strengths included "working a lot of games, keeping up with what was going on with the game and having a good understanding of the game."

While as an administrator, he believes the keys to his success have been “my ability to train umpires and to handle some of the larger tournaments the ASA has had.

“The experience I’ve had with the Metro made it very easy to be involved in very large tournaments with ASA,” says Fick.

Fick says that two things stand out as being the most rewarding moments of his career.

“The first thing was in 1979 when Ed Clott asked me to be the Cincinnati Metro Umpire-In-Chief,” he says. “But the real highlight of my career came in 2002 when I joined the ASA National Umpire Staff and I had the opportunity to train umpires from around the country and even overseas.”

Fick’s most memorable assignments came in 2006 and 2008.

“In 2006, I was assigned to teach umpires and work with administrators for the United States Military in Germany and Italy,” he says. “Those two one-week clinics were very rewarding.

“Then in 2008 I was the Umpire-In-Chief for the largest two tournaments ASA has ever held in terms of the number of teams. Those were the girls’ 16-under and girls’ 18-under fast pitch nationals. There were 144 teams in each tournament.”

Fick’s background also includes attending fifteen national umpire clinics in Oklahoma City, serving as Umpire-In-Chief for over twenty national championships, serving as instructor for over twenty ASA National Umpire Schools or Advanced Schools, and conducting clinics in eighteen states as well as in Europe.

The annual Metro umpire clinic Fick operates in Cincinnati is the longest running ASA clinic with a national staff member serving as a clinician each year in the country.

Fick has also worked as a basketball, volleyball, baseball and football official. He was a past-President of the Queen City Umpires, and a 1995 inductee into the Ohio High School Athletic Association Officials Hall of Fame.

A graduate of Greenhills High School and the University of Cincinnati, Fick was employed for thirty years at Standard Textile, where he was the Director of Human Resources. He and his wife Dee have been married for twenty years.

Fick says he is humbled and appreciative to be inducted into the Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame.

“I look at all the other umpires and the players and coaches and other people who have been involved in softball in Cincinnati, and it is very humbling,” he says. “Cincinnati is one of the real softball capitals of the world, and to be included with the people who are

already in the Hall of Fame, and who are going in this year, when you look at that roster, it is very humbling.

“I want to thank everybody associated with the Hall of Fame for all they do,” concludes Fick. “And all the people I’ve been able to work with in softball over the past forty years or so. I really owe a lot to them. If I had it to do all over again, I’d probably pretty much do the same thing.”

Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall Of Fame Profiles...

Marsha Friedhoff Played In First Ever Women’s National, Won ASA World Titles In 1966, ‘68

Talk about irony among the next Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame induction class, consider this.

One inductee, Dick Ernst, didn’t start playing softball until he was 55. Another, Marsha Del Friedhoff, retired at the age of 22.

What Friedhoff accomplished in nine years, however, is more than most softball players accomplish in a lifetime.

Marsha Friedhoff was introduced to the game when she was still in grade school.

“Delhi Junior High had a summer softball program for 6th graders, so I took advantage of that and it was my first exposure to organized ball,” remembers Friedhoff. “It became something that I would always like to do. Then in high school I played on an intermural team against other schools. Athletics for women were not as organized as they are now.”

In 1961 when she was still in grade school, Friedhoff’s skills caught the attention of National Hall of Fame manager Leroy Rutenschroer.

“I was just an 8th grader,” recalls Friedhoff. “I just made the minimum age requirement to play in the Cincinnati ASA leagues, which was 14. Rutenschroer was one of the best teams in the area along with Dana Gardens. Both were real powerhouses when it came to national tournaments.”

It just so happened that the commencement of Friedhoff’s career coincided with the institution of the first ASA Women’s National Tournament, which was held in Cincinnati in 1961. Friedhoff played in the event, and would go on to compete in the ASA Women’s Nationals every year until she retired except in 1964.

Rutenschroer finished second in the Nationals a year later, but in 1965 Friedhoff moved on to a three-year stint with Dana Gardens. Dana finished 4th in 1965, captured a national title in 1966 in Burlington, NC, and was runner-up in 1967.

Friedhoff spent the final two years of her career with Escue Pontiac, capturing her second national championship in 1968 in Cincinnati. And just as she had in 1966, Friedhoff recorded the final out of the tournament in 1968.

A lifetime .450 hitter, Friedhoff was known for hitting line shots over the infield. She was primarily a short-centerfielder, but also played 1st base and left field.

Her biggest strength wasn't her offensive or defensive skills, however, but her "desire to play.

"I always wanted to practice," she says. "I really looked forward to each game and had a high interest in taking part. There were so many more players who were more consistent than me as far as their hitting and fielding skills, but I never minded getting out there and practicing. The more the better. I felt that attitude really helped me along the way."

A runner-up finish with Rutenschroer and national championships in 1966 and '68 were the most rewarding accomplishments of her career, says Friedhoff.

"As I've been reflecting upon those years, I think one of the most rewarding things was when we came in 2nd in 1962 with Lee Rutenschroer," says Friedhoff. "We had a mediocre season, but ended up qualifying for the nationals and wound up coming in 2nd. I don't know what our record was that year, but I know we weren't expected to do that well.

"Then of course we went down to Burlington with Dana Gardens and Commie Currens and won the tournament in 1966, beating the defending champions, Art's Aces, 2-1 and 1-0 in the finals. We came out of the losers' bracket to do it. No team up to that point had ever come out of the losers' bracket to win the women's nationals. That was really exciting to do," she says.

"And in 1968 with Escue, we won it again, and again we came out of the losers' bracket to do it, defeating Jacksonville 9-6 and 6-4. We played and won five games in 24 hours, and with each game the excitement seemed to grow. It was really exciting and gratifying to experience that."

Coincidentally, Friedhoff caught the final out in both the '66 and '68 nationals.

Friedhoff participated in her last national tournament in 1969 with Escue, then hung up her spikes. It was her lone regret in softball.

"I started teaching that year and felt like I wanted to put my energy into some other things, and as I look back on it, I regret doing that," she says. "If I had anything to do over, I think I would have tried to play longer."

Interestingly, after almost forty years, Friedhoff resumed her career last year.

“I’ve actually started playing ball again in the senior program,” she says. “It’s been fun to get back into it, and I’m going to play again next year.

“Softball has given me some wonderful experiences and many lessons for life,” she continues. “The people were a very important part of my life. It was an honor to know and play with them all. I have many good memories.”

What does it mean to Friedhoff to be inducted into the Hall of Fame?

“I really feel honored to have played with the people I played with and shared all the experiences with,” says Friedhoff. “I was part of some really great teams and really honored to be selected and to be part of the group that has already been inducted.”

Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall Of Fame Profiles...

ASA National Title, Player Of The Decade, And Two Player of the Year Awards Highlighted Randy Lewis’ Career

Randy Lewis’ career at the competitive level of slow pitch softball didn’t last very long in comparison to many members of the Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame.

And while longevity can play a big role in racking up team championships and individual awards, Randy found a way to make the most out of his relatively few years playing in the “biggs.”

Lewis got started playing softball at the age of 18 with his dad’s company team, Hamilton Industries, in 1985. Two years later he joined a USSSA “B” team, Mattlin Construction, with which he found his way onto the Cincinnati Softball News home run leader board with 68 in 1988. The following year at only 21, Lewis clubbed 95 home runs and was named first team ASA “A”/USSSA “B” All-City. In 1990 Lewis spent a year with Scotties, and was selected to the Men’s “Major” All-City first team after belting 122 homers.

Lewis moved on to Frye Fastening for the next two seasons, and got a taste of his first ASA Metro tournament.

“I didn’t even know what it was that first year,” recalls Lewis. “We didn’t do too good. But the next we won the ‘A.’ The first one is always special.”

Finally in 1993, Lewis hit the big time, joining Watanabe Optical, the team he would finish his career with. It proved to be a breakout season for both Lewis and Watanabe, as Watanabe won the ASA “A” National Tournament, and Lewis was named to the All-American team. Lewis slugged 139 home runs that year, earned first team Men’s “Major” All-City honors, and was named Men’s “Major” Rookie of the year.

Lewis was just getting started. In 1994, he was named Greater Cincinnati “Player of the Year” after swatting 149 home runs and leading both area major leagues in home runs.

The honors continued to roll in over the next three seasons as Lewis would hit 156, 115 and 160 home runs and earn “Major” All-City honors each year.

Lewis then turned in perhaps his most memorable season in 1998, leading Watanabe to a “Major” Metro crown and earning Metro MVP honors. He also slugged 145 home runs en route to his second “Player of the Year” award.

In his final season, Lewis hit 124 home runs as Watanabe repeated in the Metro.

Lewis quit playing softball in 2000, but the honors kept rolling in. He was named to the All-Decade Team for the nineties, “Player of the Decade,” and to the Greater Cincinnati All-Century team.

“That’s some pretty good company,” acknowledges Lewis. “A lot of people have played softball in Greater Cincinnati. That was quite an honor.”

Between winning his first Metro with Frye Fastening and earning All-Century honors, Lewis points to Watanabe’s national championship, two “Major” metro titles and earning “Player of the Year” honors twice as the other most rewarding accomplishments of his career.

“Very few people get a chance to play for a national championship team,” he says. “And the ‘major’ division of the Metro is the top level locally, so that was very gratifying. And being named ‘Player of the Year’ makes you feel pretty good with all the great players in the area.”

Lewis realizes he’s known as a one-dimensional player, but says he was also a “team player” during his career.

“I was a power hitter, but I also took a lot of pride in being able to get a hit when our team ran out of home runs,” says Lewis. “I was a team player who went for the base hit when it was called for. Also, I knew I wasn’t the fastest guy in the world, so I didn’t mind coming out of the game for a pinch-hitter or defensive purposes.”

Lewis recalls fondly growing up around the game when his parents - Raleigh and Loretta - worked during the season at the Sports Farm and Cincinnati Softball Center, presently known as Pastime Park.

“That’s where I started playing,” he says. “I grew up hanging around the park. I remember dad wouldn’t let me play softball until the baseball season was over so it wouldn’t affect my baseball swing.”

Lewis says the best part of softball is “all the good people that you meet.

“The best friends I have, I met through softball,” says Lewis. “And they’re the best friends I have in the world. When I got sick and needed dialysis, they threw a tournament for me down at Rumpke, and that was very special.”

Lewis said eventually he received a kidney transplant, and is enjoying good health now.

