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2018 // ISSUE III

BALLS AND STRIKES



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BALLS AND STRIKES

Official Publication of
USA Softball
2018 \ Issue III

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello and welcome to Balls and Strikes, the official magazine of USA Softball.

Remember when we used to refer to the “off-season”? For you youngsters out there, there used to be a time when each sport had a season, and an off-season. The off-season was when those of us on the administrative side of things could prepare for the next year. It was a time when you could evaluate how the previous season went, decide what changes to make, if any, and look to improve your program. It was also a time when as a player you could play other sports. Well with the advent of Fall Ball and in many cases Winter Ball, the off-season is no more. Softball, like many other sports, has become year-round. But that doesn’t mean that there shouldn’t be time for other sports and activities. Specialization at a very young age is not healthy, and those that tell you otherwise are probably charging you a lot of money for your 10 year-old to play year-round. Let them be kids. Let them have fun and play whatever sports interest them. If softball is “their” sport, they will let you know soon enough. They don’t need to be pushed to be the next superstar while they are playing t-ball.

By the time this issue is distributed Championship season will be completed. I’d like to give a special thank you to all of those who host our championships. I for one appreciate all of those local associations, host organizing committees, cities, counties and CVB’s that continue to step up as tournament hosts. Thank you all.

On the International side, our Junior Men’s team suffered early losses to top four finishers Canada and New Zealand that left them in a hole they couldn’t quite dig themselves out of, finishing 2-4, and good for eighth in the 16-team field at the Junior Men’s World Championships in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada. On the slow pitch side both our Men’s and Women’s teams defeated Canada to win this year’s Border Battle, held in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. What a fantastic accomplishment. And finally, in Chiba, Japan our Women’s team scored seven runs off one of the all-time greats in Yukiko Ueno in a game for the ages to not only win back-to-back World Championship Gold, but also to become the first team to qualify for the Olympic Games in 2020. As Mel Allen used to say, “How about that!”

See you at the ballpark.

John Gouveia

John Gouveia





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TOKYO BOUND!



The USA Softball Women's National Team qualified for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games while defending the World Championship Gold Medal last August in Chiba, Japan! Read more on page 24.

THE 2018 JUNIOR OLYMPIC NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON CONCLUDES!



Over 40 teams concluded their season by claiming a coveted USA Softball National Championship. Read more about the Junior Olympic (JO) Championship season on page 31.



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FACES ON THE FIELD

Every year, USA Softball has 924,000 Junior Olympic (JO) athletes playing on more than 77,000 teams while over 1 million adults play on 88,000 teams across the United States. Meet Gianna, Kristin, Lexi, Richard and Riley... athletes who are proud to play #USASoftball!



GIANNA, 10

California
American River Frostbite
Girls' 12-Under Fast Pitch
Catcher

HER START

I started playing when I was five years old in the 6-Under Division because some of my friends were doing it.

FAVORITE PART OF PLAYING SOFTBALL

I love being a catcher and making a lot of new friends.

GOALS IN SOFTBALL

I want to become the best player I can be and someday play for the Washington Huskies.

BEST EXPERIENCE IN SOFTBALL

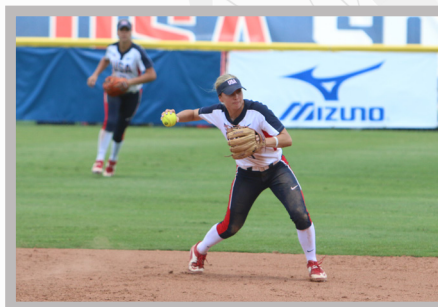
When my team won the Championship in my 8-Under league and I was voted to the All-Star team.

ROLE MODELS IN THE GAME

Ali Aguilar and Sis Bates, both play for Team USA and Washington.

TOUGHEST OBSTACLES

Balancing all of my school work with softball.



Sis Bates



Ali Aguilar

FACES ON THE FIELD



KRISTIN, 15

Maryland
Lady Orioles
Girls' 16-Under GOLD Fast Pitch
Third base

HER START

I got started playing at the age of four in the Edgemere Sparrows Point Recreation Council.

