

Publisher's Comments by Mark Linnemann

Thinking about purchasing a “juiced” or “painted” bat from one of the internet “bat doctors” or perhaps from one of their sales reps who peddle their “wares” out of their automobile trunks while competing with area teams?

You might want to think again.

Jail time and your life savings may hang in the balance.

The Amateur Softball Association, in conjunction with Rawlings Sporting Goods and Wilson Sports, recently announced the filing of a federal lawsuit against two bat doctors “that knowingly committed trademark infringement against an ASA federally registered trademark in addition to violating the intellectual property rights from some of ASA’s industry partners.”

Suddenly, all the saber-rattling rhetoric by the associations about suspending individuals who partake in this black art, and all the finger-pointing and blame-gaming by participants who expect the organizations to be at every softball park across the country on every night to protect them from the use of softball’s “stealth” weapons, have moved to the back burner.

A new strategy - one forecast by Softball Magazine last fall - may be able to accomplish what the risk of losing a bat or of a one year or two year or even a lifetime suspension never could: ridding the game of this insidious plague.

Last October and then again in the fall issue of Softball Magazine, Stephen Orel, a New York city attorney, wrote a pair of articles outlining how bat companies and associations could utilize federal and state trademark and unfair competition laws to put bat doctors out of business.

The Amateur Softball Association, Rawlings and Wilson must have been listening.

According to Orel, illegal or altered bats fall into two categories: “juiced” or “doctored” bats vs. “painted” bats.

“Juiced” or “doctored” bats have enlarged sweetspots to increase their power. They may have had their walls shaved or added extra end loading. Or a rod added by the manufacturer to comply with safety standards may have been removed.

The introduction of composite bats in 2002 started a crisis that caused the ASA to completely revise its bat testing methodology. A new standard was adopted prohibiting the exit speed of a batted ball from exceeding 98 mph. “A ball hit faster would reach a pitcher too fast for human reaction time to allow a defense,” says Orel.

Bats that meet ASA's test - pursuant to a licensing agreement between ASA and the manufacturer - can be certified, and the manufacturer is permitted to display a symbol signifying ASA's seal of approval. This symbol is known legally as a "certification mark," which is regulated under the federal trademark statute known as the "Lanham Act."

Until now, enforcing the use of legal bats - believed to be widespread - has been all but impossible. USSSA's website notes that a handful of "bat doctors" have pledged to "exit the business." It is assumed this was in exchange for not being suspended or perhaps the lifting of a suspension.

Personally, I believe a suspension for someone who puts others in danger of being injured and who has undermined the integrity and credibility of the game of softball is far too lenient. Last year my 53-year old wife pitched in a Cincinnati Recreation Commission mixed couples league, and I for one view these altered bats as instruments that - in the wrong hands - could potentially have killed her. Kicking someone out of softball hardly seems like a sufficient penalty for someone who is involved in such a reckless activity.

In his articles, Orel stated that associations and bat companies can seek an injunction against bat doctors, as well as damages sustained, lost profits and court costs. In "exceptional" cases, attorneys fees can be awarded. More significantly, where a trademark is counterfeited, plaintiffs can seek statutory damages as high as \$1,000,000 per counterfeit mark if the usage is deemed "willful."

Orel believes that "painted" bats, bats which have been stripped of their original markings and had new paint and counterfeit decals applied, present the greatest exposure to bat doctors of civil and criminal liability. Bat painters "not only face civil trademark lawsuits," says Orel, they are "violating the copyrights of companies."

This is serious business, says Orel. Under the 1984 Trademark Counterfeiting Act passed by Congress, we're talking about up to ten years in prison and a \$5,000,000 fine. And for teammates who share painted bats, be aware that the government could find you guilty of "trafficking" in violation of this law.

There are also state laws that criminalize such conduct and make it a felony, including one in Alabama, for example, that makes it a criminal offense for "tampering with a sports contest."

If a bat painter uses a copyrighted logo or artwork, the infringer is exposed to both civil and criminal liability. Statutory damages of up to \$150,000 PER INFRINGEMENT (read: PER BAT) can be awarded in certain circumstances, along with costs and attorneys fees.

Need more reasons to dissuade you from bat doctoring?

Orel says that in 1996, “Congress added both trademark counterfeiting and criminal copyright infringement to the list of unlawful activities that constitute ‘predicate’ acts under RICO, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act.” Some bat painting “enterprises” may fit into this scheme, and places of business engaged in bat painting could be seized and owners and employees jailed. “Owners of auto body shops (for example) who use their property for bat painting...are putting their livelihoods as well as their freedom at risk,” says Orel.

Forget about being suspended by ASA or USSSA. Bat painters and painted bat users are likely violating state and federal trademark laws. Businesses could be seized and violators jailed under RICO. And there may be additional legal exposure for teammates, coaches, and sponsors that may facilitate the use of illegal equipment if someone is injured.

The use of doctored and painted bats has given the game of softball a black eye for long enough. It may even be contributing to its decline. The Amateur Softball Association, Rawlings and Wilson are to be commended for taking action against those who are obviously involved in softball for the wrong reasons. One can only have profound respect for organizations and businesses who desire to protect their patrons as well as their own good name.

In My Opinion by Ron Jeffers

This is the third in a series of drills for umpire instructors to use in teaching new and veteran umpires alike the mechanics of umpiring. Umpiring is not rocket science, but it does take hustle and the ability to follow a few basic rules to get the calls right and to be successful. The first thing you have to have is someone who truly wants to be a good umpire, and someone willing to put the effort into developing their skills.

Umpiring is not very much fun, until you get good at it. In fact it can be the worst experience of your life until you get the knowledge and experience it takes to master this craft, then it can be great fun. I want it to be fun for you, and I truly do want you to be the best you can be. That is why I am writing this series, but my greatest fear is no one will take the time to try these time proven drills with the umpires in their own local umpire associations. If that does in fact happen, the park directors, fans, players and umpires will all suffer and the game of softball will continue to go the way of typewriters and carbon paper.

Umpires should never ever turn their back on a live ball. They need to keep the ball, the runner and the base all in front of them. Umpires should also never backpeddle. Umpires should turn and run toward their pre-determined destination, in the same manner a defensive back, in football, would cover a wide receiver while keeping a watchful eye on the ball.

The players will always tell everyone to what base they are going to throw the ball. Fielders always first look and then step toward the base where they are going to throw the ball, and umpires must react appropriately to the respective player's actions.

Getting close to a play makes an umpire's decision more believable, but getting close to the play is not the most important ingredient in getting the call right. The umpire's getting into the best possible position to have the angle he needs to get the call correct is paramount. A good example of this is each base has four sides to it, but usually only one side of the base is important on any given call. The umpire must strive to reach the position on the field where he can see the ball, the runner, and the one side of the base a runner will be sliding into. For example, if the runner is coming from second base into third base, the important side of the base is the side facing second, so the umpire would want to be about eight feet from third base facing left field. After the runner slides into that side of third base, the important side of the base and angle now changes. Now the important side of the base is the side facing home plate, and the umpire now needs to move to a position, where he is still watching the ball, and facing the third base coach's box. If the ball got away from the third baseman the only side of the third base bag that is now relevant is the side facing home plate. That is the side of the base the runner will always come back to, and the umpire must know this, and be willing to move to be in the best possible position to see and make the next call.

The umpire can never be in a position where he allows the fielder or the runner to be between him and the tag. No matter how close you are you have to have the correct angle to get the call right. Never call the runner out unless or until you tell the fielder "show me the ball." After you are shown the ball, then call the runner out. Making a call quickly does not make it believable. What the umpire does with his facial expression, voice, timing and energy in his signal will sell the call and make it believable. Show me an umpire who makes an out call immediately followed by a safe call, and I will show you an umpire whose mechanics and judgment stink.

To practice this drill and play at third base we need a line of runners at second base, and a line of umpires coming from behind the catcher at home plate. We need an outfielder in short right or centerfield, a third baseman and a catcher. The umpire students need to rotate between being the umpire and the runner at second base. The instructor will position himself near the third base coach's box, and yell "go" when everything is ready. The umpire will run out from behind home plate on the left side of the catcher, and go out in the infield to call "out" after the fielder has tossed the ball in the air, caught the ball and taken it out of his glove to throw it. Remember it is never an out on any catch until the ball is voluntarily released from the glove of the person catching it, so have the outfielder drop one occasionally. When the ball is first touched by the outfielder the runner at second is free to tag up and advance. After the umpire makes the out call, he then must hustle to third base to get in the appropriate position for the call at that base. Make certain he does not take his eye off the ball while he is running to third base. If the ball gets away at third base have the runners advance to home or start for home and come back to third for a play retreating to third. The umpire must hustle to make the call wherever the base and play happens to end in an out.

This is a great drill to work on the umpires hustle, positioning, timing, footwork, agility, angles and etc. Do not allow the umpires to make an out call until the ball is voluntarily removed from the glove. Do not let them turn their back on the ball. Make certain they are moving quickly to get the correct view of the play at every base. This drill will tell you volumes about the quality, or lack thereof, of your umpires, and it will quickly tell who in your group truly does want to be the best they can be, and who wants to put out the least amount of effort to get their money.

Parks that are serious about having a good umpire program will start on the field umpire training programs using these drills to train their umpires, and the rest will continue as usual and hope their umpire program will someday and somehow get better. I originated, developed and trained the first umpire schools for softball umpires in the world, and graduates from those schools are still working the NCAA World Series, Olympics and Major National Championships. You cannot teach anyone to umpire in a classroom. Rules, yes. But it takes drills like these to develop decent umpires.

That is my opinion. What is yours?

What's Your Gripe by Ron Jeffers

Q. Mr. Jeffers, I have a question fo you. I have asked everyone - even many umpires - and I get a different answer every time I ask this question.

If a batter hits a ball toward the pitcher off to the first base side, and the pitcher fields it and runs over to put a tag on the runner, but then the runner starts going backward a little to buy time for a runner to advance from 2nd to 3rd, is that legal? I know that you can do that on any base, but I was not sure about between home and first. If it is legal or illegal, can you point out to me where in the rule book it states the rule? I have looked all up and down that book trying to find an answer but to no avail. This has become an interesting topic with a lot of the guys around the parks, and I just want to know where it says one way or the other.

**Sincerely,
Kevin Henn
Sentry Fire/Apex/LBYC Softball Team**

A. To avoid being tagged out, or to avoid being hit with a batted or thrown ball, a base runner can stop running between any bases without penalty. The base runner can even run back toward the base he came from, or last occupied, too, except for one situation. The batter-runner can stop on his way to first base, but he is to be called out immediately if he retreats back toward home plate to avoid being tagged with the ball.

The ASA rule to cover your situation play is as follows. Rule 8 Section 2,H The rule reads as follows: When the batter-runner steps back toward home plate to avoid or delay

a tag by a fielder. EFFECT – The ball is dead and runner (s) must return to the last base legally touched at the time of the interference.

The theory behind this rule is the batter cannot return to home plate, so he or she should not be allowed to make any movement back in that direction, to avoid or delay being tagged out

My personal philosophy on rules is they should be like minnie skirts. Short enough to hold my attention, yet long enough to cover the essentials. For years now the “Playing Rules Gods” of the Amateur Softball Association have been making multiple rules changes every year, and now they are stuck with a book that no longer serves the umpires, players, managers or directors well. The book, over time, has become cumbersome for everyone and very poorly written. It would be money well spent to hire a good technical writer to sit down with Creg Cress, ASA’s new czar of umpiring, and re-write the entire playing rules book, with an appropriate usable index. Even after the skim off, the organization has millions of dollars in revenues from the past Olympic Games that they could easily afford to change this most important book into a much more usable instrument. You and every other player should be able to easily find, read and understand the rule to cover each and every situation that occurs in a game, without having to rely on getting a ruling from someone like myself. With all the modern technology and computer software that is available today this rule book an instrument of the dark ages.

Now remember, “have the runner stop running closer to home, and not take a step backward.” This way you can accomplish what you want to do, and there is NO penalty for doing this. Force the fielder to throw the ball to first base or come after the batter-runner to tag him.

Q. Dear Ron: in our game recently there were runners at 1st and 2nd base with no outs, and someone hit a popup in the infield. The umpire called “infield fly if fair.” The runner on 1st took off and on his way to 2nd, ran into the 1st baseman and interfered with his ability to catch the ball. The ball fell untouched and rolled foul in front of 1st base. What’s the proper call on this play?

A. The batter-runner is OUT as soon as the umpire makes the determination that the ball can be caught routinely in the infield area, there are less than two outs and there are runners on first and second bases. The umpire will call out “INFIELD FLY”, and the base runners can advance at there own risk.

The ball, in all likelihood, would have been caught had the base runner not collided with the first baseman, so the umpire should call “DEAD BALL” as soon as the interference by the runner occurred, and you would have two outs. The batter-runner is out, as a result of the infield fly rule, and the runner on first is out for interfering with the attempted catch of the first baseman. The runner on second base must go back to second base, and now we have two outs.

Yes, I do know an infield fly must be a fair batted ball, but the interference by the first baseman prevented the ball both from being touched and caught in fair ground.

Q. I was watching a high school baseball game at Loveland High School recently, and the plate umpire made a call I have never seen before. There was a runner on first base, with no one out, when the batter hit a ground ball to the shortstop. The shortstop fielded the ball, threw to the second baseman that stepped on the bag and made the throw on to first base, where the base umpire called the batter-runner "safe." The plate umpire then said the batter-runner was out too, because the runner sliding into second base slid over and beyond the base.

The plate umpire's explanation to the fans was "the runner must stop his slide at the base, and it is an act of interference if his slide carries him over and beyond the base." Is there a rule like this in baseball or softball or was this just an over zealous umpire?

A. I have not kept up with the National Federation "High School" rules since I retired from the game, but I do know there is no rule like this in college baseball, softball or professional baseball. The rules do not require a baserunner to slide into any base at any level of any of these games, but the rules in all of them does require the baserunner to slide close enough to the base that he or she could reach to either side and touch the base. There is no rule or penalty for oversliding a base in any of the games I mentioned, and I am certain it is not a high school rule either. Even the people who make the federation rules aren't that dumb.

Yes, I did say "you do not have to slide." You may take a throw in the middle of your face or forehead if you do not slide or at least duck going into second base. But by rule you do not have to slide. Running directly toward second base is not a rules violation provided the runner does not raise his arms and or hands in the air to distract the throw. The movement would be and act of interference by the base runner.

Going into home plate, if the fielder has the ball, the runner must try to run around the fielder or jump over him if he elects not to slide, but the rule again does not require the base runner to slide.

I have known several great players such as Hall of Famer Tommy Taylor who refused to slide and never did. Again, remember, sliding into any base is not required. Not now, nor ever.

The plate umpire was bush league fore getting into an argument with the parents and fans. He needs to get more involved in doing his job properly, and stop talking to the fans and worrying about them. Not one of those people came to the game that day to see him, and/or his bush league call. A good umpire knows when to umpire and when to let the play take care of itself. Umpiring can be tough enough when you know what you are doing. Learn the rules of the game, why they are there, and then how and when to

enforce them, and you won't make calls like this that only bring the attention to them and make them look stupid and amateurish.

CRC Summer Softball League Registration Begins May 1st; Fall Season Registration Begins In July

The Cincinnati Recreation Commission begins registration for the 2006 Summer Softball season on May 1st. Registration will continue until leagues are filled. Leagues will begin on Sunday, June 11th, or as soon as spring leagues are completed. Leagues are offered for Co-Rec and Men's teams, and all games in the summer season will be played at Schmidt fields.

The league fee for an eight game season is \$285 for the Sunday unlighted league and \$350 for all other leagues. The league fee includes umpire fees, bases and balls. The league fee is due at the time of registration. The Sports Supervisor will consider a \$100 down payment to hold your spot. Your registration is not complete without the payment. Final payment must be made two weeks before the start of the summer season.

Applications And Payments

Applications and payments will be accepted at the CRC Athletic Office Monday through Friday from 8:00 a. m. until 4:30 p. m. Payment may be made with cash (in person only), check, money order or Visa/MasterCard. Credit card payments for applications that are faxed (352-1605) or submitted online (www.cincyrec.org) require that you phone the Athletic Division with the credit card number and expiration date to complete the registration process.

Refunds

No entry fees will be refunded after league schedules have been completed unless the league supervisor is unable to place your team in one of the leagues. Teams withdrawing prior to completion of league schedules will be assessed a \$25 service charge for clerical and material fees.

Rosters

Rosters are due in the Athletics office before the first played game. Rosters and rule books are available on the web site.

League Packets

Packets must be picked up at the CRC Athletic office prior to your first game. Schedules and rosters will be emailed out.