Lewis calls being elected to the Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame “icing on the cake.

“It’s an honor to be joining so many former teammates and opponents,” he says.

Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall Of Fame Profiles...

Dale Overmann’s Career Spanned U. S. Military, Men’s “A,” Masters And Senior Programs

They say variety is the spice of life, and perhaps no better word characterizes the diversity of Dale Raymond Overmann’s softball career than variety.

Unlike most famous softball players, who spend the lion’s share of their careers playing at the major level, Dale Overmann’s journey to the Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame marched to the beat of a different drummer.

Along the way, his legacy ranged from playing with friends and family in the Covington recreation leagues, to representing the United States Army on the U. S. Military’s All-Service team, to competing alongside the legendary Bruce Meade with three-time national champion Florida Crush in the senior program. Along the way, he earned Most Valuable Player honors in such premier “open major” events as the Ohio Valley Classic, was named MVP in four National Turners Championships, and took MVP honors in a Senior Softball National Tournament. Overmann also played on four Kentucky ASA 35-over state championship teams.

After attending the University of Tennessee Chattanooga on a basketball scholarship, Overmann joined the army where his affinity for sports quickly caught the attention of his commanding officer at Fort Benning, Ga. The young lieutenant was put in charge of organizing basketball and softball teams for his battalion, and went on to lead his company’s team to post championship.

Overmann caught the eye of a lieutenant colonel, who “ordered” him to try out for the “All-Army” team, and he went on to lead the Army over the Navy, Air Force and Marines in an “Inner Service Tournament.”

“I played well enough to make the all-service team, and we went to Parma, Oh., to play in the ASA ‘Open Major’ National Tournament,” recalls Overmann. “They gave the military team an automatic slot, and that exposed me to big-time softball and I fell in love with it.

“That was in the summer of 1972, so when I got out of the service in 1974, I knew I wanted to play softball right away,” continues Overmann. “But when I started to play, it was July, and all the teams were established.”

Overmann didn't take long to be “discovered,” however. While playing with his brother, brothers-in-law and friends at Rolling Hills Ball Park in Covington, he caught the attention of Universal Insurance manager Wayne Victor and sponsor John Hamilton.

“Universal was one of the three best teams in Northern Kentucky along with Rockcastle Motors and the Rolling Hills Lakers,” says Overmann. “Wayne and John saw me play and asked if I would play with them the following year. That was the summer of '76 and was my first big exposure locally to top-notch softball. We played in the major leagues at White Oak and Rolling Hills against all the top-notch teams and players in Greater Cincinnati.”

Overmann played for Universal for three years, leading them to league titles over area powerhouses teams like Rockcastle and Carlisle Construction, and to a USSSA Central Division “A” Championship in Tullahoma, Tn., and a berth to the U-Trip “World Series.” Universal also won the Ohio Valley Classic, and Overmann was named tournament MVP.

Also during this period, Overmann played for Dixie Novelty/Covington Turners, and led the team to National titles in 1978, '79, '81 and '84. Overmann was named tournament MVP each year.

When he turned 35 in 1980, Overmann began to play in the masters program with several former teammates under Hall of Fame manager Bob Fennell.

“We had enough remnants of players from Universal, Rockcastle and the Rolling Hills Lakers to form a pretty good team and we stayed together through the eighties,” says Overmann. “We played in a lot of 35-over tournaments and won several state tournaments and finished well in the nationals. We always finished in the top five, but never won. We had a tough time beating Uniroyal out of Michigan.”

During the early nineties, Overmann continued to play in local leagues in tournaments at a more recreational level, while continuing to play on a more limited basis in the masters program with long-time teammates Butch Hays and Jim Nageleisen.

Then in 1999, Hays and Nageleisen invited Overmann to play with Florida Crush, the nation's top-ranked 50-over Seniors team from Ft. Lauderdale.

“We wound up winning the Major Nationals Championship and I was fortunate enough to play with Mike Nye and Bruce Meade,” says Overmann. “They were legends when I started playing, so that was very enjoyable.”

Florida Crush won the ISSSA, ISA and SPA championships that year with Overmann at 2nd base.

“It was fun,” he recalls. “They paid for our rooms and airline tickets. They flew us to a tournament twice a month to places like Las Vegas, Phoenix, Ft. Lauderdale, Memphis and Houston.”

The following year, Overmann joined local 50-over powerhouse Joseph Chevrolet, which would go on to win several national titles at the senior level.

“I finished my career with Joseph,” says Overmann. “I lost my job at Newport Steel after twenty years, and that limited my freedom to pick up and go for long softball weekends.”

Overmann attributes his success in softball to one fundamental attribute: he could hit and hit consistently.

“That’s always been my strength,” he says. “I always felt like I was a good fielder, but my consistency as a good hitter and my ability to move runners and the set the table for the guys who could hit home runs - and being a good team player - were my strengths.

“My swing was always a single or double-type swing,” adds Overmann. “I am proud to have been a leadoff or number two hitter for all the teams I played for. Bob Fennell would put pressure on me before our games, always telling me he expected three hits from me, and most of the time, I came through for him.”

Earning MVP honors in the 1979 Ohio Valley Classic will always stand out as the most rewarding accomplishment in Overmann’s career, he says.

“At that time, the OVC was a big tournament, and Universal won the championship,” says Overmann. “I led the team in hitting that year and made MVP. I had one of those tournaments where everything seemed to go right.

“I felt very good about that,” he continues. “We beat Greater Cincinnati Sports along the way. They were a lot of fun to play against. It was a very competitive tournament and it was very satisfying to win that award.”

Overmann says he’s also proud of his consistency over the years, “and being able to play so long.

“That in itself leads to a lot of accomplishments...to hang around the game as long as I did,” he says.

Being elected to the Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame “is a big honor for me,” says Overmann.

“It means a lot to me after all the teams I’ve been associated with,” he says. “Greater Cincinnati is known for its top-notch softball since the fifties, and to be considered one of the top players of the seventies, eighties and nineties is a big honor for me and I don’t take it lightly.

“A lot of my teammates are in there already, and with the caliber of people in there I’m very proud and humbled to be associated with those guys,” he adds.

“I’m fortunate to be a member of the Northern Kentucky Sports Hall of Fame and the Covington Catholic Hall of Fame already. I really cherish this and I want to thank the committee for putting me in with that special club.”

You Can Make The Difference! Buckeye Metropolitan Umpires Association Seeks New Members

Milford, Oh.--Every year, local umpire organizations need to add new umpires to compliment their present members and to replace umpires that have retired. Young people willing to learn, current players who want to make a positive difference, along with veteran ball players winding down their playing days, yet still wanting to remain a part of the game, are encouraged to get in touch with organizations at their local ballparks.

Training classes usually begin in late January or early February. There are minor start-up fees, typical for every organization, along with uniform costs. But the investment is quickly recovered. A love of the game is required and a desire to make a difference while getting fresh air, exercise and generally having fun while earning extra cash for whatever your needs are. Anyone can do this with the proper training that each and every organization can provide for you.

The Buckeye Umpires' Association, which contracts to officiate games at Expressway Park in Milford, Ohio has scheduled classes beginning in February 2009. For further information, leave your name and telephone number(s) weekdays 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Expressway Park @ 513.831.2273, or log on to: www.expressway@expresswaypark.com. All calls will be returned and details will be mailed to you promptly.

BUCKEYE UMPIRE ORGANIZATION MEETING SCHEDULE - Tuesday, February 17 - 6-8:30 PM (site TBA) - Registration, Game Management and Rules 1, 2 and 3 - Mandatory; Tuesday, February 24 - 6-8:30 PM (site TBA) - Game Management and Rules 3, 4 and 5; Tuesday, March 3 - 6-8:30 PM (site TBA) - Game Management and Rules 5, 6 and 7; Tuesday, March 10 - 6-8:30 PM (site TBA) - Game Management and Rules 7, 8 and 9; Tuesday, March 17 - 6-8:30 PM (site TBA) - Game Management and Rules 9 and 10; Saturday, March 21 - 10 AM-1 PM at Expressway Park - On field instructions, mechanics and fast pitch - mandatory; Tuesday, March 24 - 6-8:30 PM (site TBA) - USSSA umpire test, Expressway Park League Rules test; grade test - mandatory.

2008 Bud Light-Worth-All-City Team...

Blitz/Watanabe/Easton's Carter Named Player Of The Year; Schlemmer, Walton Share Manager Honors

Jimmy Carter of Blitz/Watanabe/Bull/Minges/Wessel/Easton has been named Bud Light-Worth-USSSA "Player of the Year," while Rob Schlemmer of EAP/Real Estate Title/Wessel and Blitz's Terry Walton shared "Manager of the Year" honors in voting for the "Bud Light-Worth-CIN-CINNATI SOFTBALL NEWS" Men's All-City Team for 2008.

Carter batted .693 with a .813 OBA, 82 home runs and 260 rbi's to beat out Shane Spicer of EAP fourteen points to nine for "Player of the Year" honors.

"Jimmy led us in every major offensive category and played a solid 1st base also," remarked Blitz manager Terry Walton.

On his way to "Co-Manager of the Year" honors, Walton guided his team to an 80-24 mark with six first place finishes, including four USSSA "B" NIT titles, an ASA Cincinnati Metro crown, and a runner-up finish in the Conference USSSA "B" Championship.

Rob Schlemmer managed EAP to 104-33 record with five tournament titles, including two U-Trip NIT wins and a State Championship.

Walton and Schlemmer edged Fred Trammel of House Rules/Holy Grail/Crosley's by one point - seven to six - to earn "Manager of the Year." Trammel's club captured three USSSA NIT's, and was runner-up in both the Great Lakes "C" National and ASA "A" Metro.

Blitz/Watanabe/Easton led all teams with a dozen overall selections, including a staggering eleven first-teamers. A total of twelve teams were represented. Following Blitz's twelve selections were EAP and Mike Foulks Auto Body/Team Insanity with six each and PRI/Easton with five. House Rules and JLC/Legends each played three players on the team, J Taps Softball, KW Sports/Game On/Easton and Sentry Fire/Red Eye Sports/LBYC had two apiece, and D & S Engineering had one.

Blitz's first team selections included Carter, Jason Roesch, Brian Alexander, Michael Rogers, Larry Wert, Frank Gruber, Brad Tabler, Kevin Greene, Jason Brown, Jeff Click and Walton.