FAVORITE THING ABOUT PLAYING SOFTBALL

The friendships made and the rush you get when you hit a "dinger"!

MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE

Playing in the 2018 16U GOLD National Championship in Plano, Texas. It was an awesome experience.

ROLE MODELS IN THE GAME

Jessie Warren from Florida State. That diving catch she made at the 2018 NCAA Women's College World Series was awesome!

ON BEING A STUDENT-ATHLETE

Even though I keep a very hectic schedule with softball training and workouts, I was able to maintain a 3.63 GPA during my freshman year.



LEXI, 15

Washington
Washington Angels
Girls' 16-Under GOLD Fast Pitch
Shortstop and Catcher

HER START

I decided to try other sports at eight years old after three years of competitive cheer. I started playing in an 8-Under recreation league until I joined a travel ball team two years later.

FAVORITE THING ABOUT PLAYING SOFTBALL

Competing at a high level.

TOUGHEST OBSTACLE

Learning how to be a switch hitter and become a slapper.

WHAT SOFTBALL ACCOMPLISHMENT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF

Winning the defensive Most Valuable Player award as a first year 12-Under player that was voted on by my opponents.

ROLE MODELS OF THE GAME

Sis Bates, Sierra Romero and Ali Aguilar.

FACES ON THE FIELD



RICHARD, 51
 Missouri
 Dudley Lightning
 Men's Major and Senior Slow Pitch
 Pitcher

HIS START

I started playing softball in the early 1990's.

FAVORITE THING ABOUT PLAYING SOFTBALL

The competition and pitching.

GOALS IN SOFTBALL

To play with the best in the game and I would love to make the Hall of Fame.

BEST EXPERIENCE HE'S HAD PLAYING SOFTBALL

Playing against Kevin Bazat and Greg Connell.

TOUGHEST OBSTACLE

Playing softball and managing my time coaching and watching my son play high school sports.



RILEY, 13
 California
 Five Cities Pride
 Girls' 12-Under Fast Pitch
 Center Field

HER START

I first started playing baseball when I was four years old and then switched to softball when I was five in our local recreation league.

FAVORITE THING ABOUT PLAYING SOFTBALL

That you have to problem solve in the moment and work together with your teammates to make the correct play and get the out.

TOUGHEST OBSTACLE

Working hard on my game to overcome missing my left hand. I had to work very hard and practice long hours to increase my bat speed and strength to hit off of faster pitchers. I also had to perfect my glove switch because I have to catch and throw with the same hand. It had to be quick enough that I could make the play as fast as my peers.

GOALS IN SOFTBALL

To show anyone that you can play no matter what your challenge is and to hopefully make my high school softball team.

ROLE MODELS IN THE GAME

Jim Abbott is by far my biggest role model. He played baseball at the highest level missing his right hand. When I was 10 years old I got to meet him and he was incredibly kind to me. After meeting him, I knew that I wanted to be a role model for some other little girl like he was for me.

Do you want to be profiled in "Balls and Strikes Online Softball Magazine" in the future?

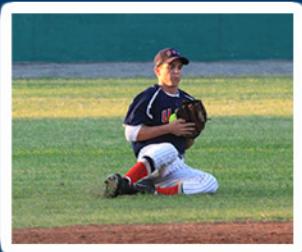
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Every year, USA Softball registers over 25,000 umpires across the U.S. From the local level to the international stage, USA Softball Umpires are the best trained and proficient in the world! From our Umpire Awards Programs to the various local and national clinics through the country, it pays to be a USA Softball Umpire! Here, we feature Ken, a USA Softball umpire from Florida.



KEN

Florida

USA Softball of Florida Umpire

Umpires: Adult Slow Pitch (Men's and Co-ed)

Started Umpiring: 1984

FAVORITE THING ABOUT UMPIRING USA SOFTBALL

It keeps me involved in the game and having the opportunity to umpire with my sons, training new umpires and conducting umpire clinics.

GOALS IN UMPIRING

To always learn something new.

HAVE YOU EVER UMPIRED AT A USA SOFTBALL NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

I've had the opportunity to umpire at three National Championships and two Senior National Championships.