Advisory Committee

Anyone interested in serving on the email Advisory Committee please contact Ron Odenbeck at 352-1627. This is your chance to help CRC improve the softball program.

Fall Season

Fall season registration will begin in July.

CRC Leagues To Offer USSSA World, National, State Tournament Berths

All Cincinnati Recreation Commission men's, women's, mixed couples and black american leagues will again offer berths into USSSA championship tournaments in 2005.

Men's, women's and mixed leagues will offer berths into both State Championship and Great Lakes Division National Championship Tournaments. Black American teams will be awarded World Tournament berths from the Sunday Salway leagues.

In men's, women's and mixed leagues, a berth into the Ohio USSSA State Championship will be awarded to the first, second and third place teams in each league. A berth to the USSSA Great Lakes Division National Championship Tournament will be awarded to the first place team in each league.

A berth to the USSSA Black American World Tournament will be awarded to the first place finishers in the Salway (Sunday) league.

Teams accepting berths are responsible for paying their own entry fee. The CRC League Supervisor and USSSA officials will determine the proper team classification. Tournament packages for Great Lakes Division National Tournaments and Ohio State Tournaments will be mailed to eligible teams by the USSSA. Teams must meet USSSA eligibility requirements to advance.

DeMarini to Award Prize Package Over 3 Classes... Softball Magazine's Championship Tournament Series Returns

For the fifth year in a row, Cincinnati has been chosen as one of Softball Magazine's seven stops for the 2006 Championship Tournament Series. "We have been coming to Cincinnati and partnering with Cincinnati Softball News for five straight years. We could not ask for a better partner to help us promote our Championship Tournament Series in the Ohio/Kentucky area," said Bob Grey, Advertising and Promotions Director for Softball Magazine. "When you combine the teamwork and great partnership we have developed with Wessel Sports and Dave Maury at their facilities across the greater Cincinnati area, it becomes a real easy decision for everyone involved to have Cincinnati as one of our premier stops on the tour."

This year's Championship Tournament Series stop will feature three different classes at three different Wessel Sports park locations. The date for the tournaments is set for the weekend of June 10-11. The tournaments are sponsored in part by and are sanctioned by

USSSA, with the men's class "E" being played at Pastime Park in Harrison, OH, the "D" at Rivershore Sportsplex in Hebron, KY, and the men's "C" will take place at Eggleston Park in Cincinnati, OH. Teams at all three locations will be battling not only for normal NIT and tournament prize packages, but also the top finishing teams will receive thousands of dollars in DeMarini gear that will be distributed throughout the three different classes and locations.

"We are very happy to have Cincinnati as our stop this year in Softball Magazine's series," said Jeff LeRiche, DeMarini's National Softball Promotions Manager. "The Ohio/Kentucky area is known as one of the hotbeds for softball around the nation and DeMarini is excited about sponsoring a weekend of softball across the greater Cincinnati area and getting to do it over three different classes."

From bats, gear bags, t-shirts, hats and more, DeMarini will be supplying the goods that the teams will be playing for. If that is not enough, then hold on to your softballs, since the teams that win each class, along with action shots, will be featured in an upcoming edition of Softball Magazine. So, not only are there chances to win great DeMarini gear, but the teams also have a chance at some fame and great exposure over the pages of Softball Magazine! The staff of Softball Magazine will be on hand shooting pictures and covering all the action.

Got any questions on how the prize package works? Just ask the twenty-plus teams over the past five seasons that have won gear at the series' stops. In 2001 at the very first stop held in the Cincinnati area, a team named the Clark County Merchants took home the loot, followed by Ft. Mitchell in 2002, Wright Mulch in 2003, Jefferson Roofing in 2004 and JLC won it all in 2005.

"The teams and classification system that Mark Linnemann and the softball people of the Ohio/Kentucky area use make for some great softball action and some really close games," said Glenn Ciardiello, Softball Magazine's Promotions and Editorial Assistant/Photographer. "We hardly ever see any blowouts score-wise and we learned a long time ago to never make your plane reservations too close to the final game because you may have an "if" game due to the tough competition in the Cincy area!"

So mark your calendars or if you have something planned, change it, because if you are looking for some great softball competition and awesome DeMarini loot to go with it, call today to reserve your spot in the tournament.

For more information on the tournaments, contact Matt Adamsky at Eggleston Park at 513-385-5304 (class "C"), Patty Amrein at RiverShore Sportsplex at 859-586-4390 (class "D"), or John Herbert at Pastime Park at 513-300-5246 (class "E").

For more information on Softball Magazine's Championship Tournament Series and other Softball Magazine events, go to www.softballmag.com.

April 1-2, 2006

**In Bud Light-Louisville Slugger-USSSA “A-B” NIT Finals At Pastime Park...
Eighteen Run 5th Lifts Watanabe/Kattus/Tiny Town Pizza/Superior/B & A/TPS
Past Community Cab/Marty’s Pub/Easton**

Harrison, Oh.--Watanabe/Kattus/Tiny Town Pizza/Superior/B & A/TPS rallied for eighteen runs in the bottom of the 5th to overcome a 24-20 deficit and shell Community Cab/Marty’s Pub/Easton 38-25 in the championship game of the Bud Light-Louisville Slugger-USSSA “A-B” NIT April 1-2 at Pastime Park.

Watanabe/TPS trailed in the game 19-5 after an inning and a half and 23-9 at the midway point, but exploded for 29 runs over the next inning and a half to take control of the contest, 38-24.

The victory wrapped up a 6-0 weekend for the champions, who knocked off three round robin opponents prior to steamrolling through the tournament’s elimination bracket for the title.

Pitcher Jim Burbrink, who limited Watanabe/TPS’ first five opponents to 28 runs before Community Cab/Easton zeroed in on the veteran pitcher in the finals, was named tournament MVP. Cab rocked Burbrink for nineteen runs in the first two innings of the championship game before Shane Spicer came in to subdue the challengers, holding them to six runs in their final five at bats.

Burbrink was joined on the All-Tournament team by Brad Reckart (.760), Kevin Birkofer (.750), Ryan Minges (.708), Larry Wert (.682) and Jeff Edington (.652).

Other hitting leaders included Burbrink at .632, Jason Roesch and Rusty Scott at .625, and Tom Stevens, Tom Thompson and Shane Spicer at .571. Scott also lead Watanabe/TPS in home runs with seven.

The victory was a perfect tune-up for Greater Cincinnati’s top ranked team, said manager-sponsor Dave Watanabe.

“I was very pleased to capture a quality tournament win this early in the year,” summed up Watanabe. “(Coach) Kevin Bullock and I both agreed, having a chance to play six or seven games in early April can only help us down the road.”

In addition to getting some swings in, the tournament allowed Watanabe/TPS a chance to meld a few new players into their line-up and to experiment on defense.

“We have some newcomers, and seeing how they mesh with our mainstays was crucial,” said Watanabe. “Ryan Minges played a solid outfield and was on base consistently. Tom Stevens was exceptional at 1st base and supplied several key dingers. Rusty Scott supplied a stabilizing force at shortstop and hit with exceptional power. And Jim

Burbrink and Kevin Birkofer had key hits for us throughout the tournament, and 'Birdie' (Burbrink) was really keeping the hitters at bay.

"We moved a lot of players around and experimented with changes in the infield and outfield," continued Watanabe. "Everything ran smoothly with our infield, led by Rusty Scott and Brad Reckart, and Ryan Minges, Jason Roesch and Larry Wert were tracking 'em down in the outfield. Also Tom Stevens and Shane Spicer were solid at 1st base.

"Everything fell into place," added Watanabe. "And with a little fine-tuning, I think we'll be where we want to be."

Watanabe/TPS' offense appeared stagnant in their opener, as they eased past Wessel Sports/A&K Tile/Concepts/Blitz 7-2 behind three hits from Brad Reckart. Rusty Scott and Jason Roesch both homered and went 2-for-3.

But in game two the floodgates would open, and the eventual champions would average just under 24 runs per game in their final five contests. First Watanabe/TPS mercy ruled KA Softball, 23-8, as Jeff Edington cracked a pair of home runs and shared six hits with Kevin Birkofer. Tom Stevens also homered for the winners.

Then Larry Wert banged out four hits, including a home run, and Rusty Scott clubbed three homers in a 20-7 rout of Graystone Mortgage. Ryan Minges also homered and went 3-for-4 along with Shane Spicer.

In the elimination round Watanabe disposed of KA Softball again 17-12, overcoming a 2-1 deficit with four runs in the top of the 2nd. Shane Spicer's two run double put his club ahead to stay at 3-2. KA narrowed the lead to 8-7 after four, but Watanabe/TPS outscored the Illinois power 9-5 over the final three frames to pull away from last year's tournament runners-up. Brad Reckart homered and was perfect in four at bats, and Jim Burbrink homered and went 3-for-4 along with Larry Wert.

Watanabe/TPS jumped out to a 10-0 lead over Wessel Sports/A&K Tile/Concepts/Blitz after an inning and a half in the semi-finals and never looked back as they rolled to a 21-6 victory in five. Ryan Minges delivered an rbi triple, then rode home on Jason Roesch's sac fly to give his club a 2-0 lead in the top of the 1st. Then in the 2nd, Brad Reckart blasted a three run homer, and Rusty Scott followed with a two run shot to account for five of Watanabe's eight runs. The Blitz answered with five in the bottom of the 2nd, but Tommy Thompson belted a three run homer in the 3rd, then Watanabe added a lone run in the 4th and seven in the 5th to invoke the mercy-rule. Jason Roesch connected on a three run swat, and Tommy Thompson and Jim Burbrink each added a two run homer in the 5th. Thompson, Burbrink and Ryan Minges combined for nine hits.

Community Cab/Marty's Pub/Easton dazed Watanabe/TPS with 19 runs in the first inning and a half to explode to a 19-5 lead in the final, and after yielding four runs to Watanabe in the bottom of the 2nd built their advantage back to fourteen in the top of the 4th. But Watanabe's offense rallied behind the relief pitching of Shane Spicer, who held

Cab to six runs after the 2nd inning, erupting for 29 runs in the 4th and 5th to overwhelm their Cab 38-25. A two run sock by Brad Reckart put Watanabe ahead for good at 24-23, then Tom Stevens and Tommy Thompson each added a two run shot as the advantage swelled to 28-23.

Kevin Birkofer, Jeff Edington and Ryan Minges pounded out six hits apiece, Stevens and Jason Roesch went 5-for-6, and relief pitching hero Shane Spicer chipped in with four safeties.

Concluded Watanabe/TPS' Dave Watanabe: "(Park Owner and Manager) John Herbert and his staff did an excellent job creating a solid sixteen team field and Pastime Park was looking great."

Sweeps Past Six Opponents, Claims "B" World Berth At Pastime Park....
Storm/Wessel/Nixco/Flanagan's Ends Drought In Bud Light-Louisville Slugger-USSSA "B-C" NIT

Harrison, Oh.--As best as he can remember, the last time manager Chris Craddock's Storm softball team won a National Invitational Tournament was in 1997.

"The last time we won any big tournament was the 2004 Metro. And the last time we won an NIT was in 1997, the first year I had the Storm team," recalls Craddock.

But on April 1-2 at Pastime Park in Harrison, the drought came to an end, as Storm/Wessel Sports/Nixco Plumbing/Flanagan's Front Porch mowed down six straight opponents to capture the "B-C" division of the Bud Light-Louisville Slugger USSSA National Invitational.

"It felt good to get off the a good start this season," remarked Craddock after the tournament.. "Normally we start off slow, so to win the first NIT of the year was a big relief. It kinda gets that monkey off our backs."

The Storm drilled three round robin opponents, then - after rallying for five runs in the bottom of the 6th to knock off PRI/Premier Sports 16-13 in the opening round of the elimination tournament - they rolled past EAP/Western Hills Window 20-10 and Empire/Easton 21-12.

Matt Mason (.818) and Outstanding Defensive Player Scott Moree led the champions.

"Matt was on fire the entire tournament," said Craddock. "His parents were there and watched the entire tournament and apparently that inspired him a lot."

Moree "played outfield last year and we moved him into 2nd base where he's more comfortable," noted Craddock. "He made a lot of big plays for us."

Steve Klute (.600) led the Storm in home runs with four and rbi's with fourteen.

“He always steps up in the big games,” said Craddock. “He always gets the clutch hits when you need them.”

Mason and Klute joined teammates Jason Brown (.700) and Steve Bosch (.630) on the all-tournament team.

Consistency was the key for the Storm, observed Craddock.

“We never really played that great in any particular game,” said Craddock. “But we played consistently, scoring runs in almost every inning throughout the whole tournament.”

The Storm scored at least sixteen runs in every game, including twice in round robin play as they disposed of PRI 16-11, Loveless/Easton 26-12 and Community Cab/Marty’s/Easton 16-11.

Kevin Hall, Scott Moree and Jason Brown combined for twelve hits, and Kevin Greene chipped in three against PRI. Next Brown and Greene went 5-for-5 and Hall added three hits versus Loveless. Then Steve Bosch collected four hits, and Greene, Moree and Steve Klute contributed three apiece as the Storm polished off Community Cab in their pool play finale.

PRI/Premier Sports nearly derailed the Storm in the first elimination round game, as they held a narrow 12-11 lead through five and a half innings. But in the bottom of the 6th, the Storm rallied for five runs, then held on for a 16-13 victory. Kevin Hall’s rbi single plated Mike Cook with the go-ahead run, then Jason Kramer’s bases clearing double put his club ahead 16-12. Jason Brown paced the offense with five hits. Cook, Hall and Bosch each went 3-for-4.

EAP/Western Hills Window jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the top of the 1st in the semi-finals, but it was short-lived. The Storm answered with four in the bottom of the inning, padded their advantage to 9-3 with five in the 2nd, and scored in every inning except the 7th as they rolled to a 20-10 victory. Steve Klute’s three run blast erased a 3-1 EAP lead in the bottom of the 1st and put his club ahead to stay. A two run shot by Rob Coffey highlighted the five run 2nd. The bulge swelled to 18-5 after a three run 4th and a four run 5th.

Coffey, Matt Mason and Mike Cook shared twelve hits for the winners.

A Steve Klute two run swat broke a 7-7 tie in the bottom of the 2nd in the finals, then the Storm broke the game open with a three run 3rd and a five run 4th to forge a 17-7 lead over Empire/Easton. Jason Brown’s two run double capped off the 4th. The Storm added two more in the 5th and 6th to make the final 21-12.

Steve Bosch and Matt Mason pounded out five hits each, Rob Coffey added four, and Brown, Scott Moree and Mike Cook combined for nine hits.

The championship gave the Storm a berth into the USSSA "B" World September 22-24 in Lake Buena Vista, Fl. Runner-up Empire/Easton qualified for the U-Trip "C" World in Sterling Heights, Mi., over the same weekend. Both teams must play in their respective State and National Tournaments to retain their berths.

**BUD LIGHT-LOUISVILLE SLUGGER-USSSA
EARLY BIRD ROUND ROBIN MEN'S A-B NIT**

1. Watanabe/Kat./TTP/Super./B&A/TPS, Cin., OH 6 0
2. Wessel Sports/A&K Tile/Con./Blitz, Cin., OH 2 3
3. Graystone Mortgage, Cincinnati, OH 2 2
4. KA Softball/Worth. Chicago, IL 0 4

**BUD LIGHT-LOUISVILLE SLUGGER-USSSA
EARLY BIRD ROUND ROBIN MEN'S B-C NIT**

1. Storm/Wessel/Nixco/Flan. Front P., Burl., KY 6 0
2. Empire/Easton, Cincinnati, OH 4 2
- Community Cab/Marty's Pub/Easton, Cinti, OH 3 3
4. EAP/Western Hills Window, Cincinnati, OH 3 3
- Loveless/Conveyor S./ATT/TS/Easton, Cin., OH 2 3
- Pure Romance/Easton, Milford, OH 2 3
7. Harrison Bowl, Harrison, OH 3 1
- Max Softball, Cincinnati, OH 2 2
- A & A Enterprises, Cincinnati, OH 1 3
- Brock Restoration, Cincinnati, OH 1 3
- Pure Romance/Premier Sports, Milford, OH 1 3
- M & S Drywall/Valley Insul./Easton, Cin., OH 0 4

**BUD LIGHT-LOUISVILLE SLUGGER USSSA
EARLY BIRD RD. ROBIN NIT ALL-TOURNAMENT TEAM**

- Scott Jones Pure Romance/Easton
 Steve Schon EAP/Western Hills Window
 Joey Vandever Loveless/Easton
 Lee Pierson Wessel/A & K/Con./Blitz
 Dave Beall Community Cab/Marty's/Easton
 Mike Reichert Community Cab/Marty's/Easton
 Chris Hunt Community Cab/Marty's/Easton
 Billy Dunn Empire/Easton
 Johnny Trimpe Empire/Easton
 Tim Keeton Empire/Easton
 Matt Mason Storm/Wessel/Nixco/Front Porch

Jason Brown Storm/Wessel/Nixco/Front Porch
Steve Bosh Storm/Wessel/Nixco/Front Porch
Steve Klute Storm/Wessel/Nixco/Front Porch
Scott Moree - ODP Storm/Wessel/Nixco/Front Porch
Brad Reckart Watanabe/Kattus/TTP/Sup./B&ATPS
Ryan Minges Watanabe/Kattus/TTP/Sup./B&ATPS
Jeff Edington Watanabe/Kattus/TTP/Sup./B&ATPS
Kevin Birkofer Watanabe/Kattus/TTP/Sup./B&ATPS
Larry Wert Watanabe/Kattus/TTP/Sup./B&ATPS
Jim Burbrink - MVP Watanabe/Kattus/TTP/Sup./BA/TPS

Trailblazers Play Stingy “D” In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D” Qualifier At Expressway

By Andy Zureick

Milford, Oh. – The Trailblazers gave up only eight runs in three games while averaging more than 14 runs per contest as they won the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D” Qualifier at Expressway Park on April 2nd.