Other first team selections were Shane Spicer, Ryan Richmond and Rob Schlemmer of EAP, Paul DeMoss of JLC, Terry Rosenbalm, Dan Feichtner and Everitt Hibbard of PRI, Brandon Johnson, Jeremy Ross and Jason Ferguson of Mike Foulks, Jason Gardner of House Rules, and Adam Visnic of Sentry Fire.

“Rookie of the Year” honors went to Jason Ferguson of Mike Foulks, who batted .600 with 60 home runs. Ferguson bested teammate Jeremy Ross, who hit .650 during the 2008 season.

The Bud Light-Worth-Sports All-City team is selected by area managers whose teams participated in the USSSA “B” or “C” World tournaments in 2008. Qualifying managers were sent ballots on which they were required to nominate team members and provide key statistical information and comments.

Twelve managers returned ballots, and copies of each were then returned to each manager along with a final ballot to vote for a first and second team at each position, four utility positions, and manager, player and rookie of the year. First team selections received two points, and second team selections one point.

The leading vote recipient at each position was placed on the first team, along with the next four highest point recipients, who were placed in the "utility" category. The next fourteen highest point recipients were then placed on the second team.

ALL-CITY NOMINEE BATTING LEADERS (.650 or higher): Steve Hunt .740, Adam Visnic .725, Brandon Johnson .720, Jimmy Carter .692, Ryan Richmond .691, Paul DeMoss .687, Pat Philhower .682, Shane Spicer .679, Chris Malay .676, Jason Roesch .672, Josh Baird .667, Brian Goebel .664, Brian Alexander .655, Michael Rogers .654, Ryan Minges .653, Jeremy Ross .650.

ALL-CITY NOMINEE HOME RUN LEADERS (30 or higher): Jimmy Carter 82, Steve Schon 71, Jason Ferguson 60, Steve Williams 58, Michael Rogers 55, Terry Rosenbalm 53, Brad Tabler 50, Shane Spicer 48, Josh Baird 48, Tony Huber 45, Kraig Piper 44, Steve Bosch 43, Mike Barone 42, Brian Goebel 41, Adam Visnic 41, Dave Kessler 41, Todd Roush 40, Jason Roesch 39, Brian Alexander 38, John Tomlinson 37, Chad Vordemesche 36, Dan Feichtner 35, Chaz Weber 32, Brandon Bellamy 30.

PREVIOUS SOFTBALL NEWS PLAYERS OF THE YEAR: 1977 - Mike LaFever, Rockcastle Motors; Runner-Up Jim Kuhn, Hal Manufacturing; 1978 - Hal Ward, Greater Cincinnati Sports and Ron Jones, Stroh's; 1979 - Rick Linz, Greater Cincinnati Sports, Runners-Up Jack Robinson, Bushelman Construction, and Hal Ward, Greater Cincinnati Sports; 1980 - Galen Kelly and Steve Hicks, Bushelman Construction; Runner-Up Dave Johnson, Hammer's; 1981 - Mike Tolliver, Jay's; Runner-Up Steve Hicks, Bushelman; 1982 - Mickey McMullen, Bushelman Construction; Runner-Up Joe Griffith, Knights; 1983 - Leo Osterday, Bushelman; Runner-Up Jack Coll-ins, Bushelman; 1984 Bob Massong, Bushelman; Runner-Up Leo Osterday, Bushelman; 1985 - Jack Collins, M. W. Tribble; Runner-Up Mike Sullivan, VIP Limousine and Mike O'Brien, Jay's; 1986 - Mike O'Brien, Jay's; Runners-Up Mike Sullivan and Don Cleaver, VIP Limousine; 1987 - Scott Hein, VIP Limousine/Express Transport; Runners-Up Mike Sullivan, VIP/ETC, Mike Harvey, Jay's, and Bob Cole, F & C Athletic; 1988 - Steve Roeder, VIP/ ETC; Runner-Up Larry Shircliff, VIP/ETC; 1989 - Bill Jackson, VIP/ETC; Runner-Up Steve Roeder, VIP/ ETC and Marty Monterosso, Jay's; 1990 - Marty Monterosso, Jay's; Runner-Up

Homer Ruth, VIP/ETC; 1991 - Tony Salamone, Greg Back/Kipling's; Runner-Up Doug Riley, Greg Back/Kipling's and Tim Clemmons, Jay's; 1992 - Mike Kinnett, Watanabe/Scarlaro's/Easton; Runner-Up Doug Riley, McCluskey Chevrolet-GEO; 1993 - Tom Thompson, Jay's/ Worth; Runner-Up Mike Kinnett, Watanabe/Scarlaro's/Easton; 1994 - Randy Lewis, Watanabe/Scarlaro's/Easton; Runner-Up Mike King, Hosea Worldwide; 1995 - Mike Kinnett, Watanabe/Scarlaro's/Perkins/Easton; Runner-up Joe Penwell, Backstop/Easton; 1996 - Jim Kearns, Lovill/Easton and John Steele, Watanabe/Scarlaro's/Perkins/TPS; Runner-up Joe Penwell, Backstop/Easton; 1997 - John Steele, Watanabe/Scarlaro's/Perkins/ TPS; Runner-up Marvin Doyle, Backstop/Easton; 1998 - Randy Lewis, Watanabe/Scarlaro's/Perkins/TPS; Runner-up Tom Ellis, First American Title; 1999 - Mark Smith, Watanabe/ Perkins/TPS/Bike; Runner-up Tony Sharkins, Perkins Roofing/TPS; 2000 - Jack Collins, EMR/Meiner's Cafe/Worth; Runner-up Kevin Atwood, Perkins Roofing/ TPS; 2001 - Marvin Doyle, EMR/Worth; Runner-Up Jason Roesch, Cooper/ Pohlman/Worth, Steve Spille, Perkins/TPS, John Steele Perkins/TPS; 2002 - John Steele, Perkins/Watanabe/TPS; Runner-up Marvin Doyle, Cooper Sports/Specialty Vending/Worth; 2003 - Brian May, Watanabe/K & G/TPS; Runner-up Tom Ellis, Watanabe/K & G/TPS; Darrell Hall, DLB/Arnold/Superior; Jon Jamison, Luckey Homes/Rite Rug; 2004 - Brian Wegman, Watanabe/New/K & G/Tiny Town/TPS; Runner-Up Shane Hatfield, Alpine/Easton; Mike Kinnett, EMR/Worth; Johnny Miller, EMR/Worth; 2005 - Brian May, Watanabe/TTP/Superior/CHL/B&A/TPS; Runner-Up Jon Jamison, Arnold/Freeze; 2006 - Brad Reckart, Watanabe/TPS/Superior/CHL/B & A/TPS; Runner-Up Kevin Greene, Storm/Wessel/Nixco Plumbing/Flanagan's Front Porch and Frank Gruber, A & K Tile/Wessel/GRK/Blitz; 2008 - Jon Jamison, Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Putter's; Runner-up Jason Roesch, Blitz/Watanabe/TTP/Wessel/Easton.

**2008 WORTH-BUD LIGHT-CINTL. SOFTBALL
NEWS-USSSA MEN'S ALL-CITY FIRST TEAM**

Pitcher	Shane Spicer (18)	EAP/Wessel
Catcher	Jimmy Carter (18)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
1st Base	Paul DeMoss (12)	JLC/Legends
2nd Base	Terry Rosenbalm (12)	PRI/Easton
3rd Base	Jason Roesch (14)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
Shortstop	Ryan Richmond (13)	EAP/Wessel
Outfield	Brandon Johnson (18)	Mike Foulks/Insanity
Outfield	Brian Alexander (15)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
Outfield	Michael Rogers (12)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
Outfield	Jason Gardner (11)	House Rules/Holy Grail
Utility	Adam Visnic (12)	Sentry/Red Eye/LBYC
Utility	Larry Wert (10)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
Utility	Jason Brown (8)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
	Jeff Click (8)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
	Dan Feichtner (8)	PRI/Easton
	Jason Ferguson (8)	Mike Foulks/Insanity
	Kevin Greene (8)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton

	Frank Gruber (8)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
	Everitt Hibbard (8)	PRI/Easton
	Jeremy Ross (8)	Mike Foulks/Insanity
	Brad Tabler (8)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
Manager	Terry Walton (7)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
	Rob Schlemmer (7)	EAP/Wessel
MVP	Jimmy Carter (14)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
Rookie	Jason Ferguson (13)	Mike Foulks/Insanity

**2008 WORTH-BUD LIGHT-CINTL. SOFTBALL
NEWS-USSSA MEN'S ALL-CITY SECOND TEAM**

Pitcher	Trent Thompson (4)	Mike Foulks/Insanity
Catcher	Brian Goebel (4)	JLC/Legends
1st Base	Mike Albers (6)	KW Sports/Game On
2nd Base	Brian Erdman (4)	Hart Restoration/Saints
3rd Base	Steve Hunt (6)	JLC/Legends
Shortstop	Roger Drake (4)	Mike Foulks/Insanity
	Nick Masur (4)	PRI/Easton
Outfield	Frank Andriola (7)	J-Taps Softball
Outfield	Brian Bellamy (7)	PRI/Easton
Outfield	Ryan Minges (7)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
Outfield	Ben Moerlein (7)	KW Sports/Game On
	Chris Young (7)	EAP/Wessel
Utility	Dave Huber (5)	House Rules/Holy Grail
Utility	Chaz Weber (5)	Sentry/Red Eye/LBYC
	Mike Barone (4)	Hart Restoration/Saints
	Gary Hammerle (4)	EAP/Wessel
	Pat Philhower (4)	D & S Engineering
	Seth Tracy (4)	Mike Foulks/Insanity
	Steve Williams (4)	EAP/Wessel

**2008 WORTH-BUD LIGHT-CINTL. SOFTBALL
NEWS-USSSA ALL-CITY HONORABLE MENTION**

BLITZ/WATANABE/BULL/MINGES/WESSEL/EASTON: Trevor Barth, Steve Bosch

D & S ENGINEERING: Kevin Mell (Manager), Pat Philhower (Rookie), Brandon Taylor

EAP/REAL ESTATE TITLE/WESSEL: Josh Baird (Rookie), Jason Harden, Steve Schon, Chad Vordemesche

HART RESTORATION/SAINTS: John Tomlinson

HOUSE RULES/HOLY GRAIL/CROSLEY'S: Jeremy Kramer, Tom Kramer, Shawn O'Conner, Mark Sheppard, Tim Stacy

JLC/LEGENDS: Jay Eibel, Paul Laible, Chris Malay, Billy Scott

MIKE FOULKS/TEAM INSANITY: Roger Boles, Cory Hogle, Craig Johnson, Mike Foulks (Manager)

PRI/EASTON: Dan Feichtner (Manager), Scott Harper, Dave Kessler (Player, Rookie), Tony McKinney

SENTRY FIRE/RED EYE SPORTS/LBYC: Adam Visnic (MVP, Rookie), Mike Scuglik, Chaz Weber (Rookie)

USSSA State Championships Like Winners...