BEST EXPERIENCE IN UMPIRING SO FAR

Teaching both of my sons to umpire and umpiring together. My oldest son has umpired with me since he was 16 and he is now 36. My youngest son has umpired with me since he was 18 and he is now 25.



Do you want to be profiled in "Balls and Strikes Online Softball Magazine" in the future?

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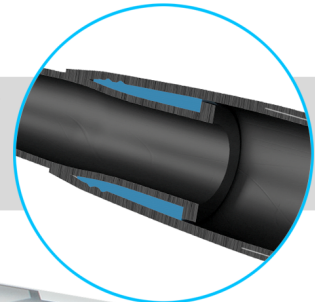
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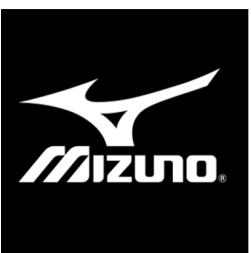
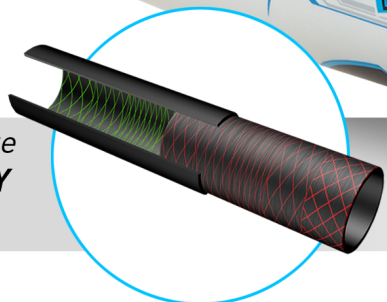
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NEWS & NOTES

MARYLAND-DC-DELAWARE UMPIRES STEP UP DURING MLB ALL-STAR WEEK



USA Softball was well represented at Major League Baseball's (MLB) All-Star Week. In addition to participating at PLAY BALL Park for the third-consecutive year, USA Softball of Maryland-DC-Delaware also provided umpires for the inaugural All-Star Jennie Finch Classic and the Armed Services Classic. [Click here to read more.](#)

DUDLEY SPORTS AND SPORTSENGINE BECOME USA SOFTBALL SPONSORS

USA Softball is proud to announce Dudley Sports and SportsEngine as the newest sponsors of USA Softball!



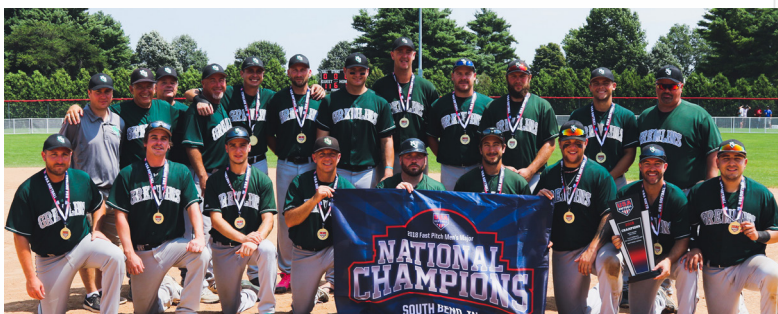
- Dudley is an official sponsor of the 8-Under and 10-Under fast pitch grassroots programs. Their catalog of equipment includes: bats, softballs, batting gloves and accessories.
- SportsEngine is the exclusive club management technology provider for USA Softball. With this partnership, USA Softball associations and members will be equipped with online tools such as payment processing, web hosting and tournament/league scheduling.

WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM NAMED TEAM USA "BEST OF AUGUST" WINNER



The USA Softball Women's National Team was recently announced as the "Best of August" team winner for the Team USA awards, presented by Dow. The award, which honors Team USA athletes and teams for outstanding athletic achievements during the month of August, comes after the U.S. claimed the WBSC World Championship while qualifying for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

NEW YORK GREMLINS EARN THIRD-CONSECUTIVE MEN'S MAJOR FAST PITCH NATIONAL TITLE



For the third-straight year, the NY Gremlins went undefeated to capture the USA Softball Men's Major Fast Pitch National Championship. The NY Gremlins, out of Clifton Park, N.Y., won their fourth national title in seven years after defeating Hill United Chiefs 11-3 (six innings).