The first two games of the three-game round robin both ended via the mercy rule in five innings. In the opener, the Trailblazers whipped M&M Connection 14-1. In the top of the 1st, Matt Ellington and Tony Fiscus drove in one run each to give their team a 2-0 lead. They would never look back. In the top of the 5th, Fiscus and teammate Nate Fite collected two RBI apiece as Trailbalzers scored eight. Fiscus was 3-for-3 in the victory. Ray Johnson was a perfect 4-for-4. Brian Gross went 3-for-4.

Game two pitted the Trailblazers opposite Sneaky Pete’s Industries. In the bottom of the 1st, Matt Ellington doubled in two runs to put the Trailblazers up 4-2. In all, they would score seven in the inning. They followed that up with four more in the 2nd. Brian Gross and Mike Back drove in two each as part of the 10-run 3rd. The final was 22-4. Gross led the way at the plate, going 4-for-4. Justin Rash and Tony Fiscus were 3-for-3. Ray Johnson, Steve Boone, and Matt Ellington all went 3-for-4.

The final game for the Trailblazers versus Two-n-out was at least a contest. Brian Siebert singled in two as the Trailblazers jumped out to a 4-0 lead in the bottom of the first. Two-n-out cut it to 4-3 going into the bottom of the sixth. In that frame, Sean Rash drove in the final two of the game, making the score 7-3. Siebert, Rash, and Steve Boone all collected two hits in the victory.

Afterwards, Trailblazer manager Bill Ison restated the obvious when he credited his team’s defense for the success of the day. “Matt Ellington played a good second base and Sean Rash played a very good shortstop. Tony Fiscus pitched a great tournament. He kept a lot of teams off balance, especially Two-n-out. We played good defense behind him.”

Fiscus was also the Trailblazers' leading hitter at .875. "He was on fire," noted Ison. "Tony always came up with runners in scoring position and he came up with the clutch hit for us."

Ray Johnson and Brian Gross each hit a solid .727. Other offensive notables included Sean Rash (.667), Steve Boone (.545), Matt Ellington (.571), Nate Fite (.500), and Justin Rash (.500).

"We want to thank Expressway Park," Ison concluded. "We had a lot of rain the day before the tournament and they had the fields in great shape and, as always, they run a class tournament."

The championship qualifies the Trailblazers for the USSSA "D" State tournament in Dayton on August 19-20 and the Great Lakes Nationals back at Expressway Park on September 2-4.

Moe's Southwest Grill/Saints Sizzle With Bats In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D" Qualifier At Queen City **By Andy Zureick**

West Chester, Oh. – Moe's Southwest Grill/Saints scored 78 runs in five games, going a perfect 5-0 to win the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D" Qualifier at Queen City Sports Complex on April 1st. The tournament victory earned them a paid trip to the USSSA "D" State on August 19-20 in Dayton and a berth in the "D" Nationals in Milford, Ohio on September 2-4.

Moe's Southwest Grill/Saints opened the day versus T & T Lions. Larry Heitzman singled in a run to put his team up 3-2 in the top of the 2nd. They would not trail from that point on. They would add five more in the top of the 4th and five in the 5th to take a commanding 13-4 lead. The final was 13-5. Brian McDonald and Todd Stephens were each 4-for-4. Heitzman and Bill Brinkman both went 3-for-4.

Facing Accurate Masonry/Beeches, the Saints would play from behind. Brian McDonald collected an RBI in the bottom of the 2nd as they jumped out to a 3-0 lead. Michael Barone's two-run triple in the 4th led the way to a six-run at bat that blew the game wide open, 12-0. The eventual tally was 14-4. Barone, McDonald, and teammate Todd Stephens each turned in perfect 4-for-4 performances. Paul Fiser went 3-for-3.

Moe's Southwest Grill/Saints played M & M Connection in the third game of pool play for a chance to advance to the championship round. After two innings, they found themselves on the wrong side of a 6-1 score. They chipped away at the lead, but going into the top of the 7th they still trailed 10-8. "Even when we were down be, nobody's heads were down," explained team manager John Tomlinson. "They just came through when we needed them. Everybody did their jobs to win the game. We knew the winner was going to advance to the elimination round." In that last at bat, Moe's rallied for six runs to take a 14-10 lead. Paul Fiser tripled in two runs to put the team ahead to stay.

That score would stand up as the final. Fiser was 3-for-3 in the victory. Brian McDonald, Tim Duffy, Mike Barone, and Troy Brinkman each went 3-for-4.

In the tournament semifinals, the Saints plated four runs in the bottom of the 1st thanks in part to a Tim Duffy RBI single. They would never relinquish the 4-1 lead of that inning. Michael Barone tripled to drive in two more as part of a four-run 5th. That effectively put the game away. The final was 11-4. Scott Barber, Brian McDonald, Mike Barone, Tim Duffy, and Paul Fiser all finished the game at 2-for-3.

The finals pitted Moe's opposite the Diamond Dawgs. In the top of the 3rd, Larry Heitzman drove in two with a double, leading his team to six runs and a 10-4 advantage. John Tomlinson singled in a run as his team added four more in the 4th. Then in the 6th, the Saints plated eight big runs and the route was on. Brian McDonald and Tim Duffy each had two RBI in the at bat. Todd Stephens tripled with the bases loaded in the 7th to put the finishing touches on a 26-10 championship victory. Several players got well at the dish in the win. Mike Barone led the way going 6-for-6. Paul Fiser and Troy Brinkman were 5-for-6. Larry Heitzman, Todd Stephens, and Brian McDonald all went 4-for-6. "We were on fire," summarized Tomlinson.

Brian McDonald posted the top average for Moe's hitting a robust .810. Paul Fiser (.737), Mike Barone (.714), Todd Stephens (.714), Troy Brinkman (.619), and Tim Duffy (.571) also turned in noteworthy offensive performances in the tournament.

According to Tomlinson, major factors in the success for the Saints were timely hitting and really good defense. Most notable were middle infielder Paul Fiser and team newcomer, pitcher Larry Heitzman. "He fielded the middle and was really tough to hit."

Hitmen Softball Big Late In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D" Qualifier At Expressway By Andy Zureick

Milford, Oh. – Hitmen Softball won all three games played to win the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D" Qualifier at Expressway Park on April 2nd. But despite the success, their first two victories were not decided until the final at bat.

In game one versus Big "O" Softball, the game was tied 5-5 going into the Hitmen at bat in the bottom of the 6th. Brian Tolliver led the inning with a single. Wally Cox singled, advancing the runner to second. Joe Downing drew a base on balls to load the bases. Ron Sterling then brought the go ahead run in to score with a sacrifice fly. Big "O" Softball threatened in the top of the final frame to make it interesting. With one out and runners on first and second, centerfielder Adam Dettwiller cut down the potential tying run at the plate for the second out. The next batter lined out to pitcher Brian Roberts, ending the game at 6-5. Roberts was also a perfect 3-for-3 at the plate. Brian Tolliver went 3-for-4. Joe Downing was 2-for-3 with two RBI. Wally Cox was also 2-for-3. Dettwiller and Pat Rarick collected two hits a piece.

Facing the Good Guys in game two, Hitmen Softball trailed 5-4 after five and a half innings of play. It could have been worse if not for the stellar defensive play of Adam Dettwiller in center for the second game in a row. With the bases loaded and no outs, Dettwiller hauled in a fly out then threw out the runner on first trying to advance to second. The next batter flew out, ending the threat. "That really took them out of an inning," commented Hitmen manager Jon Perkins. In the bottom on the 6th, Pat Rarick walked following a fly out. Steve Applegate hit into a fielder's choice for the second out. Brian Roberts singled, putting runners on first and second. Jon Perkins singled in Applegate to tie the game. Dettwiller then matched his defensive heroics at the plate by driving in the go ahead run. The Good Guys failed to answer in the last chance, ending the game at 6-5. Perkins led his team's offensive effort, going a perfect 3-for-3 in the second victory on the day. Brian Roberts was also 3-for-3, including two "rib-eye stakes". Brian Tolliver went 2-for-3.

In the final game of the day, Hitmen Softball was looking to take the money and run as they faced the Space Cowboys. Ron Sterling double in two runs in the bottom of the 2nd to get the Hitmen scoring going. Brian Tolliver drove in the fifth and final run of the inning with a sacrifice fly. By the end of the 5th, the lead had swollen to 9-0. In the top of the 6th, the Cowboys finally dented the plate, but it was way to little, way to late. It ended 9-1. Adam Dettwiller and Tim Roth went 3-for-4 in the final victory. Roth also had two RBI. Brian Roberts and Steve Applegate were each 2-for-3. Ron Sterling drove in a team-leading three runs.

Brian Roberts went 8-for-9 on the day, for a team best .889 batting average. Jon Perkins finished at .556. Brian Tolliver was close behind at .545. Defensive specialist Adam Dettwiller ended up hitting .500.

Speaking on Dettwiller's play, team manager Jon Perkins explained, "He made some big catches which were key...he patrols our three-man outfield in centerfield."

Perkins also spoke about his team's new approach to the game for the '06 season. "We came out for the first time this year and we're having fun. It's a different atmosphere than when we played "C" last year...we'd rather forget last year. We enjoyed ourselves and did well."

The tournament victory qualified Hitmen Softball for the USSSA "D" Tournament in Dayton on August 19-20 and the Great Lakes Nationals in Milford, Ohio on Labor Day Weekend.

Wuebbler In Relief Keys Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" Qualifier Win For Walt's BBQ At Queen City **By Andy Zureick**

West Chester, Oh. – In the final game of the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" Qualifier four-team round robin at Queen City Sports Complex on April 1st, Walt's BBQ looked to be out of steam versus the Kodiaks. After two innings, they trailed 11-0. That is when

Bob Wuebbler, the regular shortstop, came in to relieve the team's ailing pitcher who was having trouble getting the ball over the plate. Wuebbler would toss four shutout innings that include zero walks as Walt's BBQ rallied for a 15-11 win and a tournament championship.

"Every single pitch was right over the plate," explained team manager James Johnson. "He didn't throw one ball the last four innings. The umpire said after the game he'd never seen anybody come in and take over like that."

Walt's scrapped back in the final game with three in the 3rd, four in the 4th, and three more in the 5th. In the four-run 6th, Josh Sauter doubled in the go ahead the run, making it 12-11. The final was 15-11. Sauter and teammate Chad Kingerski were both 5-for-5. Garrett Penz, Daniel Blake, James Johnson, and Matt Wade were each 4-for-5.

Walt's BBQ opened the tournament with a 14-5 victory over The Players. Five runs in the top of the 3rd put them ahead to stay, 5-3. Ryan Oberz collected two RBI in the at bat. Walt's added three more in each of the next two innings to take a commanding 11-4 lead. Four members of the team – Ryan Oberz, Bobby Wuebbler, Darrn Johnson, and Jeremy Brandon - were a perfect 4-for-4 at the plate for the game. Josh Sauter went 3-for-3. James Johnson also chipped in three hits.

The sandwich game pitted Walt's against Diamond Kings. In what would be a pitcher's duel, Chad Kingerski tripled to dive in two in the bottom of the 6th, breaking a 3-3 tie. 5-3 is how it would end. Kingerski led his team at the plate going 3-for-3. Matt Wade was also 3-for-3. James Johnson and Daniel Blake each were 2-for-3.

Kingerski was perfect at the plate in the tournament at 8-for-8. "He didn't show up for the first game. We had a guy who had to go home on an emergency and he came in and gave us a lift. He drove in six runs in two games."

Josh Sauter was a close second at the plate hitting .909. Ryan Oberz and Matt Wade both finished the day batting .833. As a team, Walt's was 88-for-121, a whopping .733 average.

According to Johnson, the manager, Wuebbler was definitely the team most valuable player due to his leadership. "He put it into everybody's head that we weren't out of it...[he] kept us in the game."

"This is a first year team, first time we all came out and played together, and first tournament of the year. It's nice to get qualified this early," concluded Johnson.

Walt's earned berths to the USSSA "E" state tournament in Harrison on August 19-20 and the nationals in Ft. Knox, Kentucky on Labor Day weekend.

Watson's, Team Nati, Local 212 Red Sweep Kolping Divisions

Mt. Healthy, Oh.--Watson's, Team Nati and Local #212 Red each swept past three opponents to capture their respective division titles in a twelve team, three division round robin on Sunday, April 2nd at Kolping Park.

Watson's drilled ALBA (0-3) 12-5, then outslugged Team 1 (2-1) in a key match-up with the eventual division runners-up before romping past MSD (1-2) 18-2 in the division one finale.

Team Nati outscored their opponents 54-18 as they overpowered Auto Express (2-1) 18-6, Northend Boys (1-2) 14-5 and Team Havoc (0-3) 22-7.

While in division three, Local #212 nudged past 420 (2-1) 6-4, then routed Tribe Softball (1-2) 15-1 and UAW Bulldogs (0-3) 16-9 to complete the sweep of division three.

Outlaws, Always Trucking, Regulators, Secret Service Sweep Queen City Divisions

West Chester, Oh.--The Outlaws, Always Trucking, Wilmington Regulators and Secret Service each swept past three opponents en route to a first place finish in a sixteen team, four division Sunday morning round robin April 2nd at Queen City Sports Complex.

The Outlaws outslugged eventual runner-up All Net (2-1) 19-14 in a key first round match-up with the eventual tournament runners-up, then routed Fielders Choice (0-3) 15-5 before trimming Hammer Time (1-2) 14-12 in their finale.

Always Trucking used a staunch defense to hold all three of their opponents to single digit scoring as they mowed down LeSaint (0-3) 11-4, Dairy Queen (2-1) 10-6 and Rancho Grande (13-3) in division two.

The Wilmington Regulators allowed only eleven runs on their way to the division three title, besting Kurr's Kustom Flooring (0-3) 9-4, Stone Design (2-1) 13-3 and Package Home Solution (1-2) 9-4.

While in division four, Secret Service waltzed past Linwood Cafe (2-1) 15-5, Chaos (0-3) 14-2, and Fader (1-2) 10-6.

April 8-9

Double-Dips Freeze/Arnold/Easton 20-4, 11-10 At Eggleston Park... Storm/Wessel/Nixco/Flanagan's Is "On A Roll," Bags Second Title In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "B-C" NIT

Colerain Township, Oh. What a difference a year makes.

Last season the Storm softball team had no confidence, almost never fielded its starting line-up, couldn't beat the best teams, couldn't hit USSSA pitching, couldn't bounce back from an early loss, and - above all else - couldn't win a major tournament.

With less than a month gone in the 2006 season, all that has changed.

On April 8th, Storm/Wessel Sports/Nixco Plumbing/Flanagan's Front Porch won its second USSSA "B-C" NIT in as many weeks, double-dipping Freeze Concrete/James Arnold Attorney/BW3/Easton 20-4 and 11-10 at Eggleston Park.

"Our team is playing with a lot of confidence right now," said Storm manager Chris Craddock after the tournament. "We feel like we can play with anyone right now. Beating some quality teams in the 'Bash for Cash' a few weeks ago gave us some confidence, and when we followed that up with a 6-0 record at Pastime, we feel like we're on a roll right now."

The addition of some veteran leadership, and adjusting to USSSA hitting and pitching have helped make the difference, said Craddock.

"With the addition of Rob Coffey and Brian Sandlin, who have a lot of experience winning at this level, it's giving the whole team a boost," explained Craddock. "And adding Steve Bosch to the middle of our line-up helped."