Mike Foulks' Johnson, Renegades' Fisher Named No. Ky. Player, Manager Of The Year

Brandon Johnson of Mike Foulks Auto Body/Team Insanity and Donny Fisher of the Renegades have been named the Northern Kentucky "Player of the Year" and "Manager of the Year," respectively, for 2008.

Johnson led Mike Foulks to an overall 43-23 mark (USSSA record), three USSSA B-C NIT championships, a Kentucky USSSA "B" State Title, a first place finish in the Conference USSSA Consolation Bracket and a 13th place finish in the U-Trip "B" World Tournament. Mike Foulks finished the season ranked 5th in the nation.

Johnson batted a blistering .720 for the year with 20 home runs. He was the tournament MVP in the USSSA City Slam, was named to the USSSA All-State Team, and was also a Conference USSSA First Team selection.

Mike Foulks/Team Insanity manager-sponsor called Johnson a "leader" who maintains a "positive attitude.

"B. J. is always about what is best for the team and giving a hundred and ten percent," remarked Foulks. "He never gives up until the last out of the game. He's a true leader on the field, always keeping a positive attitude and pushing himself and his teammates. He works hard to make himself and his teammates better at playing this game."

Donny Fisher edged out Foulks eight points to seven to claim "Manager of the Year. His Renegades team went 62-35 on the year, winning four qualifiers, a USSSA National Invitational, and the Kentucky USSSA "D" State Tournament.

Adam Visnic of Sentry Fire/Red Eye Sports/LBYC was runner-up "Player of the Year, hitting .725 with 41 home runs.

Others receiving "Player of the Year" votes included Jason Ferguson (.600, 60 HR's) and Trent Thompson (.500) of Mike Foulks, Brian Goebel (.664, 41 HR's, 97 rbi's) of JLC/Legends and Jay Rhoden (.563, 14 HR's) of Hart Restoration/Saints.

Northern Kentucky "Rookie of the Year" honors went to Jeremy Ross of Mike Foulks Auto Body. Chaz Weber of Sentry Fire finished second in the voting. Ross batted .650, while Weber hit .635 with 32 HR's.

Nomination forms were sent to all Northern Kentucky men's "B," "C" and "D" teams that participated in 2008 USSSA World Tournaments. A total of ten managers nominated team members.

Copies of each form were then returned to the participating managers, who were asked to select a first and second team at each position, plus four utility positions, manager, player and rookie of the year. First team votes were worth two points, and second team one point. At least seven points were required to make the first team, and four to make the second team.

"Player of the Year" Brandon Johnson led all players in the voting, garnering 16 points, the maximum possible.

Other first team selections included Murphy's teammates, Craig Johnson, Jason Ferguson, Trent Thompson and Jeremy Ross; JLC's Brian Goebel, Paul DeMoss, Paul Laible and Steve Hunt; Doug Murphy, Brian Sandlin, Brent Hopkins and Chaz Goetz of Good Guys/GBI Cincinnati; Adam Visnic and Chaz Weber of Sentry; the Merchants' Vic Kleine; Brian Parrish of Ante Up; and Donny Fisher (manager) of the Renegades.

Mike Foulks led all teams with a total of eight first or second team selections. JLC and Sentry Fire followed with six, the Renegades had five, Good Guys tallied, Ante Up three, Hart Restoration and the Merchants two each and Big O Softball one.

2008 ALL-NORTHERN KENTUCKY FIRST TEAM

Pitcher	Doug Murphy (13)	Good Guys/GBI Cin.
Catcher	Brian Goebel (8)	JLC/Legends
1st Base	Brian Sandlin (12)	Good Guys/GBI Cin.
2nd Base	Craig Johnson (11)	Mike Foulks/Insanity
3rd Base	Paul DeMoss (12)	JLC/Legends
Shortstop	Adam Visnic (12)	Sentry/Red Eye/LBYC
Outfield	Brandon Johnson (16)	Mike Foulks/Insanity
Outfield	Brent Hopkins (13)	Good Guys/GBI Cin.
Outfield	Jason Ferguson (12)	Mike Foulks/Insanity
Outfield	Vic Kleine (10)	Merchants
	Chaz Goetz (9)	Good Guys/GBI Cin.
	Paul Laible (9)	JLC/Legends
Utility	Steve Hunt (10)	JLC/Legends
Utility	Brian Parrish (10)	Ante Up
Utility	Trent Thompson (10)	Mike Foulks/Insanity
Utility	Jeremy Ross (8)	Mike Foulks/Insanity
	Chaz Weber (8)	Sentry/Red Eye/LBYC
Manager	Donny Fisher (8)	Renegades
MVP	Brandon Johnson (9)	Mike Foulks/Insanity
Rookie	Jeremy Ross (8)	Mike Foulks/Insanity

2008 ALL-NORTHERN KENTUCKY SECOND TEAM

Pitcher Charlie Saylor (4) Renegades
Catcher Roger Boles (5) Mike Foulks/Insanity
1st Base Kraig Piper (4) Sentry/Red Eye/LBYC
Seth Tracy (4) Mike Foulks/Insanity
2nd Base Josh Fulmer (7) Renegades
Bobby Kindoll (7) Ante Up
Shortstop Mike Hartfiel (4) Merchants
Outfield Tim Barker (7) Mike Foulks/Insanity
Outfield Mike Barone (7) Hart Restoration/Saints
Outfield Josh Kinnett (7) Ante Up
Outfield Chris Malay (7) JLC/Legends
Brett Mullins (7) Renegades
Utility Jeff Ellis (5) Sentry/Red Eye/LBYC
Utility Keith Rusnell (5) Big O Softball
Utility Mike Scuglik (5) Sentry/Red Eye/LBYC
Utility John Tomlinson (5) Hart Restoration/Saints
Jay Eibel (4) JLC/Legends
Justin Fulmer (4) Renegades
Manager Mike Foulks (7) Mike Foulks/Insanity
MVP Adam Visnic (7) Sentry/Red Eye/LBYC
Rookie Chaz Weber (4) Sentry/Red Eye/LBYC

HONORABLE MENTION

ANTE UP: Mike Barnes (Manager, Utility), Patrick Bern-dsen (Rookie), Toby Gilliam (Utility), Drew McGowan (Utility), Chuck Wagner (Utility)

BARNSTORMERS: Ricky Arnold (Utility)

BLUE COLLAR: Kevin Larison (Utility), Derrick Lem-mex (Utility), Brandon Lightner (1st), Cy Egger (Catch)

GOOD GUYS/GBI CINCINNATI: Chris Fogt (Manager), Bryan Stevenson (Utility)

HART RESTORATION/SAINTS: Kevin Blanton (1st/-Utility), Darren Block (Catch), Kurt Davis (Outfield), Tim Duffy (Short), John Erdman (Rookie, Utility), Jay Rhoden (MVP, Utility), Gary Schoultheis (3rd), John Tomlinson (Manager)

JLC/LEGENDS: Brian Goebel (MVP), Billy Scott (Out-field), Mike Sellet (Catch/Utility), Danny Sharp (Utility)

MERCHANTS: Jim Hartfiel (Utility), Davey Iles (Outfield), Rob Mitchell (1st), Scott Ruth (Outfield)

MIKE FOULKS AUTO BODY/TEAM INSANITY: Jim Burt (3rd), Roger Drake (Short), Jason Ferguson (Rookie), Cory Hogle (Outfield), Trent Thompson (MVP)

RENEGADES: Ryan Curtis (3rd), Josh Fulmer (Rookie), Justin Fulmer (Rookie), Ben Harris (Outfield), Brandon Harris (Outfield), Rob Mitchell (1st/Utility), Brett Mullins (Rookie)

SENTRY FIRE/RED EYE SPORTS/LBYC: Kevin Henn (Manager), Brian Walker (Pitch/Utility)

Tom Taylor Elected To Kentucky Softball Hall of Fame

Greater Cincinnati softball legend Tom Taylor has joined some of the most prominent names in softball with the announcement last September that he had been elected into the Kentucky Softball Hall of Fame and Honor. He will be inducted in the fall of 2009.

Taylor, who played with such towering softball figures as ASA National Hall of Fame members Myron Reinhardt, Hal Wiggins, and Raymond "Whitey" Brown on the Gatliff Auto Sales/Stroh's/Sports Center teams in 1966, 1967 and 1969, learned the game from Gatliff manager Al Brauch, also a member of the ASA National Hall of Fame. Later on, Taylor played for the legendary Rolling Hills Lakers teams in 1973 and '74.

Due to his play for Gatliff, Taylor was chosen a member of the National Team of Honor for the 1960's (reference Steve Dimitry's Softball History Website). He was inducted into the Northern Kentucky Sports Hall of Fame in 1992.

A Cincinnati native, Taylor also played for 1970-'71 ASA Regional Champion Century Tire of Cincinnati and the Cincinnati Suds professional slow pitch team in the mid-seventies. He was named to eighteen All-Tournament teams, was named the Greater Cincinnati "Player of the Decade" for the seventies in 1980, and a member of the Greater Cincinnati All-Century team in 2000. In 1988 Taylor was inducted into the Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame, then in 2002 to the Hamilton County Sports Hall of Fame.

Taylor's strengths as a player were his power and throwing arm. He is considered to be the greatest power hitter of his era and won eighteen home run championships, including the 1968 World Tournament.

Taylor told the Cincinnati Softball News that he considers his selection to the Kentucky Softball Hall of Fame "the greatest honor I have been given in my sports lifetime.

"I had the privilege of playing with the Gatliff Auto Sales team of Newport in 1966, 1967 and 1969," says Taylor. "When I got an offer from manager Al Brausch in early 1966 to play with this team, I jumped at the chance. They were a consensus ranked number two in the nation and were a three-time national champion.

