

# (TRAINING ROOM)

**SOFTBALLCENTER**



Major Softball News

with **Dale Weiser**

The top level of slow pitch softball heated up this summer starting with Conference USSSA's July 4th Seattle "Dual" Major tournament and their 17 teams. Sonny's/Beacon/Cowboys/Sidelines, a new 'B' team based out of Wyoming won their first tournament of the year and the first tournament of the weekend. To do so they went 5-0 including a big win over major Team Combat/Laser Vision D2E/Supreme in the winner's bracket semifinals 30-26. Then they knocked off local Conference 'B' team, Doerflinger in both the winner's finals Friday night and the championship on Saturday morning. The tournament MVP was Sonny's Tyson Steele.

The second tournament of the dual was won by Team Combat/Laser Vision who lost to Sonny's again in the winner's bracket championship Saturday night but came back to knock off Doerflinger early Sunday morning and then "double dip" Sonny's in the championship for their second Conference tournament win of the season. The tournament MVP was Combat's center fielder Rick Baker.

Sonny's was 9-2 for the weekend and run their Conference record to 19-6. Team Combat was 10-3 on the weekend and run their season's record to 36-16. Doerflinger was 9-4 on the weekend and earned a



*Brian Wegman*



*Danny Lopez*



**Bryson Baker**



**Brett Helmer**

second and a third place which helped them get back into the points race to qualify for the Major World Series at the end of the year.

Also on July 4th holiday weekend was the 32nd Annual Busch/Pepsi Softball Classic in Arkansas. The Arkansas Major was won by Fence Brokers/Gametime Supply/Worth who went 5-0 and outscored their opponents 130-76. FBI defeated T's 13 in the winner's bracket finals 33-24, and knocked off Texas/Miken 31-14 in the championship game.

A third Major tournament of the holiday weekend was "The PIF", as we know it here in the states, which was held in Sherbrooke, Quebec (Canada). Traditionally the PIF is known for great competition and its huge crowds. This year's tournament did not disappoint. Twelve teams started on Friday divided into four flights of three teams each, "round robin" style, with the top teams in each division advancing to the double elimination bracket and the rest of the teams to single elimination. In the upper division Vacances/Transat won the winner's bracket championship game over Rochester Athletic 6-3 and advanced to the single game final. Meanwhile Rochester proceeded to win the loser's bracket final over a local French team called Wilkins Champigny-Remax 23-8 to make it back to the finals and then defeated Pharmapar/Vacances/Transat 15-5 for the PIF Championship.

The middle of July found the best teams in the nation squaring off at the 43rd Annual Smoky Mountain Classic in Maryville, Tennessee. The tournament featured 30 teams from 19 different States and 20 teams from Conference USSSA. The Classic started on Friday night with a big crowd at the main fields at Sandy Springs Park. One official estimated the crowd to be about three-times the size of the Dudley. One local lady told me that she brought her son to the tournament 30 years ago and now he was out on the field umpiring. She said the crowds are not what they used to be but the town still looks forward to the tournament every year. She said she could tell by where people were parking that this year's Friday crowd was pretty large.

On Saturday the eight undefeated teams squared off on the show field. In the first game it was Softball Magazine's own columnist and Team Combat/Laser Vision slugger Brett Helmer and the "Derby Boys" that came out swinging for the fences and put on the best home run show of the day as they "flip flopped" then "run ruled" Jean Shoppe 37-14. Helmer was 5-5 with five homers and 14 RBI in the game. As the day continued and the heat pushed into the 90's the scores dropped as the temperature affected the ball and GTL, Resmondo, and Suncoast all won lower scoring games.

In the semi-finals GTL used some great pitching from Geno Buck and a smothering

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## **Rochester Athletic**

defense to beat Team Combat 19-2, while Resmondo held off Suncoast 20-14 as the ball started to fly a little bit towards the end of the game.

The winner's championship game between Resmondo and GTL began around 7:30 PM in front of the largest crowd of the day and was a great game from beginning to end. GTL held the lead much of the game but stranded 14 runners in the first seven innings and was unable to put away Resmondo. Going into the top of the seventh Resmondo was down 22-16. GTL got two outs from the first three Resmondo batters and then Resmondo just refused to make the final out and put up a seven spot to take the lead 23-22. In the bottom of the inning GTL scored one but left the winning run on third with two out and Resmondo scored five in the eighth to steal the victory. The game was filled with some high drama, some great defensive plays, and some long homers.