In addition, said Craddock, "we've been a much better hitting ASA and NSA team, and we've struggled hitting USSSA. We tried to play more USSSA the last couple of years and it's finally paying off. We're hitting U-Trip more consistently. That's the big thing.

"Also Doug Murphy has worked hard and made himself into a good USSSA pitcher. He's one of the most under-rated USSSA pitchers around. He doesn't get a lot of credit, but he's really a good pitcher, and in USSSA, that's big."

The Storm was led by tournament MVP Steve Klute, who went 30-for-38 (789) with eight home runs and 24 rbi's. He was joined on the All-Tournament team by Jason Kramer (.679), Jason Brown (.650), Mike Cook (.641, 6 HR's, 23 rbi's), Steve Bosch (.600, 6 HR's, 19 rbi's) and Scott Moree (.618).

"Steve (Klute) was on fire the entire day," observed Craddock. "He hit and hit and hit, and he hit with power and drove in a lot of runs. He's one of the best clutch hitters around."

The Storm started slow in the sixteen-team event, falling behind Max Softball 3-0 after three, but in the top of the 4th, they struck for four runs to take the lead for good. Jeff Bowman's two run double put his club on top at 4-3. They padded their lead to 7-3 in the 5th with the help of a Scott Moree two run double, then sealed the win with a four run 6th highlighted by Mike Cook's two run homer.

Kevin Hall, who added a solo shot in the 6th, collected five hits, Jason Brown added four and Mike Cook went 3-for-5 with a pair of homers. Pitcher Doug Murphy held Max scoreless over the final four frames.

Mike Foulks/Team Insanity had the Storm on the ropes in game two, as they took a 13-10 lead with three runs in the top of the 6th. But in the bottom of the 6th, Storm erupted for eight unanswered runs to pull out a dramatic 18-13 victory. The winners were out of home runs in the 6th, but strung together nine consecutive hits, taking a 14-13 lead on Jaso Kraemer's two run single. A bases loaded triple by Mike Cook capped off the scoring.

Steve Klute launched a pair of home runs and went 4-for-4 along with Kevin Greene.

The Storm reverted to one of their bad habits of the past - losing in the early rounds - when they suffered a 16-15 setback to Wessel Sports/A&K Tile/Blitz in game three. Wessel strung together three consecutive two out hits in the bottom of the 7th to pull out the victory.

But any idea that the Storm would continue to mimic the mistakes of the past would soon be dispelled.

First they erased Loveless Hardwood - the area's hottest team - 27-16, using a sixteen run outburst in the top of the 4th to erase a 6-5 deficit and seal the win. Consecutive three run home runs - including one to put the Storm ahead 8-6 by Doug Murphy - propelled the Storm to a 14-6 lead and they never looked back.

Jason Brown banged out five hits, Klute, Mike Cook and Scott Moree combined for twelve, and Doug Murphy went 3-for-4 with ten rbi's.

Next the Storm used a five run 5th to escape with a hard fought 17-15 victory over Community Cab/Marty's Pub/Easton.

Trailing 12-11 after five, the Storm used took the lead on an rbi single by Brian Sandlin, then padded their advantage to 16-12 on a Mike Cook three run swat. Cab answered with two, then mustered up one final run in the 7th before packing it in.

Steve Bosch was perfect in five at bats, Matt Mason and Steve Klute shared eight hits, and Mike Cook homered twice and went 3-for-5.

In the losers' bracket finals the Storm used a huge 6th inning outburst to avoid defeat, this time erupting for fifteen runs in the bottom of the 6th to even the score with Wessel/Blitz 31-26. The Storm trailed 26-16 after Wessel appeared to break open a 17-16 contest with nine runs in the top of the inning, but the Storm surged back.

First Jason Brown smacked a three run homer to cut the deficit to 26-19. Later a two run shot by Matt Mason narrowed the lead to one at 26-25, then Steve Bosch doubled home a pair of runs to put his club ahead to stay at 26-25. An rbi double by Jason Kraemer capped off the scoring, as pitcher Brian Sandlin shut down the Blitz in the top of the 7th.

Steve Klute collected six hits, Steve Bosch went 5-for-6, and Kraemer, Sandlin, Scot Moree, Mike Cook and Kevin Greene contributed four hits each.

In the finals the Storm rolled easily past Freeze Concrete/James Arnold/BW3/Easton 20-4, sealing the win on the strength of a six run 2nd and a four run 3rd. Steve Klute connected on a three run sock to cap off the 2nd and give his club a 7-1 advantage, while Doug Murphy's three run dinger highlighted the 3rd.

Scott Moree collected four hits, and Steve Klute homered twice and went 3-for-4 along with Mike Cook, Kevin Greene and Brian Sandlin.

Freeze/Arnold appeared to recover in the second finals, and took a 10-8 lead after four and a half. But in the bottom of the 5th, the Storm struck for three runs to grab an 11-10 lead, and pitcher Doug Murphy made sure it held with two shutout innings to preserve the win. Singles by Steve Klute, Steve Bosch and Kevin Greene cut the Freeze/Arnold advantage to one at 10-9 in the bottom of the 5th, then Jason Kramer delivered what proved to be the knockout punch with a two run double.

Steve Klute sealed MVP honors with three hits, including a home run.

The pitching and defense of Doug Murphy proved to be the difference in the championship game, commented Storm manager Chris Craddock.

"He was definitely the story in the last game," said Craddock. "He shut out Freeze in the last two innings and turned two key double plays."

Craddock said his team demonstrated that 2006 was going to be a whole new ball game by rallying back to capture the title after dropping its third game.

"One thing with this team in the past was that after we'd lose one early, we'd struggle to come through the losers' bracket and we'd run out of gas before we'd get the job done, and we'd finish 2nd or 3rd" remarked Craddock. "But after the disappointing season we had last year, we feel like we have something to prove, and with the players we've added to the roster, I feel like this is our year to make it or break it."

Is the Storm peaking too fast?

"Not really," said Craddock. "This is uncharted territory for us. We've always started slow, so getting off to a fast start is just a bonus. If we drop off the table in mid-season, hopefully we'll get back on track towards the end of the year when it counts. But in the meantime, we'll take the wins while we can get them."

Craddock concluded by expressing a "special thank you" to his assistant coach, Jeff Bowman.

“I was unable to be there due to family obligations, and Jeff did a really great job in running the team,” said Craddock.

**WORTH-BUD LIGHT-USSSA MEN’S “B-C” NIT
EGGLESTON PK., COLER. TWNSHP. - APRIL 8TH**

1. Storm/Wessel/Nixco/Flanagan’s, Burlington, KY 7 1
2. Freeze/Arnold/BW3/Easton, Cincinnati, OH 4 2
3. Wessel/A & K/Blitz, Lawrenceburg, IN 3 2
4. Comm. Cab/Marty’s Pub/Easton, No. Bend, OH 3 2
5. Loveless/Con. Sol./Tot. Tan/TS/Easton, Cin., OH 3 2
- House Rules/Crosley’s/Col. Pub, Cinti., OH 3 2
7. PRI/Premier Sports, Cincinnati, OH 3 2
- D & S Engineering, Cincinnati, OH 2 2
9. GRK Softball, Cincinnati, OH 1 2
- Max Softball, West Chester, OH 1 2
- Mike Foulks/Team Insanity, Union, KY 1 2
- Sentry Fire Protection/Apex/LBYC, Erlanger, KY 1 2
13. Brock Restoration, Cincinnati, OH 0 2
- Cincysoftball.com/Cooper Sports, No. Bend, OH 0 2
- Design Conc./Midwest Const., New Rich., OH 0 2
- GZG Cons./Beef O’Brady’s/Bruster IC, Cin., OH 0 2

**Walker/Tanel Hits Pay Dirt In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D” State-National
“Super” Qualifier At Expressway Park
By Andy Zureick**

Milford, Oh. – Walker/Tanel took top honors and a \$500 cash prize while earning a paid berth to the USSSA Great Lakes “D” Nationals in the April 8-9 Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D” State-National “Super” Qualifier at Expressway Park. In two days, they posted a 7-1 record.

Walker/Tanel opened the two-and-out event with wins over Nasty Boys and Harold’s Barbering. In the first game, Mike Atkins picked up the game winning RBI in the two-run bottom of the 6th. The final in that one was 11-10 as Ben Lassiter went a 3-for-3 to lead the winners. The following game was not nearly as close as evidenced by the 17-5 final. In the decisive 3rd of game two, Terry Johnson tripled in one run and Walt Perry drove in two more as their team totaled six runs and took a commanding 8-2 lead. Johnson and twin brother Jerry each went 4-for-5 in the victory.

Walker/Tanel dropped game three to Two-n-out, 13-7. “We talked about [the loss] the whole way back to the hotel,” reflected team manager Walt Perry. “We were flat, their pitcher took us out or it. We felt if we could jut hit the ball against them we’d be fine.” They would later get two chances to see if that was true.

Facing Dirt Merchants, Walker/Tanel got back on track with a 10-5 win. In the top of the 5th, Tom Wissel and Dave Farmer drove in two a piece with a double and triple, respectively. That led to six runs in all and a 10-5 lead. That score would stand up as the final. Wissel and Ben Lassiter led the way offensively, each going 3-for-3.

Another big six-run inning against M&M made it two wins straight wins for Walker/Tanel. This time it was the top of the second with Mark Dailey providing the big blow – a two-run double that got his team on the scoreboard. Andy Foster was 3-for-3 in the 9-1 win. Ben Lassiter continued his hot hitting with a 4-for-4 performance.

That made it three of the first five games that Lassiter had been perfect at the plate. “At the beginning of the tournament, he kept us in most of the games. He was the only one hitting consistently for us,” commented Perry. Lassiter finished the tournament hitting a team best .786.

In the finals of the loser’s bracket, Walker/Tanel faced Pharmacy Solutions. The game went to the final frame knotted 4-4. With one out in the top of the 7th, Walt Perry singled and then came in to score on Andy Foster’s RBI triple. That gave Walker/Tanel the lead 5-4. Three more runs padded that to an 8-4 advantage. Pharmacy Solutions failed to answer in their final chance and that is how it ended. Foster finished with three hits. Chris Lee was 4-for-4.

That win set up a rematch with Two-n-out in the tournament finals. Walker/Tanel would need two wins to capture the title.

In the first game, Walker plated eight runs in the top of the 4th thanks in part to Terry Johnson’s two-run triple. Two-n-out answered with three in the bottom of the inning, making it 9-8. But they would get no closer. The final was 12-9. Johnson and teammates Tom Wissel and Walt Perry each had four hits in the victory.

That set up a one game, winner-takes-all match up between Walker and Two-n-out. Trailing 6-5 in the bottom of the sixth, Dave Farmer tied it for Walker/Tanel with an RBI double. Terry Johnson later added two more when he tripled with two runners aboard. Pitcher Mark Dailey pitched a shutout seventh making the final 8-6. Chris Lee was 3-for-3 in the final game. Tom Wissel and Andy Foster were both 2-for-3.

Wissel (.737) was among the team leaders at the plate for the tournament. Terry Johnson was second only to Ben Lassiter, posting a .774 batting average.

Despite some impressive plate performances, Perry, the manager, credited his team’s play in the field with the championship. “It was all defense. We had three guys hit well but our defense kept us in every game, especially our middle infield of Tom Wissel (shortstop), Chris Lee (middle infielder), and Terry Johnson (second base). They turned 12 double plays over the weekend and that was the whole key because the rest of us didn’t hit as well as we could have.”

“It was our first USSSA tournament of the year,” explained Perry, “and we found out that a lot more pitching goes into these tournaments than anything else.”

Team Bring It Captures Title In Kolping’s Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D” Qualifier By Andy Zureick

Mt. Healthy, Oh. – In the six-team Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D” Qualifier at Kolping Park on April 8th, Team Bring It lost their first game of the day then won four straight and the tournament championship. That qualified them the USSSA “D” state and national tournaments later in the summer. The state tournament will be played in Dayton on August 19-20 while nationals are Labor Day weekend at Expressway Park in Milford, Ohio.

Team Bring It stumbled out of the gate in the first of two games in pool play. Grosebeck Tavern got the better of them, 7-5.

TBI came back to beat UHR Canes in the second game, 13-9. Royce Winter and Darnell Lathan were both 3-for-4 in the victory.

In the first game of single-elimination play, Team Bring It matched up with Accurate/Beaches. The game went to the bottom of the 7th with the score tied at 13-13. Don Simpson hit a one-out single to put the potential winning run on for Team Bring It. Floyd Turner followed with a single that the right fielder misplayed. That error allowed Simpson to come around and score the game-winning run. The final was 14-13. Chip Turner was a perfect 3-for-3 in the win. Dave Wallace went 3-for-4.

In the tournament semifinals, Alvis Landscaping provided the opposition for Team Bring It. In the bottom of the 4th of that one, Royce Winter blasted a three-run homer that gave his team a 10-1 advantage. Alvis failed to score again and the game ended via mercy rule after five, 15-1. Joe Boyd was 3-for-3. Dave Wallace was 2-for-2 with two walks.

That set up a second game with UHR Canes for the championship. In the bottom of the 3rd, Team Bring It scored nine runs to blow open a 6-3 game. The big blast in that decisive inning was a three-run Johnson off the bat of Tim Booker. Booker was 2-for-2 in the 15-4 victory. Royce Winter was also 2-for-2. Darnell Lathan led all hitters going 3-for-3.

Lathan also posted a team-best .688 average for the five games. “Darnell has been a great pick up, returning to the team this year. He has been the hottest stick in the lineup. It was his third tournament of the year and he’s batted over .600 each time out,” noted Bring It captain Don Simpson.

Royce Winter finished the day at 0.667 with two homers. Joe Boyd hit a solid .647.

“Our defense was solid, our outfield was solid...they played a good tournament,” reflected Simpson. “Left fielder Don Simpson, center fielder Steven Howard, and right fielder Chip Turner – they’re the backbone of our defense.”

A significant role was also played by team-newcomer and pitcher Floyd Turner. “He just joined the team two weeks ago and started pitching in the playoffs. He controlled the games for us on the defensive end.”

“This weekend was really good for us. We’re starting to see it come together,” concluded Simpson.

UHR Canes, who finished in second place at 2-3, also won a berth to the USSSA “D” state tournament in August.

**Offense Comes Around For Dirty Birds/Blade Lawn Care In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “E” State-National Qualifier At Expressway
By Andy Zureick**

Milford, Oh. – The Dirty Birds/Blade Lawn Care outscored their competition 68-18 in four games to take first place in the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “E” State-National Qualifier at Expressway Park on April 9th.

“We finally hit the ball,” explained Dirty Bird manager Paul Guenther. “We played in February in Alabama and in the Bash For Cash in March and weren’t scoring in double digits. But this time, we hit as a team. The last tournament we played in, we hit into 26 fielders’ choices.”

Dirty Birds/Blade Lawn Care won their first three games by way of the mercy rule. In their opener against G-Troop/Sprint, Dan Bridges drove in two runs as part of five-run 3rd inning. That gave the Birds the lead for good. They went on to win 18-8 in six innings. Bridges finished 3-for-5; Steve Madlener went 4-for-5.

In the bottom of the 1st opposite Lewis County Merchants, the Dirty Birds/Blade plated seven runs including two on a Larry Spears double. They tacked on 10 more in the 4th to blow the game open, 14-1. It ended in five, 24-1. Rick Rorick was a perfect 4-for-4. Dan Clevenger was 3-for-3.

Facing the Backyard Boys in game three, the Dirty Birds posted another seven-run 1st inning to put the game away early. They followed that with three more in the 2nd and 3rd on the way to a 15-5, six-inning final. Adam Bolinger was a team-best 3-for-4. Dan Clevenger and Steve Madlener were both 2-for-3.

In the final game of the day, Tombstone Cycles got their chance against the Dirty Birds. They gave them the best game of the day. Mike Orick tripled to drive in two in the 4th, breaking a 4-4 tie. Three more runs in the bottom of the 5th gave Dirty Birds a 9-4 lead

and sealed the win. The final was 11-4. Orick, Dan Bridges, and Nathan Bainum were all 2-for-3.

Steve Madlener led the Birds at the plate for the tournament, hitting .800. Rick Rorick (.667) and Dan Bridges (.636) also had solid offense days. Dan Clevenger batted .583 with nine RBI.

Solid play in the field complemented the awakening of the Dirty Bird bats. “Our defense was really good,” commented Guenther. “Mike Orick was pitching and it was his first tournament pitching, period. He was pitching because I was hurt and stepped in and made a good impression on the team. He’s a new guy and came in and did the job...pitched great.”

“Adam Bolinger (third base and shortstop) caught line drive after line drive, everything that came his way.”