"I wasn't sure what this storied Kentucky team wanted with a raw 23 year old power hitter, but I cherished the idea of playing with eventual ASA national Hall of Fame members Myron Reinhardt, Raymond 'Whitey' Brown and the late Hal Wiggins," says Taylor. "These gentlemen and another teammate, Don Whitford are all members of the Kentucky Softball Hall of Fame. We were guided by ASA Hall of Fame and Kentucky Hall of Fame manager Al Brausch.

Taylor recalls how Brausch led his teams in a pre-game prayer said for the safety of the players on both teams. "These gentlemen taught me confidence and proper bearing, as well as how to both win and lose with grace," says Taylor. "Some of my other teammates on were Walt Wherry, Barry Norman, Huddy Knock, Jim Caldwell, Karl Nageleisen, Earl Berryman, and Alex Burkhart.

"I also played for various tavern teams in Northern Kentucky with my good friend Bobby King, a 1997 Kentucky Softball Hall of Fame member," says. "Bobby Fennell, manager of Carlisle Construction/Rolling Hills Lakers, called me to play numerous times, including the 1973 and 1974 USSSA World Tournaments."

Taylor says that after he decided to retire following the 1976 season, he I got a call from Walt Wherry, manager of the Cincinnati Suds, in the spring of 1977. "There had been tryouts by a couple of hundred players and the roster was at about 17. He asked me to play right field in New Jersey that weekend for the Suds. I said yes and played the 1977 and 1978 seasons with the Suds. So much for retirement!"

Taylor says he had a "strong Kentucky connection with my Cincinnati Suds teammates.

"I played with Butch Hays, Sonny Rider, Huddy Knock, Greg Sandy, Mike LaFever, Dave Penick, and the great Donnie Rardin, Jr., another Kentucky Softball Hall of Fame member.

"I am humbled by becoming a member of the Kentucky Softball Hall of Fame & Honor. This would not have happened without recommendations from my friend Mark Linnemann and from Myron Reinhardt, the first slow pitch softball player in the ASA national hall of fame. Also I would never have made this Hall without the advocacy of Mr. Hank Bassett, Treasurer of the Kentucky Softball Hall of Fame.

"A wise man once said, 'We who have been honored do possess certain skills or abilities, but if we are honest with ourselves, we know that whatever success we've enjoyed (especially team success), is the result of a lot of good fortune and the efforts of some outstanding teammates, coaches and sponsors.' And to this I say 'Amen,'" says Taylor.

Taylor says he considers it a blessing to have played for Al Brausch, Bill Witte and Bobby Fennell, "and the incredible teammates I mentioned above. And it is my great fortune to count Mark Linnemann, Myron Reinhardt, and Hank Bassett as friends. This lifetime Ohioan gratefully thanks my Kentucky brethren for adopting me."

September 20-21...

PRI/Easton Second In USSSA "C" World At Liberty Park

Sterling Heights, Mi.--After capturing the winners' bracket at the USSSA "C" World Tournament September 19-21 at Liberty Park, PRI/Easton was forced to settle for a

second place finish as they were double-dipped by World Champion J & H Wall/Chanticlear Pizza of Hugo, Mn. 5-3 and 16-1.

PRI/Easton capitalized on late scoring to win four of their six games as they swept through the winners' bracket of the 96-team event. But after averaging fifteen runs per game in the winners' bracket, PRI's offense went into a coma in the finals, scoring only four runs in two games.

"We put ourselves into a great position to try to win a world tournament," commented PRI/Easton player manager Dan Feichtner. "Unfortunately, it just didn't work out as we took a couple of games off hitting-wise when we needed it the most."

The pitching of tournament ODP Tony McKinney helped carry PRI through the winners' bracket, said Feichtner.

"If you look at the scores of our games, he held everybody pretty much in check," said Feichtner. "He pitched well enough to win the world. We just didn't put up the runs when we needed to at the end."

McKinney limited five of PRI's eight opponents to single digit scoring.

Defense and timely hitting were also keys to his club's success, noted Feichtner.

"We played defense well throughout the tournament. We didn't take a game off. And we hit when we needed to, especially in the games when we had to put a few more runs up than the other teams, and we were capable of doing that," said Feichtner.

PRI won two of their games in the final at bat, including a huge 21-20, extra inning victory over Mobil 1/Extra Innings in which they scored three in the bottom of the 7th to tie the game, then pushed across the game winner in the 8th.

"We were up six in the top of the 7th and they came up and put up nine on us," recalled Feichtner. "We could have just folded. But instead we battled back and put up a three-spot to take them into extra innings and eventually won."

Another pivotal came in the second round against the Ruffnecks, said Feichtner.

"Some of their guys played for KME and Laser Vision, which played 'A' last year, so we knew going into this game they were going to be some tough outs. Plus they put up four runs in the top of the 1st. Fortunately (pitchers) Tony and Ronnie Smith held them in check and we hit enough to win 7-6."

Offensively, PRI was led by Terry Rosenbalm (.650), Feichtner (.630), Brandon Bellamy (.615) and Everitt Hibbard (.600). All four joined McKinney on the All-World team.

PRI came out strong in their opener, overpowering MRCC/Miken 21-1 in four innings behind four hits from Rosenbalm and three each from Bellamy and Scott Harper. The winners exploded for seven runs in the top of the 1st, then tacked on three in the 2nd and 3rd and eight in the 4th to quickly level their victims. Rosenbalm cracked a two-run homer and Bellamy added a two-run double to account for four of their club's seven runs in the 1st. Scott Harper's three-run blast was the big blow in the 4th.

PRI fell behind the Ruffnecks 4-0 in the top of the 1st in game two, but pitchers Tony McKinney and Ronnie Smith held the California club to two runs the rest of the game while their club battled back. PRI knotted the game at 4-4 on a three-run, two-out double by Everitt Hibbard in the 3rd, then took a 5-4 lead on a Brandon Bellamy solo shot in the 4th. The Ruffnecks outscored PRI 2-1 over the next inning and a half to tie the game at 6-6, but in the bottom of the 6th, Dan Feichtner belted a leadoff solo home run to give PRI an eventual 7-6 victory. Hibbard and Feichtner were both perfect in four at bats, and Bellamy went 3-for-4 to pace the offense.

Next PRI used a six-run 3rd to overcome a 2-1 deficit and never looked back in a 14-6 rout of Northeast Buzz/Allied/L & L/AFB/YSMS. Nick Mazur's two-run double put his team ahead to stay at 3-2. Terry Rosenbalm then launched a three-run homer to make it 6-2. Three innings later Scott Harper swatted a two-run homer to cap off a three-run 6th and close out the scoring.

Mazur and Terry Rosenbalm combined for six hits for the winners.

PRI used a three-run 6th to break an 11-11 tie with Crusaders/Combat in game four and went on to pull out a 15-11 victory. Brandon Bellamy's two-run double put his team on top for good at 13-11 in the 6th, then Von Banks followed with a solo shot. Scott Stigers' 7th inning rbi single produced the final run of the game.

Bellamy, Banks and Stigers shared nine hits in the win.

That set the stage for perhaps the most exciting game of the tournament, as PRI met hometown favorite Mobil 1/Extra innings in the winners' bracket semi-finals. The Sterling Heights team trailed PRI 17-11 going into the top of the 7th, but erupted for nine runs to grab a 20-17 lead. PRI answered with three to force extra innings on a two-run double by Everitt Hibbard and a sac fly by Dan Feichtner. Then in the bottom of the 8th, Mike Harris had a leadoff double, then raced home with the game winner on a Dave Kessler double down the right field line.

Hibbard collected five hits in the game, Tony McKinney added four and Kessler went 3-for-5.

That lifted PRI into the winners' bracket finals for the first of three encounters with J & H Wall/Chanticlear Pizza. The two clubs battled to an 8-8 stalemate through five, but in the top of the 6th, Dan Feichtner socked a three-run home run to give PRI an eventual 11-8 victory, as Tony McKinney held J & H scoreless in the 6th and 7th to preserve the win.

An inning earlier, PRI had scored three runs to tie the score, with Todd Roush capping off the inning with a two-run shot.

Brandon Bellamy went 3-for-4 and Scott Harper chipped in two hits to lead the champions.

Unfortunately, PRI's offense went into a stupor in the finals, as J & H prevailed 5-3 and 16-1.

PRI manager Dan Feichtner concluded by thanking his team's sponsors and everyone who supported his team in Michigan.

"Obviously, we want to thank PRI for everything they did for us throughout the year, and Easton for all the equipment," said Feichtner. "Also, we want to thank all of our fans and the Cincinnati area teams for backing us up there. I'll never forget the atmosphere in our big game against Mobil 1 on Saturday night. It was like we had a 12th man with all the fans. That game was pretty sweet."

Bunch Of Guys, S & S Take Kolping Park Divisions

Mt. Healthy, Oh. - Bunch of Guys posted a 2-1, while S & S Softball swept to a 3-0 mark, to take first place in their respective divisions in an eight team, two division Saturday night round robin September 20th at Kolping Park.

Bunch of Guys knocked off Rounding 3rd (1-2) 6-1 in their opener, then battled past Bay's & Sons (2-1) 11-9 in what proved to be the deciding division one contest. Louis Tire (1-2) then ambushed Bunch of Guys in a 23-21 slugfest in the finale.

Meanwhile in division two, S & S outlasted Gators (0-3) 17-15 in game one, then shelled Green Machine (1-2) 20-10 before romping past Best Prop (2-1) 31-16 in the championship game.

Team Hangover, New Generation Claim Expressway Park Round Robins

Milford, Oh.--Team Hangover swept to a 3-0 mark, while New Generation went 2-1 to claim first place in their respective divisions in an eight team, two division Sunday round robin September 21st at Expressway Park.

Team Hangover used a solid defense to hold all three of their victims to single digits. Hangover routed ECA Aces (2-1) 13-3 in a key first round match-up with the eventual division one runner-up, then escaped with a narrow 9-8 victory over The Point Inn (1-2) before mopping up in a 13-6 decision over PAC National (0-3).

While in division two, New Generation disposed of Sawyer Brown (1-2) 7-1 and Wilber (2-1) 16-3 to clinch the division title before being ambushed by Bad Boyz (1-2) 13-11 in their finale.

September 27-28...

MVP Yields Only Six Walks, Bats Team High .744...