En route to claiming the championship title, the Gremlins outscored their opponents 41-10, only going the full seven innings in two of their five contests. [Click here to read more about the 2018 Men's Major Fast Pitch National Championship.](#)



BORDER BATTLE BRAGGING RIGHTS RETURN TO U.S. SOIL

The Red, White and Blue put on a show at Border Battle X, including two USA victories in the Women's and Men's Border Battle finales against Canada. With Team USA represented by the Men's Futures Slow Pitch National Team (USA Futures), Men's Slow Pitch National Team (MSPNT) and Women's Slow Pitch National Team (WSPNT), the WSPNT captured the program's first Women's Border Battle title, the MSPNT reclaimed the Men's Border Battle title and the USA Futures went undefeated.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE BOX SCORES,
RECAPS AND MORE FROM
BORDER BATTLE X!](#)



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SOCIAL MEDIA:

LET'S HEAR FROM YOU!

If there's one thing we love at USA Softball, it's interacting with softball fans from around the world! Are you following along on social media? Share your photos and be sure to tag @USASoftball with the hashtag #USASoftball for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue of Balls & Strikes Magazine!

"Congrats to the US Armed Forces Women's Softball Team for earning silver @ the @USASoftball National Championship #softball #ArmedForces #USASoftball"

@USMILITARYSPORT



"I love playing #USASoftball. This is the team we took to Boise, Idaho for Nationals. It was a mix matched team but I feel we had a decent flow but struggled to close enough wins to keep playing. We went 1&2 and ended up taking 17th place. I am proud to be a part of this team and would play ball with each and every one of these young men if given the opportunity. What a great experience..."

@LSBENNETT278



"USA 12U National Champions!! It was a great week in Spartanburg, SC. #ImpactStrong #USASoftball!"

@CAROLINEPATTE1



"As long as I have been playing and coaching, I couldn't have asked for a better group of guys to share the field with. We battled against the best all year long and had our share of victories being the youngest team on the field. I can't wait what the future has in store for us. Great job all year in ASA fellas, super proud of you all..."

@DAHONEYBADGERS



"Congrats Marian! #USASoftball #MVP #Alaska"

@NELSONGRETCHEN



"Heat03 take 4th place out of 90 at the #USASoftball 14U "A" National Championship after a 2-0 loss to Ohio Lasers. Congrats to all of our players on a great tournament! #GoHeat"

@STLHEATSC



2018 USA SOFTBALL ANNUAL MEETING SET FOR OCT. 27-NOV. 1

It is almost time for the 2018 USA Softball Annual Council meeting that will be held in Oklahoma City, Okla.!

What is the annual meeting? Each year, over 300 voting Council Members meet to discuss association business. The National Council, which consists of USA Softball Commissioners or Commissioner Emeritus, Executive Director Emeritus, Council Member Emeritus, Regional Player Representatives, At-Large Player Representatives, Junior Olympic Commissioners, Regional Umpire-In-Chiefs, Allied Members, Elite Athlete Reps, and Past Presidents, are charged with making decisions on legislative changes, rule changes and is solely responsible for awarding National Championships to host cities across the country.

For additional information (forms for council members, training session information, etc.) on the Annual Meeting, visit the event page.

This year's Council Meeting runs from Saturday, October 27 (Hall of Fame Banquet) to Thursday, November 1 (last General Council Session) and is highlighted by several key events.

Tradeshow:

This year's USA Softball Trade Show is on Tuesday, October 30 from 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m., to be held in the 'Ballroom C' at the Cox Convention Center. Exhibitor registration is now open.

Attendees at the Trade Show include USA Softball Council Members, local USA Softball association staff, Park and Rec professionals, guests and other meeting attendees.

Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony:

The 38th annual National Softball Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony will be held at the Council Meeting on Saturday, October 27. Inductees include Dick Brubaker (Fast Pitch Player), Crystl Bustos (Fast Pitch Player), John Daniels (Sponsor), Ricky Huggins (Slow Pitch Player), Todd Joerling (Slow Pitch Player), Bill Silves (Umpire), Christa Williams (Fast Pitch Player), Charles Wright (Slow Pitch Player).

"Swing for a Cause" golf tournament:

This annual event benefits the USA Softball Special Programs and Special Olympics NIT. This year's tournament will take place at Lincoln Park Golf Course.