The Dirty Birds earned berths to both the USSSA “E” State Tournament in Harrison on August 19-20 and the nationals in Ft. Knox, Kentucky on Labor Day weekend. The Backyard Boys (3-1) and Lewis County Merchants (2-2) also qualified for the state tournament.

JB’s Get The Nod In Worth/Bud Light/USSSA “E” State-National Qualifier At Expressway **By Andy Zureick**

Milford, Oh. – JB’s finished the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “E” State-National Qualifier at Expressway Park on April 8th in a three-way tie for best record and was awarded first place by way of best run differential among the four teams.

JB’s won their opener against Lights Out, 14-6. In the bottom of the 1st, they scored seven runs to take a 7-3 lead. Jeremy Snyder and Greg Ramsey both collected two-run doubles in that decisive inning. Matt Hosterman, Billy Hitker, and Matt Hutchinson all had three hits in the winning effort. Like JB’s, Lights Out would also finish the day with a 2-1 record.

In each of the first three innings opposite the Untouchables, JB’s plated a single run. They added two more in the 4th and three in the 5th on back-to-back doubles from Jeremy Snyder and Justin Dick. Dan Nichols, Sr. doubled with the bases loaded in the sixth, scoring three as part of a five-run inning. That broke the game open, 13-5. The Untouchables managed only one more run for a 13-6 final. Matt Hutchinson was 4-for-4 in win number two. Chris Lack and Jeremy Snyder each went 2-for-2. Nichols was 2-for-3 with four RBI.

JB’s lost their third and final game to Fat Daddies, 17-13. “It was an excellent game,” explained JB’s manager Matt Hutchinson. “We put up nine in the first inning, then they

had a nine-run inning in the bottom of the 3rd to go up 11-9. [In the 6th] we scored two to go ahead 12-11. In the bottom of that inning, they came up and scored six to make it 17-12.”

“One of the biggest things was scoring runs throughout the day,” concluded Hutchinson. Considering the championship was decided on run differential, that was especially true. “We averaged 13 runs per game, plus we got some big hits at crucial times.”

“I was in the leadoff spot and was able to help get the team started throughout the day,” said Hutchinson. He hit a team best .833. “Your leadoff man needs to be able to get on base, which I was able to do. Matt Hosterman was hitting behind me in the two spot and Jeff Thompson and Steve Presser were hitting 9 and 10. With them at the bottom getting it back to the top, it helped the team.” Presser, Hosterman, and Thompson posted .714, .667, and .667 averages, respectively. Dan Nichols, Sr. rounded out the list of top offensive performances, batting .571 for the tournament.

Hutchinson also led his team in the field, making appearances at second, third, and short. “I made a couple of snags down the line at third and turned a couple of double plays when playing up the middle. That stopped a couple of beg innings.” In the outfield, Justin Dick playing right-center made several standout plays.

JB’s qualified for the USSSA “E” state tournament in Harrison on August 19-20 and the Great Lakes Nationals on Labor Day Weekend in Ft. Knox, Kentucky. Second-place Fat Daddies also earned a berth to the state event.

Kickin’ It...Westwood Style In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “E” Qualifier At Expressway Park
By Andy Zureick

Milford, Oh. – Westwood Style went a perfect 3-0 to win the championship of the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “E” Qualifier at Expressway Park on Saturday, April 8th. In three games they racked up 47 runs with a squad put together at the last minute due to the absence of some team regulars.

Westwood Style posted their first win of the day versus Cincinnati Smackdown, 9-2. The game was close, 2-1, after three innings of play. Westwood then broke it open in the top of the 4th with five runs. Chris Papner delivered the big blow in that at bat, a two-run double. That made it 7-1 and from there it was academic. Bobby Schultz led the way at the plate going 4-for-5. Grover Pierson and Nick Brandhorst each had three-hit performances.

The second game of the day for Westwood Style was a bit of a laugh as they run-ruled Care Connection 20-7 in five innings. Grover Pierson got things going in the top of the 1st when he singled with the bases juiced. That drove in the first two of five in the at bat. Tom Pierson doubled in two more in the six-run 2nd. Westwood scored five more in the

4th and the route was on. Chris Pepner led all hitters going 4-for-4. Nick Brandhorst was 3-for-3 with three RBI. Grover Pierson drove in four with a 3-for-4 game.

The final game versus Greenies would decide first place in the tournament as both teams entered the contest at 2-0. Going into the bottom of the 6th, Westwood trailed 13-10. Bob Schultz started the scoring in that frame with a two-run double. Chris Pepner tied the game 13-13 with an RBI single. Grover Pierson's run-scoring single gave Westwood the lead 14-13. Westwood would tally seven runs in the inning to claim a 17-13 advantage. Greenies made a run at it in their final at bat but could only muster two runs, making the final 17-15. Nick Brandhorst once again was at the top of the offensive honor roll, going 4-for-5. Jason Barge, Grover Pierson, Chris Pepner, and Nick Reuhlman were all 3-for-4.

Brandhorst (.769) also posted the top average for Westwood Style. "He's our leadoff hitter, and it's what you'd expect," said Style manager Grover Pierson. "He gave us more than what you'd expect, really."

Pierson helped his team's cause by hitting a team second-best .727 with seven RBI. Jason Barge (.667) also drove in seven runs. Chris Pepner was the third of the trio who drove in seven. He hit .615 for the day.

"Style" compiled a .607 team batting average, so obviously hitting was what led to their success according to Pierson. "We walked a lot of guys the last game, so we had to overcome our mistakes. We were very surprised to score so many runs (47) this early in the season."

Chris Papner at shortstop and Bob Schultz at second led the way in the field, turning five double plays in the tournament.

The championship qualifies Westwood for the USSSA "E" state tournament at Pastime Park in Harrison on August 19-20 and the nationals in Ft. Knox, Kentucky on September 2-4. Greenies, the runner-up, also earned a berth to the state tournament.

Dynamic Softball Punches Post-Season Ticket In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" World Qualifier
By Andy Zureick

Cincinnati, Oh. – Dynamic Softball went 6-1 to win the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" World Qualifier at Riverstar Park on April 9th. The championship earned them the postseason trifecta – a state tournament berth, an invite to the national tournament, and a paid entry in the USSSA World Tournament in Lake Buena Vista, Florida on September 21-24.

Dynamic Softball cruised through their first two games of the day. In game one, they topped the Space Cowboys 10-2. In the seven-run 3rd of the opener, Rob Brooks doubled in the go ahead run making the score 3-2. Buck Green later added to the total

with a two-RBI double. From there, they never looked back. Brooks and Travis Blevins were each 4-for-4. Green was 4-for-5.

Bailey's/Avalanche lasted only four innings in game two versus Dynamic. Ova Venters had a pair of two-run doubles in the blow out – one in the four-run 1st and another in the 2nd. Seven runs in the fourth put the game away, 17-2. Venters was 3-for-3 in the contest. Adam Sorrell and Rob Brooks were also 3-for-3.

Game three between Dynamic and JB's was much more tightly contested. Dynamic drew first blood in the top of the second when Dusty Blevins drove in two with a double. Leading 3-0 in the top of the 6th, Ova Venters and Josh Beason each drove in a run to increase the Dynamic lead to 5-1. JB's managed only one more run in their final two at bats making the final 5-2. Jeff Kincaid was 3-for-3 in the win; teammate Ernie Russell went 2-for-2.

Dynamic Softball dropped their first game of the event against Home Solutions. Going into the bottom of the 7th, the game was knotted 10-10. Home Solutions pushed one across in their last bat of regulation to secure the victory, 11-10.

“When we lost, we stayed up...nobody got down,” recalled Dynamic manager Dusty Blevins. “We played together as a team and had confidence in each other.” The loss meant they would have to win one game in the loser's bracket to earn a chance at the tournament title.

In that game, Dynamic faced JB's for the second time in three games. This time, it was not nearly as close as the earlier meeting. In the bottom of the 5th, Brandon Wenning tripled with the bases loaded and Jason Hall added a two-run double as Dynamic racked up seven scores. That gave them a decisive 14-5 lead. Each team would score one more in the final two innings to make it a 15-6 final. Jeff Kincaid, Rob Brooks, and Ernie Russell were all 3-for-4.

That set up a rematch between Dynamic Softball and Home Solutions. Dynamic would need two wins to take down the undefeated Home Solutions team.

In the first finals, Dynamic made short work of Home Solutions with a 16-6 five-inning, mercy-rule victory. They got out of the gate quickly with seven runs in the top of the 1st. Ova Venters drove in two in the opening at bat. In the 4th, Buck Green plated two more, increasing the lead to 13-6. Green would go 4-for-4 in the game. Rob Brooks and Jason Hall each went 3-for-3.

Home Solutions was looking to return the favor in the second finals as they scored nine runs in the top of the first. But from that point on, Dynamic played stifling defense and began chipping away at the lead. In the top of the 4th, they scored 4 runs including the go-ahead run on an Ova Venters RBI single. That made it 12-9 in favor of Dynamic. Travis Blevins drove in two in the next inning as the eventual champs scored six more to blow the game wide open, 18-9. Pitchers Ernie Russell and Ova Venters held Home

Solutions to two runs over the final six innings, making the final 19-11. Venters, Jeff Kincaid, and Adam Sorrell were all 4-5 in the championship win.

“We pretty much played errorless ball on defense. It was the best we looked all season so far,” said Blevins, the manager. “We played good fundament...team softball.”

Rob Brooks set the offensive pace for Dynamic, going 20-for-24 (.833) in the tournament. Jason Hall (.750) and Ova Venters (.739) also turned in tremendous performances at the plate. Ernie Russell hit a solid .722.

Second-place Home Solutions also won berths to the state and national tournaments later in the summer. The USSSA “E” state event will be played in Harrison on August 19-20. Nationals are slated for Labor Day weekend in Ft. Knox, Kentucky.

Northern Diamonds/Worth/Tanel Shell Hill & Griffith 31-21 In Worth-Bud Light-Commie Currens-USSSA Women’s “C” NIT Finals At Riverstar

The Northern Diamonds/Worth/Tanel shelled Hill & Griffith 31-21 in the deciding game of the Worth-Bud Light-Commie Currens-USSSA Women’s “D” National Invitational April 8th at Riverstar Park.

The victory over H & G wrapped up a 3-0 day for the champions, who averaged nineteen runs per game en route to the title.

The Diamonds had previously routed the Shooters 15-5 and Smokey’s Softball 11-5 prior to their showdown with H & G.

“That was a crazy game,” remarked Northern Diamonds manager Rod Neubauer. “Every time we’d score, they’d answer. We were doing our best and they’d act like it was nothing and they’d come back with more runs and just wouldn’t give up. Even though we were up by twelve, we never felt comfortable. That’s how good they are. They just would not go away.”

Neubauer said that beating teams like the Shooters, Smokey’s and Great Lakes National Champion H & G was “a huge confidence builder, especially against teams in our region. If we can beat those three teams, we can handle anybody. That’s how good those three teams are.”

Neubauer said that Smokey’s defeated the Diamonds in the nationals last year, and Shooters “won everything in Ohio - the state and NIT’s - and they were ranked number one in the nation going into the Nationals. They’ll be back,” said Neubauer. “That’s a real good team there.”

Pitcher Dana Seehafer, who spearheaded the Diamonds’ offense with an .857 weekend, led her club on both sides of the lines, said Neubauer.

“She’s new this year. We knew she could hit. She just kept getting single after single for us. But we also got some great pitching from her. We made quite a few errors and she kept pitching us out of jams. She kept the damage to a minimum.”

Although his club allowed only ten runs over their first two games, Neubauer said he was disappointed with his defense - although he did find one bright spot.

“It wasn’t really a good day defensively, but L. J. Anderson made some nice scoops and made a couple of nice plays at 1st.”

The Diamonds never trailed in their first two games, as they steamrolled past the Shooters 15-5 in five innings and Smokey’s Softball 11-5.

Rachel Prushinski’s rbi single put the Diamonds on the board against the Shooters in a four run 1st. The lead remained at four runs at 9-5 until the bottom of the 5th, when the Diamonds erupted for six runs to seal a 15-5 victory. A two run double by Christina Chase brought down the curtain. Molly Gillespie banged out four hits, and Vickie Schultz and Dana Seehafer combined for six.

Rbi singles by Seehafer and Dodie Jones in the top of the 1st put the Diamonds ahead 2-0 against Smokey’s Softball in game two. The lead swelled to 7-3 after six, when the Illinois club plated four runs to break the game open and seize an 11-3 advantage. Molly Gillespie’s two run single highlighted the inning. Deanna Maday drove in four runs and shared eight hits with Dana Seehafer.

That pitted the Diamonds against Hill & Griffith, who also stood undefeated at 2-0. H & G battled to a narrow 15-14 lead through three, but in the top of the 4th the Diamonds exploded for eight runs to forge ahead 22-15. Dodie Jones delivered an rbi single to put her club ahead to stay at 16-15. A Rachel Jones rbi single capped off the inning.

The Diamonds padded their lead to 28-15 with six more in the 5th. H & G answered with five to avoid the run ahead rule, but three more by the Diamonds in the top of the 6th eventually invoked the mercy rule in the bottom of the 6th, as H & G could only muster one more run in the home half of the inning.

Debbie Cook led the hit parade with six safeties, Rachel Prushinski collected seven rbi’s and went 5-for-6 along with Molly Gillespie and Dana Seehafer, and Deanna Maday, Vickie Schultz and Melissa Swanson chipped in with four hits each.

“I was proud of our team for coming together the way they did,” said Diamonds’ manager Rod Neubauer. “But it’s early,” he cautioned. “We have to try to stay on an even keel. We can’t get too excited yet.”

FINAL STANDINGS: 1. Northern Diamonds/Worth/Tanel, McHenry, Il. 3-0; 2. Hill & Griffith, Cincinnati, Oh. 2-1; 3. Shooters, Dayton, Oh. 1-2; 4. Smokey’s Softball, Gahanna, Oh. 0-3.

Intimidators/Sneaky Petes's Jell Early, Trample Worth-Bud Light-Commie Currens-USSSA Women's "D" NIT Field At Riverstar

Intimidators/Sneaky Pete's manager Jeff Flatt is already going on record.

"This is without a doubt the best team I've ever had with our power hitting, base hitting and speed," says Flatt.

And while Flatt's statement may seem somewhat presumptuous and brash after only one outing, it would be difficult not to be optimistic after the way the Intimidators dismantled their opposition in the Worth-Bud Light-Commie Currens-USSSA Women's "D" National Invitational April 8th at Riverstar Park.

Sneaky Pete's/Intimidators overpowered four opponents, including three by the mercy rule, as they averaged 13 runs per game while yielding a little over four on their way to the title. So dominant were the Intimidators that the only trailed once in the tournament, and that was only for a half inning when PRI took a 1-0 lead in the top of the 1st in game four.

"The hitting and defense both jelled right together," beamed Flatt after the tournament. "Usually just one of them might come together this early in the season. And our infield defense only had two girls playing in the right positions. Third base was the only natural position I had besides my pitcher. You can put these kids anywhere and they can play any position."

Amy Todd led the Intimidators with a .750 day, followed by Ruthie Holden and Amy Steele at .692, Bev Penny at .615, Keysha Nicodemus at .583 and Deb Caplinger at .500.

"Amy (Todd) had a heckuva tournament batting and played really good defense in left centerfield," observed Flatt.

But mostly, Flatt wanted to talk about his club's pitching and defense.

"Cindy Wall pitched a heckuva tournament," said Flatt. "She shut three teams down, including Pelle's, which hit the heck out of the ball until they played against her. The kids couldn't believe it. And you can put Teresa Davis anywhere and she plays her heart out. And Keysha Nicodemus played a really good tournament. She hasn't even practiced yet this year. It was her first time on the field."

Sneaky Pete's grabbed a quick 3-0 lead in the bottom of the 1st, then blew a 3-1 contest open with eight runs in the bottom of the 3rd en route to a 9-3 victory over Franklin Financial in game one. A Bev Penny rbi single put the Intimidators on the board in the 1st. Keysha Nicodemus delivered a key two run single in the 3rd.

Amy Todd collected three hits, and Teresa Davis, Ruthie Holden and Debbie Caplinger combined for six.

The Intimidators jumped out to a 15-0 lead after only two and a half innings in a 15-5, five inning rout of the Underdogs in game two. Amber Turner's rbi single plated Teresa Davis with the first run of the game in a five run 1st. Amy Todd's two run single highlighted an eight run outburst in the 3rd.

Davis and Ruthie Holden shared six hits, and Turner, Todd, Bev Penny, Keysha Nicodemus, Amy Steele and Becky Elkins chipped in with two hits apiece.