**McKinney Leads Young Guns/American Made/Evil Empire To One-Pitch NIT
“Gold” Title At Expressway Park**

Milford, Oh.--Pitcher Tony McKinney held three elimination round opponents to single digit scoring and batted .744 to lead Young Guns/American Made/Evil Empire to a first place finish in the “Gold” division of the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA One-Pitch National Invitational September 27-28 at Expressway Park.

Young Guns finished second to River City Hitmen in round robin play in the sixteen team Gold Division with a 2-1 record. But in the elimination round, the Young Guns mowed down all three opponents, avenging their setback to the Hitmen in a 13-8 decision.

Young Guns mercy-ruled Killer Beez 17-7 and Tyler Trucking 16-5 in the elimination round prior to disposing of River City.

Pitcher Tony McKinney led the champions to the title and was named tournament MVP.

“In the six games we played, he only walked six guys, and in a one-pitch tournament, that’s crazy...that’s throwing the ball real well,” said Young Guns manager Tristan Young. “Also he hit .744, so we had to give him the hardware.

“Pitching was the key along with our defense up the middle of McKinney, Dan Tolbert (middle infield) and Brandon Bellamy (center-field),” remarked Young. “Plus we had five hitters who hit over .700. You total that up with the defense we played and you’ll fare quite well in a tournament like this.”

Tolbert could have easily gotten the nod for MVP honors, said Young.

“We played a five-man and he turned four or five double plays,” noted Young. “He was dirty all weekend diving for everything. If he had hit a little higher he could have been named MVP.”

Bellamy also shined on defense, said Young.

“In our third and fourth games, Brandon had three assists throwing runners out. And he didn’t hit bad either at .680.”

Offensively, Tim Rovekamp hit .727 to finish second behind McKinney’s .744 effort. Tolbert batted .714, and Matt Bock .700. Dave Kessler batted .750 playing on Sunday, going 9-for-12.

“We had a lot of timely hitting,” added Young. “When you can score ten runs in an inning and bat around, that’s pretty good.”

Young Guns used that ten-run outburst to help polish off River City in the finals, 13-8.

In round robin play, the Young Guns knocked off Bailey’s 16-10 in their opener, then fell to the Hitmen 10-9 before waxing the Bad Boys, 17-6.

In the elimination round, the Young Guns used a five-run 4th and an eight-run 5th to overcome a 4-3 deficit and mercy-rule Killer Beez 17-7 in six in game one. Brandon Bellamy’s three-run blast put his club ahead to stay at 6-4 in the 4th. Then in the 5th, four consecutive doubles - a leadoff double by Brett Kostoff followed by rbi doubles by Dave Kessler, Tim Rovekamp and Dan Tolbert - made it 11-5. Chris Wessel followed with a two-run single as the lead swelled to 13-5. The Beez never recovered.

Kostoff collected four hits, and Kessler and Wessel each went 3-for-4.

In the semi-finals, Young Guns spanked Tyler Trucking 16-5 in five on the strength of a four-run 3rd, three-run 4th and a six-run 5th. Tim Rovekamp’s slammer accounted for his team’s four runs in the 3rd and put the Young Guns on top 7-2. Tristan Young’s two-run single highlighted the six-run 5th as the Young Guns broke open a 10-5 game.

Brandon Bellamy banged out four hits, and Rovekamp and David Kessler shared six for the winners.

Rovekamp cracked another key home run in the finals against River City Hitmen, this time launching a three-run shot to break a 4-4 tie in the top of the 3rd. The Hitmen came into the inning with a 4-2 lead, but the Young Guns exploded for ten runs to grab a 12-4 lead and never looked back. Matt Bock followed Rovekamp’s homer with a two-run single, then scored on a Chris Wessel triple to make it 10-4. The Hitmen answered with three in the 4th, but could only muster one more run over the final three innings against Tony McKinney. McKinney and Matt Bock combined for six hits to pace the offense.

The Young Guns’ Tristan Young felt that his team’s offensive strength would ultimately carry them to the title.

“There was no game - even the game that we lost - that we didn’t have a chance to come back and win,” said Young. “We felt that if we fell behind, we had enough good hitters that we’d be find whatever the score was.”

DIVISION ONE: River City Hitmen 3-0, Young Guns 2-1, Bad Boyz 1-2, Bailey Sports 0-3; **DIVISION TWO:** Killer Deez/Hyperion 2-1, 3M Precision 2-1, Michael’s 2-1, Double Day 0-3; **DIVISION THREE:** Long Shanks 2-1, TEG Ringers 2-1, Lagonda Machine 1-2, D & S Engineering 1-2; **DIVISION FOUR:** Tyler Trucking 3-0, DeClaire Insurance 2-1, Hogwild Saloon 1-2, Herb’s Softball/Kenny’s A’s 0-3.

**WORTH-BUD LIGHT-USSSA ONE-PITCH NIT
GOLD "A" DIVISION FINAL STANDINGS**

1. Young Guns/Amer. Made/Evil Empire, Cin., OH 3 0
2. River City Hitmen, New Albany, IN 2 1
3. DeClaire Insurance, Sardinia, OH 1 1
Tyler Trucking, Parkersburg, WV 1 1
5. 3M Precision, Cincinnati, OH 0 1
Killer Deez/Hyperion, Greenville, TN 0 1
Long Shanks, Brookville, OH 0 1
TEG Rangers, Greenville, TN 0 1

**WORTH-BUD LIGHT-USSSA ONE-PITCH NIT
GOLD "B" DIVISION FINAL STANDINGS**

1. D & S Engineering, Milford, OH 3 0
2. Herb's Softball/Kenny's A's, Johnson City, TN 2 1
3. Bailey Sports, Bristol, TN 1 1
Double Day, Bolingbrook, IL 1 1
5. Bad Boyz, Mt. Orab, OH 0 1
Hogwild Saloon, Kingsport, TN 0 1
Lagonda Machine, Washington, PA 0 1
Michael's, McDonald, PA 0 1

Caps 7th Inning, Four Run Rally In Finals...

Hunley Single Lifts Chris's Band Box To One-Pitch NIT "Silver" Title At Expressway Park

Milford, Oh.--Paul Hunley's rbi single in the bottom of the 7th capped off a four-run rally and gave Chris's Band Box a dramatic 15-14 come-from-behind victory over Liberty Mechanical in the championship game of "Silver" division of the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA One-Pitch National Invitational September 27-28 at Expressway Park.

The win over Liberty wrapped up a three-game sweep of the tournament's elimination round for the champions, and avenged an 11-10 loss in round robin play. Chris's Band Box had previously defeated Dirty Dozen 14-7 and ERA 16-6 in the elimination round to reach the finals.

Round robin wins over TNT (20-10) and Maniac (11-1) gave the winners a 5-1 record for the weekend.

"Controlled pitching and clutch hitting" carried Chris's to the title, said sponsor-manager Chris Mantz.

“Being a one-pitch tournament, the pitcher was very valuable in this event,” explained Mantz. “On Sunday he walked only three batters in three games, which had a lot to do with many of our victories. We received six to eight walks per game by the opposing pitchers, which set up opportunities for base hits and high scores.”

Jim Watkins handled mound duties for the winners.

Walks and clutch hitting enabled Chris’s to rally from behind in the finals and avenge a tough loss in pool play action, said Mantz.

“We had lost to Liberty in the bottom of the 7th earlier in the tournament. Then in the bottom of the 7th in the championship game, we were down three runs and again, walks played some part in our comeback as they walked two batters that allowed us to score four runs and overcome a three-run deficit.”

Paul Hunley, who delivered the big blow in the bottom of the 7th to plate Steve Martin with the game winner, hit a team high .750 to pace the offense. Dave Kidwell followed at .730, Courtney Parks batted .714, Jim Watkins .692, Chad Estes .680 and Jon Shouse .667. Ray Stuchell - who only played on Saturday - hit a blistering .900. Chris’s hit a sizzling .632 as a team.

Hunley was named tournament MVP “because of his outstanding defense at 1st base,” said Mantz.

“There were many close plays and he extended himself on the bag as far as one could go to take away hits. And he had the game winning hit in the bottom of the 7th in the finals and was 18-for-24 overall to lead our team in hitting.”

Game one of the elimination round was never in doubt as Chris’s jumped out to an 11-2 lead over Dirty Dozen with five runs in the top of the 1st and six in the 2nd. Paul Hunley put his club on the board with a two-run single in the 1st. Billy Kelso followed with a two-run base hit and scored on Courtney Parks’ triple to cap off the inning. Steve Martin’s two-run single highlighted the 2nd. Dirty Dozen never recovered in an eventual 14-7 decision.

Dave Kidwell collected four hits, and Jim Watkins, Chad Estes, Hunley, Jon Shouse and Kelso combined for fifteen.

Chris’s got off to a slow start in game two, falling behind ERA 7-6 after two and a half innings. But the West Carrollton, Oh., squad rallied for three in the 3rd, four in the 4th, three in the 5th and two in the 6th to invoke the mercy-rule at 16-6. Billy Kelso put Chris’s ahead for good at 7-6 with a two-run double in the 3rd. Chad Estes and Kelso each delivered a two-run single in the 4th. Dave Kidwell’s two-run single highlighted the 5th, and Joe Dalton brought down the curtain with a two-run base hit in the 6th.

Jim Watkins and Dave Kidwell banged out four hits each to lead the winners. Jon Shouse and Kelso chipped in with three hits apiece.

That lifted Chris's into the finals against undefeated Liberty Mechanical, which had slapped an 11-10 setback on Chris's in the final pool play contest.

But this time revenge was sweet, as Chris's rallied for four runs in the bottom of the 7th to stun Liberty 15-14. A walk to Robbie Mayes and a Clint Miller single set the stage for a two-run Dave Kidwell double as the lead shrunk to one at 14-13. Steve Martin then singled home Kidwell with the tying run. Chad Estes was issued an intentional walk, and Paul Hunley followed with an rbi single to plate Martin with the game winner.

Jim Watkins contributed his second consecutive four-hit performance, and Kidwell, Martin, Chad Estes, Hunley, Billy Kelso, Robbie Mayes and Miller shared 21 hits for the champions.

Chris's manager Chris Mantz said he simply told his team to be patient in the bottom of the 7th.

"The main thing I told them was to try to coax walks," said Mantz. "We were in the bottom of the line-up and we needed to get to the top, and that is exactly what happened. The top of the order sprayed some base hits around, and we were able to get three or four clutch hits which led to the four runs."