Special Programs bowling tournament:

Please join us this year at the Special Programs Bowling Tournament! This annual event benefits the USA Softball Special Programs and Special Olympics NIT and will be held at Heritage Lanes in Oklahoma City.





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ON TOP OF THE WORLD

WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM IS

TOKYO BOUND!



Haylie McCleney smiles after reaching third in Team USA's semifinal win over Japan.



Kirsti Merritt celebrates as she approaches the plate as the game-winning run in Team USA's semifinal win over Japan.



Kelsey Stewart runs towards her teammates after delivering the game-winning single in the Gold Medal game.

The Olympic dream became real for members of the Red, White and Blue. Not only did Team USA earn a place in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, the team also defended their world championship title after defeating host country Japan at the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Women's World Championship in Chiba, Japan.

Team USA clinched the No. 1 spot in Group A by going 6-0 in pool play, setting up a matchup against world-ranked No. 4 Australia for their first game in playoffs. The U.S. edged out the Aussies in a tightly contested, 3-1 ballgame which saw Monica Abbott fan 18 batters while Delaney Spaulding drove in two runs at the plate.

In their next contest that pitted the team against No. 2 world ranked Japan, the rivalry lived up to the hype. Overcoming a three-run deficit, the game went into extra innings but it would be the United States earning the walk-off win. Team USA rookie Rachel Garcia showed she was anything but, delivering the game-winning single in the bottom of the eighth to plate Kirsti Merritt and secure the U.S. a spot in the Gold Medal finale.

Less than 24 hours after securing the right to defend their 2016 world championship title, Team USA learned they officially became the first team to qualify for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games after Japan defeated Canada to setup the rematch.

Facing off against Japan for the second time in as many days, Team USA battled until the very end and proved that resiliency pays off as Kelsey Stewart hit a walk-off RBI single to drive home Michelle Moultrie in the bottom of the 10th inning to give the U.S. a 7-6 victory over Japan.

"It was another great game (against Japan). If something comes out of this game besides the fact that we came back and won, it would be that it was against a true warrior in Yukiko Ueno. For her to go out and throw 17 stressful innings (including Japan's earlier game against Canada) was amazing to watch if you're a softball fan," said Women's National Team Head Coach Ken Eriksen.