Rbi singles by Bev Penny and Amy Todd in the bottom of the 1st gave Sneaky Pete's the only runs they'd need in an eventual 10-0 shutout of Pelle's in game three. Cindy Wall recorded the shutout. A three run third sealed the win. Amy Todd, who went 3-for-3 along with Penny and Amy Steele, had an rbi single to cap off the 3rd.

In the finale, PRI took an early 1-0 lead in the top of the 1st, but it was short-lived, as the Intimidators answered with four runs in the bottom of the inning. Bev Penny's two run single put her club ahead for good at 2-1. PRI knotted the score with three in the top of the 2nd, but Sneaky Pete's broke the 4-4 contest open with seven in the bottom of the 2nd and six more in the 3rd on their way to a 19-5, five inning romp. Amy Steele's two run single broke the 4-4 tie in the 2nd, and an rbi single by Cindy Wall capped off the six run 3rd as the lead ballooned to 17-5.

Steele pounded out three hits, and Penny, Amy Todd, Keysha Nicodemus and Ruthie Holden combined for eight hits. Teresa Davis contributed three rbi's.

The champions qualified for the USSSA "D" World Tournament September 21-24 in Lake Buena Vista, Fl. They also earned a berth to the U-Trip "D" Nationals Labor Day Weekend in Indianapolis along with runner-up Pelle's.

FINAL STANDINGS: 1. Intimidators/Sneaky Pete's, Batavia, Oh. 4-0; 2. Pelle's, Silver Grove, Ky. 2-2; 3. Underdogs, Indianapolis, In. 2-2; 4. Franklin Financial, Cincinnati, Oh. 2-2; 5. PRI/Holiday Inn Express, Milford, Oh. 2-2.

Bilstein Defense, Blazer Offense Deliver Sweeps At Kolping Park

Mt. Healthy, Oh.--Bilstein held three opponents to only six runs, while the Blazers put up fifty runs in three games en route to their respective division titles in an eight team, two division Saturday Night round robin April 1st at Kolping Park.

Bilstein blanked the Double Dueces (0-3) 15-0 in their opener, then spanked Sibcy Cline (2-1) 7-3 in a key showdown with the eventual tournament runners-up prior to pounding Beerbats (1-2) 14-3 in the finale.

While in division two, the Blazers outslugged Kodiaks (1-2) 20-16 in their opener, then shut out 420 (0-3) 7-0 before battling past Repeat (2-1) 23-20 in the deciding contest.

Hitmen, Memories Sports Bar Overpower Kolping Divisions

Mt. Healthy, Oh.--The Hitmen outscored four opponents 62-18, while Memories Sports Bar plated 48 runs while yielding only six as they swept to their respective division titles in a Sunday morning round robin April 9th at Kolping Park.

The Hitmen shelled OCC/Emanon Products (3-1) 22-12 in a key first round match-up with the eventual tournament runners-up, then steamrolled Dirty Dawgs (1-3) 16-2, Monty's (1-3) 15-0 and Maxed Out A (1-3) 9-4.

While in division two, Memories trampled Mitsubishi (1-2) 14-3, Servall (0-3) 19-0 and Always Trucking (2-1) 15-3 in the deciding contest.

April 15th

Surprise Attack/ADGO Steamrolls City Slam USSSA Mixed "C" NIT Field At Riverstar Behind Burton, Harris

Co-Tournament MVP's Greg Burton and Aline Harris powered Surprise Attack/ADGO to a first place finish in the class "C" division of the City Slam-USSSA Mixed Couples National Invitational Tournament April 15th at Riverstar Park.

Burton only made two outs in compiling a blistering .857 performance, while Harris hit .583 to lead Surprise Attack's female players.

The victory netted the champions a paid berth to the USSSA Mixed "C" World Tournament October 13-15 in Lake Buena Vista, FL.

Surprise Attack manager Kim Bailey said that Greg Burton "had just an outstanding tournament.

"He was 12-for-14 and drove in thirteen runs," noted Bailey.

Bailey said Harris was named female MVP both for her .583 average and a solid effort on defense.

"She made a lot of good plays at 3rd base," observed Bailey. "She fielded her infield position well and threw a lot of runners out at 1st. And she was our leading female hitter."

Bailey added that Harris and 2nd baseman Jessica Hardy combined to make a big defensive play against Miken/No Doubt in the semi-finals to help preserve a 15-7 victory.

“Aline fielded the ball and threw to Jessica at 2nd, and she relayed the ball to 1st to end the inning,” said Bailey. “That shut them down that inning and took the wind out of their sails.”

The pitching of J. T. “June” Turner also played a big role in Surprise Attack’s success, remarked Bailey.

“He pitched the entire tournament, and even though he struggled a little bit in the Miken/No Doubt game, he held three teams under ten runs, and two of those came in the semi-finals and finals against our two key opponents.”

Surprise Attack polished off Advanced Physical Therapy 17-9 in the finals.

Bailey cited her club’s offense - they averaged just under twenty runs per game - as the biggest key to their success. Surprise Attack was led by Burton (.857), Craig Johnson (.714), J. T. Turner (.692), Rodney Wolfe (.667), Chip Turner (.667), Ryan Claywell (.600), Aline Harris (.583), Jessica Hardy (.571) and Kelly Throckmorton (.500).

A nine run outburst in the bottom of the 1st quickly erased a 1-0 deficit and helped Surprise Attack bomb DP/Wessel Sports 30-12 in five innings in game one. Greg Burton’s two run single put his club into the lead for good in the 1st. Ryan Claywell also contributed a two run single in the inning to push the lead to 8-1.

Surprise Attacked added six runs in the 2nd, then blew open a 15-9 contest with an eleven run 3rd to forge a 26-9 lead. Greg Burton contributed a two run double and Kelly Throckmorton followed with a two run single to make it 20-9, and later in the inning Ryan Claywell also delivered a two run double to give his club a 25-9 advantage.

Burton, Claywell and Nichole Dean each went 3-for-4 to pace the offense.

After falling behind 3-2 after three innings against Sizzle in the second of two position round games, Surprise Attack erupted for seven runs in the top of the 4th to grab a 9-3 lead and never looked back en route to a 16-4 victory. J. T. Turner’s rbi single put his team on top to stay at 3-2 in the 4th. A two run single by Rodney Wolfe capped off the inning. Turner collected four hits, and Wolfe added three for the winners.

Surprise Attack fell behind again in the semi-finals, trailing Miken/No Doubt 6-4 after two. But Surprise Attack pushed across three runs in the top of the 3rd to take the lead, then added five in the 4th to seal an eventual 15-7 rout. Chip Turner’s two out rbi single broke the 6-6 tie in the 3rd, and a two run single by Craig Johnson highlighted the 4th.

Turner and Greg Burton were both perfect in four at bats, while Rodney Wolfe and Jessica Hardy pitched in with three hits each.

Surprise Attack jumped out to a 14-0 lead in the finals before Advanced Physical Therapy knew what hit them. After an rbi single by Greg Burton put his club on the

board in the 1st, Surprise Attack delivered the knockout blow with four in the 2nd, five in the 3rd and four in the 4th to leave APT staring at a 14-0 deficit. A leadoff solo by Craig Johnson sparked Surprise Attack's big five run 3rd. J. T. Turner added a big two run double. Burton accounted for three of Surprise Attack's four runs with a three run blast in the 4th.

Johnson and Burton combined for eight hits, and Kelly Throckmorton, Nichole Dean, J. T. Turner and Chip Turner chipped in two hits apiece for the champions.

Surprise Attack manager Kim Bailey said she was very pleased with her club's effort - especially in view of the fact it was their first outing of the '06 season.

"This was the first time we played this year because our league games have been rained out three weeks in a row," said Bailey.

"We just came out strong and started hitting," she added. "It's nice to have that win under our belts and to get that paid World berth."

FINAL STANDINGS: 1. Surprise Attack/ADGO, Cincinnati, Oh. 4-0; 2. Advanced Physical Therapy, Cincinnati, Oh. 4-1; 3. Miken/No Doubt, Reedsville, Oh. 2-1; 3. Speed Kills, Columbus, Oh. 3-1.

Hale's 8th Inning Single Lifts Sizzle/Cherry Grove Lanes/ICB Past DP/Wessel Sports 8-7 In City Slam USSSA Mixed "D" NIT Finals At Riverstar Sportsplex

A two out, rbi single by Tony Hale in the top of the 8th lifted Sizzle Softball/Cherry Grove Lanes to an eventual 8-7 victory over DP/Wessel Sports in the championship game of the class "D" division of the City Slam-USSSA Mixed Couples National Invitational Tournament April 15th at Riverstar Sportsplex.

The victory gave Sizzle/Cherry Grove a clean three game sweep of the elimination round of the combination round robin, elimination event, as the champions netted a paid World Tournament berth to Lexington, SC October 13-15 plus \$400 travel expense.

Runner-up DP Softball/Wessel Sports also qualified for South Carolina with an unpaid berth. Both teams also qualified to the Ohio USSSA Mixed State August 26-27 back at Riverstar, and to the USSSA Mixed Nationals September 30-October 1 in Dayton, Oh.

Dave Broxterman hit a blistering .882 to power the winners, followed by Jake Angne at .800, Hale at .643, Joe Piening at .600, Samantha Hardy at .467 and Sue Lane at .429.

Sizzle manager Nancy Jo Hardy said that Broxterman "played well" in leading her club to the title.

"He hit the ball very well," said Hardy. "I think he likes hitting in mixed couples."

Hardy said that Angne never made an out in the tournament's elimination round.

"He's usually a good hitter, but he struggled a little bit in the first two games," noted Hardy. "But after that, he hit very well. He hit 1.000 in the one-and-out...he didn't make an out."

Sizzle/Cherry Grove took two on the chin in pool play, getting pounded by Surprise Attack 16-4 and DP/Wessel Sports 24-12.

"We didn't hit well our first two games," observed Hardy. "Several of our guys hadn't picked up a bat since last fall. We weren't clicking yet. But it didn't really matter until we came to the one-and-out."

Angne and Tony Hale anchored the defense, said Hardy.

"Jake and Tony both made some good plays in the outfield. We rotated a little so it was hard to pick one particular person who stood out defensively," pointed out Hardy.

Hardy gave much of the credit for her team's championship to Sizzle's opponent in the finals.

"We won the last game because of the other team," observed Hardy. "They had two players who hit the ball out so they were out the whole game, and basically we intentionally walked two batters in a row to get to the 'out' position."

Sizzle/Cherry Grove used an eleven run 2nd to overcome a 3-1 deficit followed by a ten run 3rd to overpower School Yard Bullies 27-11 in game one. A walk to Jake Angne forced in two runs and broke a 3-3 stalemate in the 2nd. Joe Wallach added a two run single. Back-to-back two run singles by Jonathon Bonham and Joe Piening highlighted the 3rd.

Wallach and Joe Piening banged out four hits each, and Bonham, Dave Broxterman and Samantha Hardy combined for nine hits.

Next Sizzle used a three run 4th to erase an 8-7 deficit and grab a 10-8 lead over Thunder & Lightning in the semi-finals. Dave Broxterman's rbi single put his club ahead to stay at 9-8. Sizzle then broke the game open with eight runs in the bottom of the 5th. Jake Angne contributed a two run single as the lead swelled to 16-8 and Sue Lane followed with a two run double to cap off the inning.

Angne was a perfect 3-for-3 for the winners.

Sizzle battled to a 7-7 stalemate with DP/Wessel after seven innings in the finals, but finally pulled out a "w" in the top of the 8th. Samantha Hardy walked to lead off the inning. Then, after a fielder's choice and a line out to 3rd, a walk to Joe Piening loaded

the bases for Tony Hale, who calmly delivered a single to plate the eventual game winner.

Dave Broxterman collected four more safeties, and Jake Angne and Tony Hale shared six hits.

FINAL STANDINGS:1. Sizzle/Cherry Grove Lanes, Mt. Orab, Oh. 3-2; 2. DP Softball/Wessel Sports, Cincinnati, Oh. 2-2; 3. Thunder & Lightning, Toledo, Oh. 2-3; Steele, Blanchester, Oh. 1-4; 5. Warriors, Forest Park, Ga. 2-2; School Yard Bullies, Batavia, Oh. 1-3; Western Hills Eaglettes, Cincinnati, Oh. 0-4.

Defense Lifts Cardinals, Allnet At Kolping Park

Mt. Healthy, Oh.--The Cardinals allowed only 14 runs in three games, while Allnet limited two opponents to only 6 runs en route to their respective division titles in a seven team, two division Saturday morning round robin April 15th at Kolping Park.

The Cardinals battled past Game Face (0-3) 10-7 in their opener, then steamrolled Pitt Ohio (1-2) 14-4 and Quality Tire (2-1) 13-3 in the deciding contest.

While in division two, Allnet spanked Tribe Softball (0-2) 10-2 before crushing Ruthless Villains (1-1) 23-4.

Watson's Bombs Bayes/Kodiaks 22-15, Alvis Shells Beef O'Brady's 19-12 In Deciding Contests In Kolping Round Robins

Mt. Healthy, Oh.--Watson's bombed Bayes & Sons/Kodiaks 22-15, while Alvis Landscaping shelled Beef O'Brady's (1-2) 19-12 to clinch first place finishes in their respective divisions in an eight team, two division Saturday night round robin April 15th at Kolping Park.

Watson's eased past Pursuit Skip Trace (1-2) 7-3 and 669 Mafia (1-2) 8-3 before polishing off Bayes/Kodiaks (1-2) 22-15 in their finale.

While in division two, Alvis Landscaping drilled the Blazers (2-1) 11-1 in a key first round match-up with the eventual tournament runners-up, then shelled Beef O'Brady's (1-2) 19-12 to nail down a first place finish prior to outslugging Hammertime (0-3) 25-15 to complete the sweep.

River Dogs Use Tight "D," Arrow Cafe Pulls Out Close Ones To Claim Queen City Divisions

West Chester, Oh.--The River Dogs allowed on four runs, while Arrow Cafe pulled out two one run victories to capture their respective division titles in an eight team, two division Saturday night round robin April 15th at Queen City Sports Complex.

The River Dogs outscored their opponents 47-4 as they smothered Todds Law Care (2-1) 11-2, U. S. Food Service (1-2) 18-0 and Kamo Crew (0-3) 18-2 in the finale.

While in division two, Arrow outslugged Crooked Bats (1-2) 16-11, then trimmed Bargo's Bar & Grille (0-3) 14-13 and U. A. W. #863 (2-1) 9-8 in a showdown for first place.

April 22-23

Malesko Lifts Freeze/Arnold/BW3/Easton To Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "B-C" NIT Title At Expressway Park

Milford, Oh.--Mike Malesko hit a key two out, three run home run in the top of the 7th to give Freeze Concrete/James Arnold/BW3/Easton a 9-7 victory in their first game and batted .800 for the day to help lift his Freeze/Arnold to a first place finish in a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "B-C" National Invitational April 23rd at Expressway Park.

Malesko earned Most Valuable Player honors as Freeze/Arnold went 4-0 against a ten-team make-up tournament of a rainout from the previous weekend.

Freeze/Arnold overpowered A. & K Tile/Wessel/Blitz 23-6 in five innings in the finals. A paid berth to the USSSA "B" World Tournament September 22-24 in Lake Buena Vista, Fl., was awarded to the Blitz, while third place Max Softball qualified for the U-Trip "C" World Tournament September 22-24 in Sterling Heights, Mi.

Joining Malesko on the All-Tournament team from Freeze/Arnold were Mike Canupp (.636), Tony Sharkins (.600), Rob Menke (.583) and Trevor Barth (.583). Jeff Click chipped in with a .750 day.

Freeze/Arnold was nearly upset by upstart PRI/Premier Sports in their opener, but Mike Malesko rescued his club with a dramatic two out blast that gave his club an eventual 9-7 victory. That and his team high .800 batting average earned the Freeze/Arnold newcomer tournament MVP honors.

"He won the first game for us with two outs in the 7th with a three run home run," said Freeze/Arnold player-manager Homer Matheny. "That should go a long way in Mike's feeling more comfortable down the road when he gets into those situations."

Pitchers Bob Noeth and Trevor Barth held three of Freeze/Arnold's four opponents to seven runs or less, which Matheny felt was the key to his club's title.

"They did a great job working the mound," said Matheny. "The tell-tale sign with in the finals against Blitz, which has a pretty potent offensive line-up, and they held them to single digits with the wind blowing out. I think they only had one home run. Trevor pitched that game and did a great job, and Bobby pitched in the winners' bracket finals and did a great job."

Matheny said that his club's infield also stepped up for the tournament.