Mantz called Liberty "an excellent ball club and they were very sportsmanlike.

"They played within themselves, and even when things weren't going their way, they continued to be good sports," said Mantz.

Mantz said the victory helped bring a satisfying finish to an otherwise "mediocre year.

"It's nice to finish well," said Mantz. "We haven't won a tournament at Expressway Park for a long time. We like coming there. Bob (park manager Bob Owens) and his crew do an excellent job. That's why we come down there and why we'll continue to come there. They run one of the finest parks around."

BUD LIGHT-USSSA ONE-PITCH NATIONAL INVITATIONAL SILVER DIVISION STANDINGS

DIVISION ONE: D & D/Dirty Dozen 3-0, Team Mayhem 2-1, B. J. Blackies 1-2, Fitzgerald Pharmacy 0-3; DIVISION TWO: Liberty Mechanical 3-0, Chris's Band Box 2-1, Maniac Softball 1-2, T & T Softball 0-3; DIVISION THREE: ERA Golden Key 3-0, Titan Health Care 1-2, Cincinnati Assault 1-2, Quad City Fence 1-2.

WORTH-BUD LIGHT-USSSA ONE-PITCH NIT SILVER "A" DIVISION FINAL STANDINGS

1. Chris's Band Box, Dayton, OH 3 0
2. Liberty Mechanical, Fairland, IN 1 1
3. Titan Health Care, Bethel, OH 1 1
- ERA Golden Key, Johnson City, TN 0 2
5. D & D/Dirty Dozen, Cincinnati, OH 0 1
- Team Mayhem, Johnson City, TN 0 1

**WORTH-BUD LIGHT-USSSA ONE-PITCH NIT
SILVER "B" DIVISION FINAL STANDINGS**

1. Maniac Softball, Elizabethton, TN 2 0
2. B. J. Blackies, Piqua, OH 2 1
3. Fitzgerald Pharmacy, Seamon, OH 1 1
- Cincinnati Assault, Cincinnati, OH 0 1
5. Quad City Fence, Johnson City, TN 0 1
- T & T Softball, Johnson City, TN 0 1

**Crosley's Outlasts Ohio Onslaught 12-2 In Worth-Dick's USSSA Great Lakes
Mixed "C" Nationals At Kettering**

Crosley's Sports Bar routed Ohio Onslaught 12-2 in the second championship game to capture first place in the Worth-Dick's USSSA Great Lakes Division Mixed "C" National Tournament September 27th at Kettering Fields in Dayton.

Onslaught had forced an "if" game by spanking Crosley's 19-8 in a six inning first finals.

But Crosley's returned the favor, mercy-ruling Onslaught 12-2 to wrap up a 3-1 effort. Crosley's knocked off both the U-Trip "C" and "D" Mixed state champions en route to the title. Crosley's disposed of "D" state champion Onslaught 10-9 in their opener, then again 12-2 in the finals, and avenged a pair of "C" state losses to champion Octane in a narrow 11-9 decision in the winners' bracket finals.

Solid outfield play and timely hitting carried the champions to the title, said Crosley's manager Fred Trammel.

"We played pretty good defense," remarked Trammel. "We concentrated on our outfield getting the ball in fast. That seemed to hurt us all year. Our females did a great job of getting the ball in and kept runners out of scoring position.

"We also hit the ball pretty good," added Trammel. "The women hit better than the men. The men hit the ball consistently, but the women stood out."

Zac Busam (.714) and Punky Kater (.700) paced the offense for the winners. Annie Neuman followed at .692, and Dave Kessler and Jeremy Spears hit .636.

Neumann, who hit a three-run inside-the-park home run to beat High Octane in the winners' bracket finals, was named tournament MVP.

"We felt like High Octane had been our nemesis all year," said Trammel. "They beat us four times. That inside-the-park home run was a big momentum swing for us. She also hit .692 and played good defense in left-centerfield."

Outfielders Busam, Kessler and Kater and additional hitter-1st baseman Spears were named to the All-Tournament team.

"Zac's our leadoff hitter and he batted .714 and was on base all day," said Trammel. "Dave always seemed to come up with some clutch hits at opportune moments for us. And Punky played both both sides of the ball really well. All our outfielders made it (the All-Tournament team), so that says a lot about the way they played all weekend."

Trammel called Spears "our real power guy.

"He came up with a lot of clutch hits for us and did a real good job," said Trammel.

Crosley's scored three runs in the 3rd to erase a 3-2 deficit, tacked on two in the 5th and three in the 6th to build a 10-5 lead, then held off a four run rally in the top of the 7th to fend off Ohio Onslaught 10-9 in game one. Dave Kessler's three-run blast accounted for his club's three runs in the 3rd. Jeremy Spears tripled home two runs and scored on a Dana Hott single in the 6th. Pitcher Ronnie Smith induced Onslaught's leadoff hitter to fly out to left-fielder Dave Kessler to get out of a two-out, bases loaded jam in the 7th.

Nine Crosley's batters - Annie Neumann, Kessler, Ken Kramer, Zac Busam, Smith, Shawaneda Pittman, Spears, T. J. Kroth and Punky Kater - combined for eighteen hits for the winners.

Crosley's needed five runs in the top of the 7th to get past High Octane 11-9 in the winners' bracket finals. Rbi singles by Punky Kater and Zac Busam followed a leadoff double by Dana Hott and cut a 9-6 deficit to two. Then Annie Neumann delivered the big blow of the day, a three-run, inside-the-park home run to give her club an 11-9 advantage. Octane threatened in the bottom of the 7th, putting their first batter on with a single. Ronnie Smith retired the next two hitters, but an Octane single put the tying run at the plate. Smith finally shut down the rally, as the next batter popped out to T. J. Kroth at short to end the game.

Busam and Kater banged out three hits each, and Hott, Kenny Kramer and Shawaneda Pittman each went 2-for-3.

Ohio Onslaught then sent Octane packing in the losers' bracket finals, and avenged their first round loss to Crosley's with a six-inning, 19-8 drilling. But the championship game was all Crosley's. The Cincinnati club jumped out to a 7-0 lead with four in the 1st and three in the 2nd, then sealed a 12-2, six inning rout with a five-run 5th.

Jeremy Spears' two-run shot capped off the four-run 1st. Dave Kessler contributed a key two-run single in both the 2nd and 5th. Spears, Kessler, Zac Busam and Annie Neumann collected three hits apiece, and Ronnie Smith chipped in two for the champions.

Scoring early in the second finals was a big key for Crosley's, said manager Fred Trammel.

"After getting drilled in the first game, coming out and scoring four was huge because we were visitors again," said Trammel.

Trammel is cautiously optimistic that his team's success in the nationals will be a springboard into the USSSA mixed world.

"We're ready to see what we've got, although we're not quite sure what to expect when we get down there since this is our first year with a mixed team," noted Trammel. "We're playing pretty good right now, so we hope it carries into the world."

Trammel said his team's unselfishness has been instrumental in good team chemistry.

"I appreciated everybody on the team sacrificing a little bit," observed Trammel. "Everybody starts on either a men's or women's team, so to make some people catch on when they're not used to doing that was big. Their doing that was good for our team chemistry."

October 4-5...

Late Rallies Lift Long Shanks To Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D" Fall State Title At Expressway Park

Milford, Oh.--Long Shanks won two of their five games in their final at bat, including a 15-14 contest with the Renegades in the championship game, to capture first place in the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA Men's Class "D" Fall State Tournament October 4-5 at Expressway Park.

The champions outscored their opponents 65-41 en route to a five game sweep of the twelve-team affair. Long Shanks rallied for three runs in the bottom of the 7th to polish off the Renegades in the finals, scoring the winning run on a walk-off single by Mark Kaufman.

Long Shanks manager Shane Dancer credited his club's championship to maintain scoring outbursts by stringing together hits and some outstanding individual defensive performances.

"Stringing together hits was the key to winning the tournament, especially in the last inning of the championship game against the Renegades," said Dancer. "They're a very

good team. Both teams were hitting back and forth. We kept the ball in the park with good, clean base hits.”

Robby Meyers (1f), Dean Miller (middle infield) and tournament MVP John Cross (1b) anchored the defense, said Dancer.

“Robby made a lot of all-out diving catches, catches in the hole and running into the fence catches,” said Dancer. “He gave a hundred percent the whole tournament. And Dean Miller made a lot of great defensive plays and turned a lot of double plays by himself.”

John Cross “sparked us and kept the team up” with his play, said Dancer.

“He played good defense at 1st base, a position that he never plays,” noted Dancer. “And he had a huge rbi double in the last game. He definitely sparked us and kept the team up. When we got down, he pumped us back up and kept us in the game.”

Long Shanks sandwiched three routs between two one run games on their way to the title, as they out-dueled Castle Bail Bonds 14-13 in their opener, then brushed aside Boot Hill 17-7, Hack Shack 15-8 and Clark Dudley 13-8 prior to rallying past the Renegades in the finale.

Against Castle, John Kopilchack’s one-out, walk-off solo in the bottom of the 7th enabled Long Shanks to dodge a bullet in game one. Robbie Meyers collected four hits to pace the offense.

Then after blowing by Boot Hill 17-7 in six and Hack Shack 15-8, Meyers and Brian Pfenning combined for six hits to help their club dispose of Clark/Dudley 13-8.

The Renegades were poised to force an “if” game as they took a 14-12 lead into the bottom of the 7th in the finals. But Matt Foote tripled with one out and scored on John Cross’ double to cut the deficit to one at 14-13. James Elliott then tripled home Cross with the tying run, then trotted home with the game winner on Mark Kaufman’s walk-off single.

Foote pounded out four hits for the champions. Meyers, John Kopilchack Shane Dancer and Kaufman shared a dozen hits.

Long Shanks manager Shane Dancer concluded by thanking Expressway Park for a “well-run tournament.

“Expressway always runs a good tournament,” commented Dancer. “They keep their fields nice. It’s our favorite place to play by far. Every time you go there things are well-run.”

Down-N-Dirty Outlasts D & D Dirty Dozen 16-5 In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" Fall State Finals At Armco Park

Lebanon, Oh.--Down-N-Dirty Softball held off D & D Dirty Dozen 16-5 in the second championship game to capture first place in the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" Fall State Tournament October 3-4 at Armco Park.