On Sunday in the championship GTL hung within striking distance of Resmondo for a while but never put up the necessary spurt and Resmondo run ruled them 27-12 when Scott Striebel hit a walk off homer in the bottom of the sixth inning. Resmondo won their fourth straight Smoky Mountain Classic, their Smoky record seventh overall, and add to their 2011 trophy case with their seventh tournament win of the season.

The summer continued with the "Carolina Shootout" which was played in sweltering heat and humidity. The tournament was postponed by lightning Saturday night around 9:30 PM, and then continued on Sunday but rained out for the final games. Shoppe/Team TPS/D2E/Elite based out of McKenzie, Tennessee was your winner as they pulled out an extra innings 20-17 win over Deluxe Bakery in the semi-finals to make it into the winner's bracket championship against Darkside/TYJA/Easton. Darkside made it to the championship by scoring three runs in the bottom of the seventh against Down2EarthSports to win 10-9 and then they beat Taylormade 27-20 on Saturday evening. The Shoppe vs Darkside winner's final was then postponed by lightning until Sunday morning at 9 AM. In that



*Greg Connell*

game, Darkside held an early lead but left the bases loaded in the fourth inning when Shoppe third baseman Lee Powers turned a double play. In the bottom of the inning Shoppe's Brad Reckart hit a grand slam to take the lead. In the fifth, center fielder Kyle Cowart shut down Darkside with a couple of great plays and Reckart added another three run homer to push the lead into "run rule" territory where Lee Powers hit a walk off homer in the bottom of the sixth to end the game and secure the championship for Shoppe when rain washed out the rest of the tournament.

The final Conference regular season tournament of the 2011 season was played in Sterling Hts, Michigan. The tournament on Friday night and Saturday morning went as predicted with none of the local non-conference teams winning any games against Conference teams. In the third round of the tournament the three big Major teams all lost to 'A' teams in upsets. Famous Sports beat #1 Resmondo 33-25. This was Resmondo's first loss to a non-major team this year (17-1 record vs non-major). R&M Metals also knocked off GTL 23-22 and EWS beat Team Combat/Laser Vision on a walk-off three run homer by Tony Mack.

So after the "super powers" fell, the tournament was wide open for any of the 'A' teams to break through and win one. This was not to be though, as Resmondo rattled off win after win in the loser's bracket late into the night and then beat Laser Vision on Sunday morning and R&M Metals in the championship 27-17.

With the regular season finished, the post season began as Team 454 Emerald/Worth based out of Glen Allen, Virginia remained the #1 Class 'A' team in the country as they went 5-1 to win the USSSA 'A' World Tournament. They were pushed into the second game (the "IF" game) of the Championship Sunday afternoon by runner up, R&M Metals/Troupe/TCP/Easton based out of Waterloo, Iowa. R&M turned an early 11-1 lead into a hard fought 13-8 victory and forced the "IF" game. In the final game Team 454 held small leads the

majority of the way and R&M pulled to within one run on a three run pinch hit homer by Keith Anderson. 454 didn't score in the bottom of the sixth and R&M failed to score in the top of the seventh and lost 21-20 when 454 pitcher Andy Vitcak snapped off a Sam Lopez liner up the middle to end the game.

The post season continued with the Conference Championships over Labor Day weekend. Resmondo-Specialty Tank/Worth, the #1 ranked men's slow-pitch team in the nation came out of the loser's bracket and "double dipped" Team Combat/Laser Vision/D2E/Supreme, the #4 ranked team in the country for the Conference Championship title. The Championships were held in their traditional location, the Osceola County Stadium in Kissimmee, Florida. Resmondo had dropped to the loser's bracket on Saturday after losing to Team Combat/Laser Vision by an astonishing score of 23-4 in the winner's bracket championship game. Then on Sunday they ran the table, winning three straight and picking up their fourth Conference Championship title in the six years the league has been in existence. Resmondo's first win Sunday was a 26-23 win over Suncoast/Reebok after they trailed 15-4 in the second inning. Then they beat Combat/Laser Vision 22-7 and finally 23-22 on a walk off bases loaded single by Jeremy Isenhower to take the title. All of the games in the Major portion of the Championships were played on baseball fields with 330-390-410-390-330 dimensions. The largest fields used in softball today.

With the Conference Championships complete, the upper level of softball turns its attention next to the USSSA 'B' Worlds, the Major World Series and finally the ASA 'A' World.

**All of these tournaments can be viewed live, online at [SoftballCenter.com](http://SoftballCenter.com)!**