"As a whole they did a great job and Rob Menke has been a big part of that middle infield," said Matheny. "He's kind of the glue up the middle pulling everyone together. he made some unbelievable plays."

Overall, however, Matheny said his club isn't quite where they need to be yet.

"In all honesty we have not played well yet," said Matheny. "We're trying to learn each other and we're not jelling yet. We only had two really good innings all day.

"The good thing is that we were able to win the tournament without playing out best. The bad thing is we have some things we still need to work on," said Matheny.

Freeze/Arnold was nearly ambushed by a U-Trip "C" team - PRI/Premier Sports - in game one. PRI led 7-6 after two outs in the top of the 7th before Mike Malesko cracked a three run home run with two outs to help his club pull out a dramatic 9-7 victory. Malesko, George Farris and Jeff Click combined for six hits.

Next Community Cab/Marty's Pub/Easton grabbed an early 9-0 lead over Arnold/Freeze after an inning and a half in game two. But Arnold/Freeze roared back with eight in the bottom of the 2nd and five in the 3rd while holding Cab scoreless to take a 13-9 lead. Then in the 5th they erupted for eight runs to blow open a 13-10 contest and take a commanding 21-10 lead. Back-to-back three run home runs by Mike Canupp and Tony Sharkins capped off the scoring in the 5th. Cab answered with five in the top of the 6th, but could muster only two runs in the 7th before succumbing 23-17.

Jeff Click banged out four hits, and Rob Menke, Trevor Barth, Jeff Schmidt and Mike Canupp combined for twelve.

In the winners' bracket finals Freeze/Arnold locked horns with Max Softball in a defensive struggle for two innings before Tony Sharkins connected for a slammer in the top of the 3rd to break a 2-2 stalemate. An inning later Mike Malesko answered with a slam of his own as the lead swelled to 10-2 and Max never recovered as Freeze/Arnold rolled into the finals with a 12-6 victory. Jeff Click collected three more hits for the winners.

A pair of three run bombs - one by Mike Canupp and another by Tony Sharkins - spelled a 6-0 lead in the top of the 1st for Freeze/Arnold in the finals, but A & K Tile/Wessel Sports/Blitz rallied to cut the deficit to two at 7-5 after two. But in the top of the 3rd, Freeze/Arnold exploded for eleven runs to seal an eventual 23-6 victory. Sean Melampy's rbi double capped off the inning.

Mike Malesko pounded out four more hits, and Mike Canupp, Jeff Schmidt, Trevor Barth and Jason Scott shared twelve.

Arnold/Freeze's Homer Matheny concluded by acknowledging his team's sponsors.

"I want to thank all of our sponsors, including Jim Arnold, Jim Freeze, BW3 and Easton," said Matheny. "And we also want to thank Expressway Park for a well-run tournament."

**WORTH-BUD LIGHT-USSSA MEN'S "B-C" NIT
EXPRESSWAY PK., MILFORD, OH. - APRIL 23RD**

1. Freeze/Arnold/BW3/Easton, Cincinnati, OH 4 0
2. Wessel/A & K Tile/Blitz, Lawrenceburg, IN 4 2
3. Max Softball, West Chester, OH 2 2
4. PRI/Premier Sports, Milford, OH 2 2
5. Com. Cab/Marty's Pub/Easton, Cincinnati, OH 2 2
Moe's S. W. Grill/Saints, Newport, KY 1 2
7. D & S Engineering, Loveland, OH 0 2
Pure Romance/Easton, Cincinnati, OH 0 2

**2006 WORTH-BUD LIGHT-USSSA "B-C" NATIONAL
INVITATIONAL ALL-TOURNAMENT TEAM**

Mike Ayers PRI/Premier Sports
Chris Harrison Max Softball
Steve Tolbert Max Softball
Nick Metrup Wessel/A & K/Biltz
Kelley Haiber Wessel/A & K/Biltz
Don Rohrer Wessel/A & K/Biltz
Trevor Barth Freeze/Arnold/BW3/Easton
Mike Canupp Freeze/Arnold/BW3/Easton
Rob Menke Freeze/Arnold/BW3/Easton
Tony Sharkins Freeze/Arnold/BW3/Easton
Frank Gruber - MVP Wessel/A & K/Biltz
Mike Malesko - MVP Freeze/Arnold/BW3/Easton
April 22-23...

Storm/Wessel/Nixco/Flanagan's Racks Up Third; Bags \$500 In "Cash Bash"

Scipio, In.--Storm/-Wessel Sports/Nixco Plumbing/Flanagan's Front Porch racked up its third tournament championship in the month of April with a five game sweep of the "Cash Bash" softball tournament April 22nd in Scipio, Indiana.

The Storm took home \$500 cash from the six team, round robin affair on the strength of an overpowering offensive attack that amassed 116 runs (23 runs per game) in only 31 innings. Eleven starters hit over .600 for the champions. The Storm polished off Heleleo 18-7 in their finale to secure the title.

Jeff Bowman turned in a hefty .889 performance for the winners, followed by Rob Coffey at .875, Steve Klute at .800, Scott Young at .778, Jason Brown at .762, Mike Cook at .750, Steve Bosch at .722 and Scott Moree at .706.

“That’s the best I’ve ever seen our team hit as a team,” beamed Storm manager Chris Craddock. “Eleven of our twelve players hit over .600.”

Craddock was especially pleased with Jeff Bowman’s effort.

“It’s a luxury to have him on our team,” stated Craddock. “He’s basically our fourteenth player and the assistant coach. He could be a starter on a lot of teams. But he accepts his role as a utility player and never complains about the time he gets. In this tournament he spelled our outfielders and gave them a breather. There aren’t a lot of players around as good as he is who are willing to accept that kind of role.”

Defensively, Craddock said his team got a big boost from Kevin Hall.

“Middle infielder Jason Kraemer wasn’t able to play, and he filled in the middle and was awesome,” praised Craddock. “He’s the best athlete on our team.”

A pair of slammers - one by Kevin Greene and another by Doug Murphy - helped the Storm jump on top of Carol’s Clean Sweep 17-0 in the bottom of the 1st in an eventual 27-13 rout. Mike Cook clubbed a three run homer in the 1st as well and Steve Klute added a two run shot. Cook, Jason Brown and Kevin Hall each went 4-for-5 to pace the offense.

Next the Storm erupted for nine runs in the bottom of the 1st and nine in the 2nd to forge an 18-1 lead over Impact Softball and never looked back in a 24-6, five inning romp. Kevin Greene’s three run sock erased a 1-0 Impact lead in the 1st. Scott Young followed with a two run dinger. In the 2nd Steve Klute launched a two run homer to ignite the scoring and Jeff Bowman capped off the inning with a three run bomb.

Klute and Jason Brown were both perfect in four trips to the plate.

Nolan’s slowed the Storm early on in game three, taking a 7-5 lead after two and a half innings. But in the bottom of the 3rd, the Storm struck for seven runs to take the lead for good at 12-7. Mike Cook delivered a two run homer to knot the score, then Kevin Greene swatted a three run homer - his third in as many games - to put his club ahead to stay. The lead swelled to 15-7 in the 4th and the Storm rolled to a 19-9 victory. Greene, Steve Bosch, Steve Klute and Rob Coffey combined for twelve hits.

The Storm rolled past J. D.’s Crew next 28-7 in five behind four hits apiece from Bosch, Klute, Jason Brown, Scott Young and Scott Moree. A fourteen run 1st, highlighted by three run blasts by Klute and Doug Murphy, and two run shots by Bosch and Greene, sealed the win.

That pitted Storm against the only other undefeated team, Heleleo. A three run bomb by Kevin Hall put his club on the board in the top of the 1st. Later in the inning Rob Coffey belted a two run homer to cap off the inning. Heleleo answered with five in the bottom of the 1st to cut the deficit to 7-5, but Storm blew the game open with eight in the top of the 2nd on the strength of a Steve Klute slammer and a Rob Coffey three run sock. Heleleo never recovered and the Storm eased to an 18-7 victory to complete the sweep.

Hall, Coffey, Mike Cook, Scott Young and Doug Murphy shared fifteen hits for the champions.

East End Softball/Air Industrial Out Duels Pharmacy Solutions In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “C-D” Qualifier At Pastime Park

By Andy Zureick

Harrison, Oh. - East End Softball/Air Industrial won all five games they played to capture the championship of the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “C-D” Qualifier at Pastime Park on Saturday, April 22nd. In both the first and last games of the day, East End needed late-inning offense to squeak by tournament bridesmaid Pharmacy Solutions.

East End Softball/Air Industrial first matched up with Pharmacy Solutions to start pool play. Going into the bottom of the final inning, East End trailed by three runs, 8-5. East End came back with three runs to tie the game and was down to their last out when Mike Windsor came to the plate. He rapped a run-scoring single to give his team a 9-8 come-from-behind victory. John Coorey was 3-for-3 including a two-run homer. John Thompson, Jr. was also 3-for-3. Johnny Thomason went 2-for-3. The same two teams would win their way through the tournament to meet later in the championship game.

In game two of the round robin, East End faced Win, Place, Show. A three-run round-tripper off the bat of Ron Burgess staked East End to a 1st inning 3-0 lead. A two-run Chad Jones homer capped a five-run 2nd that increased the East End lead to 8-2. Jones tripled in two more in the bottom of the 5th as the lead swelled to 11-4. The final was 11-7. Jones was 3-for-3 in the contest. Burgess had a 2-for-3 performance.

East End jumped on JTM/Hudy’s early in the third game of the day. A pair of three-run taters off the bats of Ron Burgess and John Coorey staked East End to an 8-0 lead after one inning of play. JTM/Hudy’s cut the lead to 8-6 after their fourth at bat only to have East End stretch it back out with four in their half of the 4th. Jeremy Ross had a two-run double in that at bat. Five more in their next at bat sealed the win. This time it was John Thompson, Jr. with the two-RBI two-bagger. JTM/Hudy’s challenged with a few in the late innings but it was too late. The final was 17-11. Chad Jones was a perfect 4-for-4; Ron Burgess went 2-for-2. John Coorey collected two hits.

East End and Pharmacy Solutions both advanced from their pool to the four-team single elimination round.

In their first game of that round, East End took on LH Trucking/Jas. Arnold Law. Charles Bennett's two-run double in the bottom of the 4th helped East End to five runs in the inning and a 14-12 lead. Five more in the next frame stretched the lead to 19-12. In that at bat, Jay Rhoden legged out an inside-the-park homer that scored two. The final score was 19-13. John Thompson, Jr. and Daniel Spicer were each 3-for-4. Jeremy Ross went 2-for-3 with a home run.

That set up the tournament finals – a rematch between East End and Pharmacy Solutions. With the score tied 11-11 after five innings of play, Jeremy Ross knocked a two-out, two-run single in the top of the 6th. John Coorey drove in two in the next at bat as East End added three insurance runs. Pharmacy Solutions failed to answer the bell making 16-11 the final. Ross was 3-for-4 and Bill Jones a perfect 3-for-3. Jay Rhoden went 2-for-3. Matt Lay led Pharmacy Solutions in the tournament at .857 with 13 RBI and nine runs scored. Mark Covey finished at .736. Keith Burchell hit .600, including four long balls.

For East End, John Thompson, Jr. garnered top offensive honors by batting .786. John Coorey hit .692 with two home runs. Chad Jones posted a .684 average for the tournament. Ron Burgess had three homeruns and hit .647.

“When we scored runs, we scored them in bunches and our defense came up with a lot of key plays,” said East End manager John Thompson, Sr. “[John Thompson, Jr.] had a hot day at the plate and also played well for us defensively. John at second base and Jay Rhoden at shortstop both helped turn a couple of key double plays and Jay made some spectacular catches to save a lot of runs.”

The tournament championship qualifies East End for the USSSA “C” State tournament in Milford on August 19-20 and the nationals Labor Day weekend in Indianapolis along with Pharmacy Solutions.

Airway Overcomes Early Setback In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D” Qualifier At Expressway Park

By Andy Zureick

Milford, Oh. – Airway dropped their first game of the eight-team Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D” Qualifier at Expressway Park on April 22nd. They regained their composure and posted four straight wins en route to the tournament championship.

The opener had Airway going against the Cincinnati Diamondbacks. Airway got blasted 12-1. That meant another loss in the three-team round robin portion of the tournament would certainly keep Airway out of the championship round.

Airway pulled it together in game two versus Schmoie's Collision. Kurt Davis and Kevin McHenry led the way each going 4-for-4. Kyle Davis and Jason Muehlenkamp both went 3-for-4. The final score was 18-5.

They put another one in the win column against the Diamond Dawgs, 12-10. Five members of the Airway team – Kurt Davis, Mike Grubbs, Matt Barone, Brian Daniele, and Kyle Davis – were 3-for-4.

That made Airway's record in pool play 2-1 and that would be good enough to get into the elimination round.

Airway first faced Trailblazers in their quest for the tournament crown. In the top of the first, Kurt Davis and Kevin McHenry collected one RBI and two RBI, respectively, as Airway jumped out to a 4-0 lead. Eight more in the top of the next inning broke the game open. Kyle Davis and Jason Muehlenkamp had a pair of two-run doubles in the at bat. The final score was 15-1. Wayne Wright, Kurt Davis, and Kevin McHenry all went 3-for-3 in the victory.

That set up a rematch between Airway and the Cincinnati Diamondbacks for the tournament title. Trailing 4-2 in the bottom of the 3rd, Airway got five runs including a two-run double from Terry Goff. That gave them a 7-4 advantage. Wayne Wright's RBI-single capped a three-run 4th that increased the lead to 10-4. The Diamondbacks cut the lead to 10-8 going into the bottom of the 6th. Airway got an insurance run in that at bat to make it 11-8. That is also how it ended. Jason Muehlenkamp was 4-for-4 in the championship. Kevin McHenry went 3-for-4. Woody Torline chipped in two hits.

Kurt Davis led Airway in the tournament at .812. Kevin McHenry hit a solid .765.

According to Airway team manager Mike Grubbs, his team's ability to put together a big inning was one of the keys to the tournament. "In one game, we scored 16 runs in one inning."

"Kurt Davis had an outstanding offensive day to lead the team and played solid defense in left field. He really carried the team as our four-hitter."

His team's defense was also very dependable. "Kyle Davis (shortstop) played solid all day long," noted Grubbs. "He was error free for five games and Wayne Wright (centerfield) in our three-man outfield did a really good job patrolling and running balls down in the gaps. He's the speed and the leader in the outfield."

Airway and runner-up Cincinnati Diamondbacks both qualified for the USSSA "D" nationals on September 2-3 back at Expressway in Milford, Ohio. Those two and Schmoie's Collision earned berths to the state tournament in Dayton on August 19-20.

Defense, Pitching Lift Ground Texx Past Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D" Field At Queen City

West Chester, Oh.--Ground Texx limited four opponents to thirteen runs en route to a four game sweep of a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D" State-National Qualifier April 22nd at Queen City Sports Complex.

A pair of rbi singles - one by Robert Hayes and another by Mike Cronin - broke a 1-1 deadlock in the bottom of the 6th and lifted Ground Texx to a 3-1 victory over Moe's Southwest Grill/Saints in the championship game. Ground Texx had previously disposed of three round robin opponents to set up a showdown with Moe's/Saints.

Bill Ramsey paced the offense with a .687 day, followed by Matt Trosper at .667, Mike Cronin at .615, Robert Hayes at .600, and Jason Harrison and Jeff Williams at .500.

But clearly the key to winning the tournament, said Ground Texx manager Walter Burchett, were "Will Henke's pitching and overall team defense.

"Our defense was amazing," said Burchett. "I can only remember one error."

Shortstop Tom Taulbee and 3rd baseman Matt Trosper were especially sharp in a 5-0 shutout win over Lima VFW, said Burchett.

"Tom made two really good plays at the end of the game in the 5th and 6th innings to stop their rallies, and Matt made some really good plays too. The left side of our infield in that game was just outstanding."

Against Moe's in the finals, Burchett said his club "had four double plays in the first four innings," and "on the day we had seven double plays."

Ground Texx parlayed copious first inning scoring into three round robin victories, striking for ten, three and sixteen runs, respectively, in the top of the 1st.

Against Norwood Firefighters Ground Texx erupted for ten first inning runs and never looked back on their way to a 25-7 rout. Robert Hayes put his club on the board with an rbi double. Mark Schorsch followed with a two run double. Mike Cronin and Bill Ramsey combined for ten hits.

Three extra base hits - a leadoff triple by Jason Harrison and back-to-back doubles by Bill Ramsey and Robert Hayes gave Ground Texx two first inning tallies against Lima VFW in game two. Jeff Williams rbi single capped off the inning. That proved to be all the runs Ground Texx would need as pitcher Will Henke turned in a 5-0 shutout victory. Williams banged out three hits, and Bill Ramsey added two for the winners.