Dirty Dozen ambushed Down-N-Dirty 19-6 in five innings in the first finals to force an "if" game in the 25-team affair, but Down-N-Dirty got the best of Dirty Dozen in the rubber match of a three-game struggle between the two finalists to wrap up a 5-1 weekend. Down-N-Dirty had previously bested Dirty Dozen 10-3 in the winners' bracket finals.

Defense, pitching, and a solid offense carried the champions to the title, said manager Ernie Russell.

"Our defense is always there," said Russell. "If we hit, we win. And our pitcher, Timmy Cowgill, did an excellent job on the mound and fielded the ball well. He threw a lot of strikes and didn't walk many guys. He only gave up double digits in two games."

The defense was anchored by Jimmy Smith, Matt Walton and Brandon Spencer, said Russell.

"Jimmy played spectacular in right field," observed Russell. "He has a great arm and threw out a couple guys and made a couple plays against the fence."

Russell said Walton was "unbelievable with the glove at 3rd base.

"He made a lot of diving catches and had a couple plays where he beat the runner on bang-bang plays at 1st because of his arm."

Spencer, who was named tournament MVP, "played a great right centerfield," said Russell. "He made four or five diving catches during the tournament and threw a couple guys out trying to take 2nd. He had an all-around great tournament."

Spencer also batted .682 and collected nine rbi's, noted Russell.

Smith (.863, 11 rbi's) and Russell (.833, 8 rbi's) led Down-N-Dirty offensively and were named to the all-state team along with Chris Tarter and Ryan Holly.

Brandon Wenning chipped in with a .692 weekend, including a pair of inside-the-park home runs.

Down-N-Dirty brushed past Sibcy Cline 12-6 in their opener, blowing open a 7-6 game with five runs in the top of the 4th. Down-N-Dirty jumped out to a 6-0 lead in the top of the 1st on the strength of a two-run double by Jimmy Smith and rbi doubles by Davey

Staton and Josh Tarter. Smith banged out four hits, and Brandon Wenning, Ryan Holly and Josh Hudson each went 3-for-4.

Game two almost sent Down-N-Dirty into the losers' bracket, as they entered the bottom of the 7th trailing West End 14-8. A furious charge highlighted by a Brandon Spencer two-run triple cut the deficit to 14-13, then Chris Tarter delivered a clutch two-run single to score B. G. Gross and Brandon Wenning to help keep Down-N-Dirty in the winners' bracket.

Ryan Holly was perfect in four trips to the plate, while Wenning, Brian Spencer, Davey Staton, Matt Walton. Brandon Spencer and Gross combined for 18 hits.

Down-N-Dirty needed to rally from behind again in game three, scoring eight runs in the bottom of the 3rd to overcome a 9-3 deficit and grab an 11-9 advantage. A pair of two-run singles - one by Ryan Holly and another by B. G. Gross - helped knot the score at 9-9. Chris Tarter then singled in the go-ahead run. The eventual champions added five runs in the bottom of the 5th to break the game open and close out the scoring. A three-run blast by Jimmy Smith capped off the inning. Pitcher Timmy Cowgill held Dawg Pound to one run over the last four innings.

Tarter and Brian Spencer shared eight hits, and Smith, Brandon Spencer, Gross and Brandon Wenning chipped in with three apiece.

Next Down-N-Dirty polished off D & D Dirty Dozen in the winners' bracket finals 10-3. A five-run 3rd erased a 2-1 deficit and put Down-N-Dirty ahead for good at 6-2. Jimmy Russell drove in the go-ahead run with an rbi single. Ernie Russell followed with a two-run single to make it 5-2. The lead swelled to 10-3 in the 6th when Brandon Spencer tripled home two runs and scored on an Ernie Russell base hit.

Russell and Timmy Cowgill collected four hits each, and Smith and Spencer each went 3-for-4.

Dirty Dozen rallied to dispose of All-State/Interactive Mortgage in the losers' bracket finals, then spanked Down-N-Dirty 19-6 in the first championship game. But the finals was all Down-N-Dirty, as they erupted for five runs in the top of the 1st and never looked back as they went on to mercy-rule D & D 16-5 in six. Down-N-Dirty tacked on one in the 2nd and 3rd, three in the 5th and four in the 6th to seal the win. Ryan Holly launched a three-run home run and Brandon Spencer added a two-run single to account for their club's five-run outburst in the 1st. Ernie Russell's two-run single capped off the 4th as the lead mushroomed to 10-4. Brian Spencer singled in two runs in the 6th and B. G. Gross doubled home a pair of runs to close out the scoring in the 6th.

Jimmy Smith, Brian Spencer and Brandon Wenning pounded out four hits each for the champions. Ernie Russell added three.

Getting past West End in the second round proved to be the pivotal game for Down-N-Dirty.

“We were down 14-8 in the bottom of the 7th and scored seven runs with no outs,” recalled manager Ernie Russell. “We were kinda down going into the bottom of the inning, but we huddled up and I told the guys to leave it on the field. Then Davey Staton led off with a single and after that it was contagious. We just hit the crap out of it. Chris Tarter came up with the bases loaded and doubled into right field. Every time we’re in a situation like that, it seems like he’s up to bat and always comes through.”

Ohmart Vega, Wicked Wayz Sweep Expressway Park Divisions

Milford, Oh.--Ohmart Vega and Wicked Wayz each swept to 3-0 record to capture their respective division titles in an eight team, two division round robin on Sunday, October 5th at Expressway Park.

Ohmart Vega shut out Panama Red (2-2) 13-0 in their opener, then knocked off CJay’s (0-3) 7-1 before out-dueling Panama Red 17-13 in the division one finale.

While in division two, Wicked Wayz spanked Point Inn (2-1) 18-6 in a key first round match-up with the eventual runners-up, then out-slugged I’d Hit It (1-2) 18-17 and UAW 863 Xplosion (0-3) 25-22 to complete the sweep.

October 11-12...

Buzz Romps Past Expressway Park Round Robin Field

Milford, Oh.--Buzz outscored three opponents by a 53-15 margin en route to a first place finish in a Saturday morning round robin October 11th at Expressway Park.

Buzz steamrolled SDR Gang (1-2) 17-6, LTW Sawyer Brown (0-3) 20-3 and Timber Tech (2-1) 16-6 in the deciding contest.

October 24-25...

Kessler, Wessel Lead American Dream/Evil Empire/Wessel/Young Guns Past Jim DelMonaco Memorial Field At Pastime Park

Harrison, Oh.--Dave Kessler batted a sizzling .800, and pitcher Chris Wessel limited four opponents to a combined nine runs, to lead American Dream/Evil Empire/Wessel/Young Guns to a five game sweep of the 5th Annual Jim DelMonaco Memorial Tournament October 25th at Pastime Park.

American Dream eased past Bish’s 7-5 and M & S/Easton 8-2 before benefitting from a 7-0 forfeit win in round robin play, then mercy-ruled Cope Sports 17-1 in four innings and Hard Knocks 15-1 in five in the elimination round to complete the sweep.

Defense, the pitching of Chris Wessel, and the torrid hitting performance of Dave Kessler were the keys to winning the championship, said American Dream manager Tristan Young.

“Danny Tolbert in the middle and Zach Meyers at short turned seven double plays,” said Young. “Chris Wessel, our pitcher, was our defensive MVP. He held our four opponents to only nine runs. That was a pretty good feat. He pitched out of a few jams and obviously had some good defense behind him.”

The tournament didn’t present an MVP award, but if it had, Dave Kessler would have won it, said Young.

“Dave only made two outs, and one of those came on a heckuva diving play by Bish’s centerfielder,” noted Young. “He also hit well with runners in scoring position.”

Following Kessler’s team high .800 average were Chris Wessel at .750, Frank Andriola at .733, Brad Louallen at .700 and Zach Meyers at .600.

Young called Andriola “flat out fast.

“He’s committed to EAP next year, and he’s going to be a heckuva pickup. He goes and gets it, and he hit .733 in the leadoff spot,” said Young.

American Dream had to rally for four runs in the bottom of the 6th to escape with a narrow 7-5 victory over Bish’s in their round robin opener. Brandon Bellamy’s two-run, inside-the-park home run broke a 5-5 tie in the 6th. Chris Wessel and Frank Andriola combined for six hits, and Zach Meyers chipped in with a 2-for-3 effort. Chris Wessel held Bish’s scoreless in the top of the 7th to preserve the win.

M & S/Easton fell next 8-2 as Brad Louallen, Dave Kessler and Brandon Bellamy shared six hits. Then a 7-0 forfeit win over BMF gave American Dream a 3-0 record heading into the elimination round.

A five-run 1st, seven-run 2nd and a five-run 3rd helped American Dream brush aside Cope Sports 17-1 in four innings in game one. Matt Bock’s two-run double capped off the 1st. A two-run double by Chris Wessel highlighted the 2nd, while a pair of two-run home runs by Danny and Steve Tolbert accounted for four of their club’s five runs in the 3rd.

Frank Andriola banged out three hits to pace the offense. Danny and Steve Tolbert pitched in with two hits each.

In the finals American Dream used a four-run 3rd and a nine-run 5th to break open a 2-0 contest and level Hard Knocks 15-1 in five. Brad Louallen’s two-run shot put his team ahead 5-0 in the 3rd. Dave Kessler delivered the big blow in the 5th, a three-run blast to

increase the lead to 10-1. Later in the inning Tristan Young added a two-run single make it 14-1.

Frank Andriola nearly hit for the cycle with a double, triple and a home run. Kessler also collected three hits, and Matt Bock added two hits for the champions.

Some heavy winds accounted for the low scores in the first two games, commented American Dream's Tristan Young.

"The wind was blowing in very hard on the back two fields," said Young. "We didn't hit a home run until the fourth game except for an inside-the-parker. The wind was a big factor."

Young said his team has the Jim DelMonaco Memorial - held in honor of former Pastime Park manager Jim DelMonaco, who died of cancer - on their calendar each year.

"In my five years playing softball, we've always played in the Jim DelMonaco Memorial," said Young. "The new owners did a good job running the tournament. It's a nice way to wrap up the year. We just relaxed and had fun."

"We didn't think we'd play because of the weather, but Pastime's ground crew did an excellent job. Those were some of the best infields we've played on," said Young.

Young said his team would miss the previous owners, John and Diane Herbert and their son, David.

"They did a great job keeping the competition fair, and did everything in their power to make the game fun. They accommodated the players very well. We had a great time playing at the park. Hopefully Marty and Steve (new owners Marty and Steve Bruck) can carry on that tradition."