Next Ground Texx exploded for sixteen runs in the top of the 1st as the steamrolled OCD Ink 20-5 in six innings. The eventual champions started the game with eleven straight hits. A two run double by Mark Schorsch highlighted the inning.

That pitted Ground Texx against Moe's/Saints for the overall title. The two finalists battled to a 1-1 stalemate through five and a half innings, but in the bottom of the 6th, Robert Hayes and Mike Cronin delivered rbi singles to lift Ground Texx to an eventual 3-1 victory. Hayes and Jason Harrison shared four hits for the champions.

The victory qualified Ground Texx for the USSSA Great Lakes "D" National Labor Day Weekend in Milford, Oh. along with Northern Kentucky Thunder. Ground Texx and M & M Connection both earned a berth to the Ohio U-Trip "D" State August 19-20 in Dayton.

Huber Lawn Care Mows Down Competition In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" Qualifier At Expressway Park

By Andy Zureick

Milford, Oh. – Huber Lawn Care was a perfect 5-0 as they capture the first place in the 12-team Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" State/National/World Qualifier at Expressway Park on Saturday, April 22nd.

Huber Lawn Care started the tournament with a 19-0 pasting of Skyline/Xtreme. Chris Applegate tossed the shutout and Brian Marshall led the way at the plate going 4-for-4. Jeremy Jones, Glenn Huber, and Jason Jett were all 3-for-4.

It was quite a bit closer in game two as Huber got by Bounty Hunters 11-6. Brian Marshall was top man again, this time going 3-for-3. Teammate Chad Case was also 3-for-3.

M & M/Team Explosion dropped a 9-6 decision to Huber Lawn Care in the final game of round robin play. They were led at the plate in that one by Brian Littleton and Chad Case, both going 3-for-4.

Huber Lawn Care faced Westwood Style in game one of elimination round play. Chris Case's RBI-single got the scoring underway in the 2nd. Huber would tally three in the inning. They added two more in the 5th and another in the 6th on the way to a 6-2 final. Case led all Huber Lawn Care hitters in the game going 4-for-4. Jerry Applegate was 3-for-4. Glenn Huber and David Felino had two hits apiece.

The tournament finals pitted Huber Lawn Care opposite Good Fellas. They jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the bottom of the 1st thanks in part to a Brian Marshall RBI single. Four runs in the 4th broke open a 5-3 contest. David Felino drove in two in the decisive inning. The final was 10-6. Eight members of the Lawn Care team – Brian Littleton, Chad Case, Brian Marshall, Kevin Murphy, Jeremy Jones, Jason Jett, Glenn Huber, and David Felino – went 2-for-3 in the championship game.

Case also led his team on the day with a .824 batting average. "He had an outstanding tournament...he really came out on fire. He batted .900 three weeks ago in our first

qualifier at Expressway,” explained team manager Glenn Huber. Case also led the way in the field. “He played several positions and played well at all of them.”

Left-centerfielder Kevin Murphy was a defensive standout according to Huber.

The Huber offensive honor roll also included Brian Marshall (.706), Jason Jett (.636), Glenn Huber (.615), David Felino (.600), Jeremy Jones (.500), and Myron Iery (.500).

“We always have a good defensive team, and we got some key hits in tough situations,” noted Huber. “We had a lot of fun and enjoyed the sportsmanship.”

Huber Lawn Care had qualified for postseason play prior to the event, but did earn \$500 cash for the championship. The paid berth to the USSSA World Tournament was passed to Good Fellas. It will be played September 21-24 in Lake Buena Vista, Florida.

The USSSA “E” state tournament will be played August 19-20 in Harrison. Teams qualifying for that event were Good Fellas, JB’s, Package Home Solutions, Skyline/Xtreme, and Buzzy’s Drive Thru.

Good Fellas and JB’s earned invites to the “E” nationals on Labor Day weekend in Ft. Knox, Kentucky.

Ford Development Double Dips Team Envy 16-4, 19-9 In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “E” Qualifier At Kolping Park

Mt. Healthy, Oh.--Ford Development tripped up Team Envy 16-4 and 19-9 in a double finals to capture first place in a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “E” State-National Qualifier April 22nd at Kolping Park.

The two wins over Team Envy wrapped up a 6-1 performance by the champions, who avenged a 16-9 setback to Team Envy in the winners’ bracket finals.

The championship gave Ford a berth to the Ohio USSSA Men’s Class “E” State Tournament August 19-20 in Harrison, and to the U-Trip Great Lakes “D” Nationals Labor Day Weekend in Milford, Oh. Runner-up Team Envy also qualified for the National Tournament, and will join Ford, 3rd place Dynamic Softball and 4th place Local 212 in Harrison.

Solid pitching and defense, which held all six of Ford’s victims to single digit scoring, the hot bat of Brandon Slade, and a never-say-die attitude led Ford to the title, said player-manager Keith Downs.

“I had a couple of key strikeouts,” noted Downs, the team’s pitcher, “and our outfielders made some great plays and our five man infield pretty much shut everybody down. Chris Hillman (2nd base) shut down the right side and got to everything that was hit to him. And he never made an error.”

Offensively Brandon Slade turned in a robust .857 (18-for-21) performance, followed by Chris Hillman at .727, Carlton Brock at .714, Keith Downs at .682, Dan Peck at .591, and Keith Cunigan, Jamie Winkler and Philip Scott at .500.

“Brandon was on fire,” observed Downs. “He just stroked the ball all day. And he’s so quick it’s hard to get him out, plus he takes a lot of extra bases.”

But most importantly, said Downs, “nobody quit.

“Everybody just kept fighting. Losing our fourth game helped us re-group and to re-focus. Everybody just kept encouraging each other and nobody got down on anybody else.”

After falling behind the Cardinals 5-3 in their opener, Ford outscored the Cards 8-0 in the 5th and 6th innings to emerge with an 11-5 victory. Brandon Slade’s two run double broke a 5-5 tie and put his club ahead for good at 7-5 in the 5th. Then in the 6th Dave Phalen and Keith Downs each delivered a two run single to make the final 11-5. Slade collected three hits to pace the winners.

Next Ford erupted for eleven runs in the bottom of the 2nd to break open a scoreless contest and breezed to a 17-2 victory over Clarion Hotel in four. Carlton Brock’s rbi single put Ford on the board. Keith Cunagin followed with a bases clearing triple to make it 4-0, and Keith Downs added a two run double as the lead swelled to 6-0. Downs, Dave Phalen and Dan Peck were all perfect in three at bats.

Another 1st inning outburst helped propel Ford past Tredway 15-1 in game three. Dan Peck’s rbi single ignited an eight run outburst in the 1st, and Jason Adams’ rbi single capped off the inning. Keith Downs, Evan Pruitt, Phil Scott and Brandon Slade each went 3-for-3.

Team Envy derailed Ford in the winners’ bracket finals 16-9, but the eventual champions would never trail again, bouncing back to outscore their next three opponents 51-18 to claim the title. Ford scored a total of 33 runs in the 1st inning in their final three games to leave no doubt about the outcome.

First they exploded for twelve runs in the bottom of the 1st to seal a 16-5 rout of Dynamic Softball. Carlton Brock’s two run double put Ford on the scoreboard, and Chris Hillman, Keith Cunagin, and Dan Peck followed with two run singles to push the lead to 10-0. A two run inside-the-park home run by Brandon Slade capped off the inning.

Peck and Slade banged out four hits each, and Downs, Adams and Pruitt added three.

Next Ford avenged their setback to Team Envy with the help of another twelve run outburst in the 1st. Carlton Brooks, Chris Hillman, Keith Cunigan, Jason Adams and Dan Peck each drove in a pair of runs in the inning. Team Envy never recovered, falling

16-4. Peck and Slade combined for eight hits, and Brock, Hillman, Pruitt, Downs and Adams shared fifteen.

Ford's momentum snowballed as they roared into the finals, and struck for nine runs in the first and five in both the 2nd and 3rd innings to take a commanding 19-5 lead and clinch a 19-9 victory. Phil Scott tripled to get things underway in the 1st, then raced home with the first run of the game on Dan Peck's base hit. Brandon Slade's two run inside-the-park home run made it 3-0. Christ Hillman followed with a two run double and Keith Cunigan a two run single as the lead swelled to 7-0.

Dan Phalen's two run double highlighted the five run 2nd, while a two run double by Carlton Brock and a two run single by Hillman accounted for the first four runs in the 3rd.

Slade, Brock, Phalen, Cunigan and Jamie Winkler each went 3-for-3 to help fuel the offense.

Amos, Sauter Power Walt's Bar BQ To Number Three In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" Qualifier At Pastime Park

Harrison, Oh.--Doug Amos hit a blistering .850 and Josh Sauter batted .800 to power Walt's Bar BQ to their third tournament title of the year in a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" qualifier April 23rd at Pastime Park.

Walt's spanked Lights Out 12-1 in the championship game of the eight team affair to avenge a 13-10 setback earlier in the day in round robin play. Walt's went 2-1 in pool play to earn a spot in the four team playoff bracket, where they battled past Ruc's Rebels 13-10 to set up their re-match with Lights Out.

A berth to the USSSA "E" Great Lakes Division National Tournament September 2-4 in Ft. Knox, Ky. was awarded to Lights Out, Outlaw Softball and Ruc's Rebels. Outlaw and Ruc's also qualified for the Ohio U-Trip State Tournament August 19-20 back at Pastime Park. Walt's had previously qualified for both events.

While Amos and Sauter paced Walt's offensively, they got plenty of support from their teammates. Bob Wubeler pitched in with a .714 mark, Garrett Penz batted .687, Jeremy Brandon hit .632, and James and Darrin Johnson each batted .625. Walt's hit .638 as a team.

"We were on fire throughout the tournament," said Walt's manager James Johnson. "Doug and Josh were our offensive MVP's. They were lining the ball wherever they wanted to. They came in with their 'A' game and left everything out on the field. They gave it their all."

Walt's defensive star was shortstop Bob Wubeler.

“In our first two games he turned about six or seven double plays,” said Johnson. “He was definitely the defensive MVP of the tournament.”

Johnson said his team got a big lift from back-up pitcher Pete Horn, who came in for starter Darrin Johnson after Johnson’s back “tightened up.

“He was struggling a little bit and Pete came in and pretty much dominated the tournament,” said Johnson. “He came in quite a few times with the bases loaded and ended the innings without giving up any runs.

“He gave us a big emotional boost and was a big reason why we won the tournament,” said Johnson.

Walt’s went 2-1 in round robin play, falling to Lights Out in game three after drilling Industrial Services 10-4 and Scums of the Playground 12-5. Bob Wubeler banded out four hits, and Doug Amos, Josh Sauter, Jeremy Brandon and Garrett Penz each went 3-for-4 against Industrial Services. Then Amos collected four more safeties, and Wubeler added three versus Scums of the Playground.

Walt’s never trailed in the semi-finals, jumping out to a 7-0 lead after an inning and a half, then blowing open a 7-4 contest with five runs in the top of the 4th en route to a 13-10 victory over Ruc’s Rebels. Doug Amos’ rbi single put Walt’s on the board in the 1st. Later Pete Horn contributed a two run single to cap off the inning. Garrett Penz had a two run single in the 2nd as the lead swelled to 7-0. James Johnson’s rbi single capped off the five run 4th after Ruc’s had cut the deficit to 7-4. Josh Sauter and Bob Wubeler combined for eight hits, and Amos, Penz and James Johnson chipped in three apiece.

Lights Out drew first blood with a run in the top of the 1st in the finals, but it proved to be their only score of the game. Walt’s answered with four, taking a 4-1 lead on Pete Horn’s bases-clearing double. A pair of two run singles - one by Doug Amos and another by Ryan Oberst - highlighted a five run 2nd as the lead mushroomed to 9-1. Finally a three run, inside-the-park home run by Josh Sauter invoked the mercy rule in the bottom of the 6th.

Amos and Sauter pounded out four hits each for the champions. Jeremy Brandon, Darrin Johnson, Pete Horn and Ryan Oberst each went 2-for-3.

The 13-10 setback to Lights Out was Walt’s first setback of the year, said manager James Johnson.

“This was our third tournament of the year and we hadn’t been beaten yet,” said Johnson. “We came into the tournament 6-0. It was very frustrating when we lost to Lights Out, because there were a lot of walks and that took the ball out of our defense’s hands.

“That took a real toll on us,” said Johnson. “It really drained us. But we re-grouped and rebounded and went on to win the tournament.”

OC Softball Perfect In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “E” Qualifier At Queen City

By Andy Zureick

West Chester, Oh. – OC Softball won all four games they played to take the championship in the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “E” Qualifier on April 22nd at Queen City Sports Complex. That qualifies OC for the USSSA “E” state and national tournaments later this summer.

OC Softball opened the day versus Team VIP. Jason McCarthy drove in the first run of the game during the three-run 1st. McCarthy would play a major role in the OC success all day. He collected another RBI with a triple in the 4th. Six runs total in that at bat made it 9-1. Team VIP managed only two more scores, making it a 9-3 final. Steve McCarthy was 3-for-3 in the win. Greg Kelly, Jason McCarthy, and Jobe Hohman were all 2-for-3.

Rick Spivey singled in a run in the 1st against Harrison Bowl. That helped OC Softball to a 4-1 lead, and they would never trail again. Spivey and teammate Todd Hawks posted a pair of two-run doubles in the six-run 2nd that put the game well out of reach. The final was 14-3. Steve McCarthy, Rick Spivey, and Todd Hawks all went 3-for-4.

“The first two games were against lesser teams...we played to the level of our competition,” reflected OC Softball manager Steve Flocari. “When we got to the third game, I told the team we wouldn’t win if we played like we did in the first two games.”

Both OC Softball and Lights Out Softball came into game three with perfect 2-0 records. The winner would advance to the tournament championship. In the bottom of the 2nd, OC Softball first dented the scoreboard on Steve Flocari’s RBI-double. They added four more in the bottom of the 5th to increase their lead to 11-2. Rob O’Neil had a two-RBI triple in that at bat. Going into the final frame, OC Softball held a 14-4 advantage. In their last at bat, Lights Out Softball made it interesting by scoring eight runs and drawing to within two. However, they could not get over the hump and OC won it, 14-12. Jason McCarthy was 4-for-5. Jobe Hohman and Steve Flocari were 3-for-3. “It was a lot closer that it should have been. We had a good lead then made some errors,” noted Flocari.

That set up the finals between OC Softball and the Backyard Boys. In the top of the 1st, Jason McCarthy and Adam Ausman both knocked RBI-singles as OC built a 6-0 lead. Randy Neville tripled in two to cap off an eight-run 3rd that made it 14-2. OC Softball finished the game in five innings via the mercy rule. The final was 19-4. “We jumped on them early and they just quit,” commented Flocari. Jason McCarthy was a perfect 4-for-4 in the championship. Steve Flocari and Steve McCarthy were both 3-for-4.

The McCarthy boys led OC Softball in the event. Jason hit .800; Steve finished at .750. Steve Flocari hit a respectable .615.

“He’s a model of consistency,” said Flocari speaking about team-leading hitter Jason McCarthy. “He rarely pops up, just hits line shots. He’s a perfect top-of-the-order hitter – always going up to make good contact. He made some great plays at shortstop also. He has really good range, real quick release, real strong arm...makes it easy to turn double plays. He made all the plays he could and that’s all you can ask.”

“It feels good to get on the board. We have a good young team and are looking forward to the season. It’s nice to get that first qualifier under your belt,” summarized Flocari.

Along with OC Softball, the Backyard Boys earned berths to the postseason state and nationals. Lights Out and Crooked Bats also qualified for the state. That event is in Harrison on August 19-20. The nationals are Labor Day Weekend in Milford.

Fatty Patty’s Trims M & S 10-8 To Seal Kolping Title

Mt. Healthy, Oh.--Fatty Patty’s trimmed M & S Drywall 10-8 in a second round game to clinch first place in a four team Saturday night round robin April 22nd at Kolping Park.

Fatty Patty’s battled past Kenny’s Sports Bar (1-2) 14-13 in their opener, then clipped M & S to assure themselves of a first place finish before Polishing off Miami Lakes (0-3) 16-10 in the finale.

M & M Steamrolls Kolping Round Robin

Mt. Healthy, Oh.--M & M Construction steamrolled three opponents en route to a first place finish in a four team Sunday morning round robin April 22nd at Kolping Park.

M & M outslugged Secret Service (2-1) 24-16 in their opener in a key match-up with the eventual tournament runners-up, then bowled over Tony’s Crew (1-2) and A-Team (0-3) by identical 15-5 scores.