JOURNEY TO TOKYO 2020



January, 2019

2019 National
Team Selection
Trials

July, 2019

USA Softball
International
Cup

August, 2019

Pan
American
Games

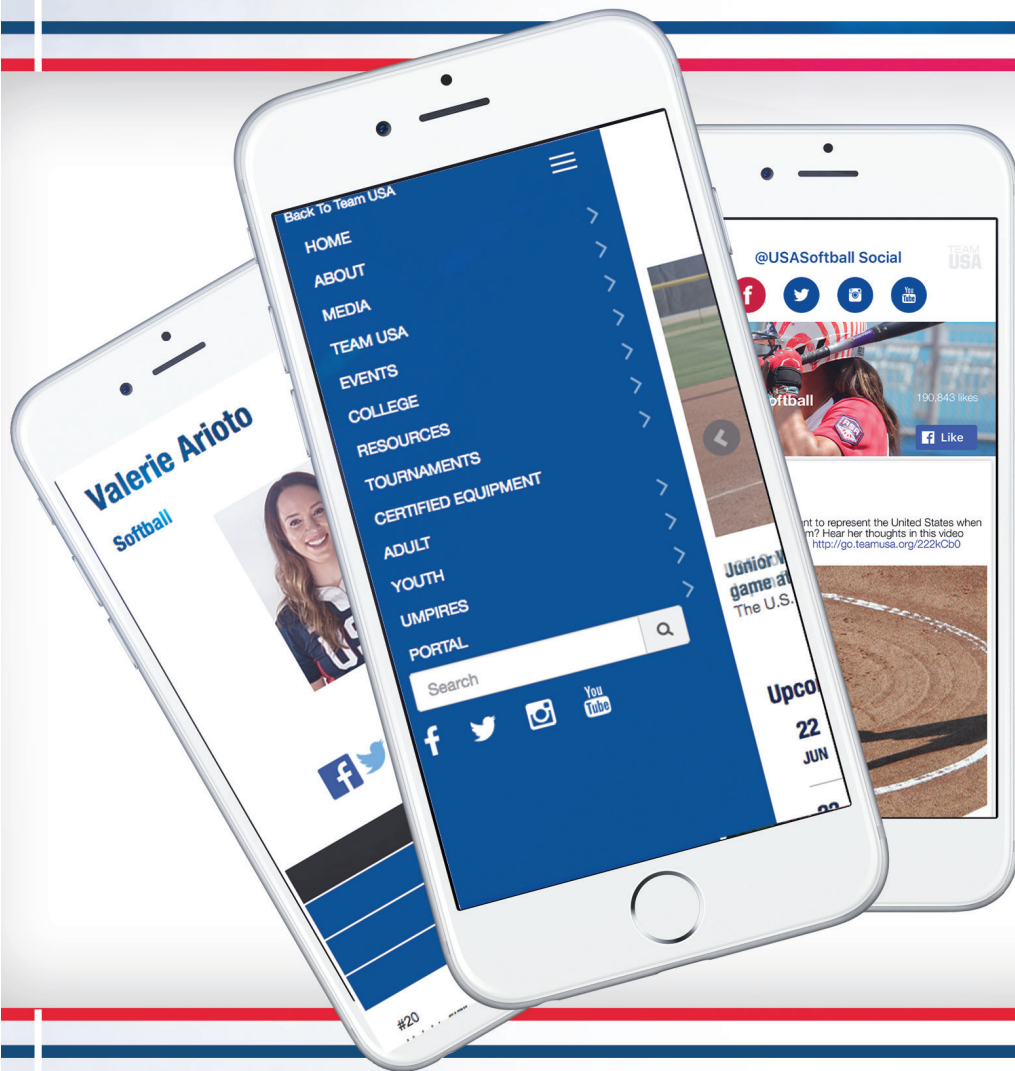
Fall, 2019

Olympic
Team Selection
Trials

**July 22-28,
2020**

Tokyo 2020
Olympic Games

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USA SOFTBALL

WHERE OLYMPIC JOURNEYS BEGIN

Since its founding in 1933, USA Softball has grown from a few hundred teams and umpires to one of the largest sports organizations in the United States. The leader in the sport of softball in certified equipment, play, coaching education and officiating, USA Softball has served as the National Governing Body of Softball in the United States since 1978. In that role, USA Softball administers, fosters and promotes the sport of softball to provide opportunities for participation and the best possible experience for those involved.

As the pipeline to the National Team Programs, the path to the podium starts at the grassroots levels of USA Softball. Through a network of Local Associations all across the country, players, coaches and umpires can register with USA Softball and join a network of over 2.5 million members from all across the U.S. who share the same passion for the game.

Whether you are a coach, player or umpire, you can become involved with USA Softball at a variety of levels. At the grassroots level, USA Softball offers recreational, league, tournament and National Championship play. Those participants ultimately feed into the National Teams who represent the United States on the international stage. As the National Governing Body, USA Softball is the ONLY organization that selects athletes, coaches and umpires for international and domestic competitions and is responsible for training, equipping and promoting the USA Softball National Team programs that compete in events such as the Pan American Games, World Championship and ultimately the Olympic Games.

Many of the National Team athletes began their journey to Team USA through the USA Softball pipeline, while every umpire who represents the United States is registered through USA Softball.

Read more about out the areas you can get involved with USA Softball below and begin your Olympic journey today!

ATHLETES

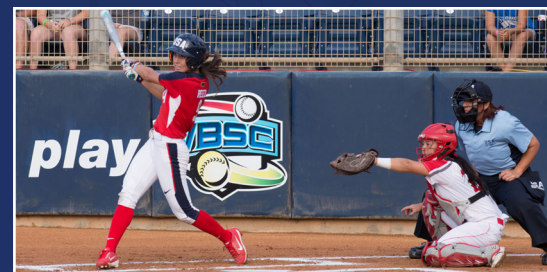


Representing your country is the highest honor an athlete can receive – and becoming a member of a USA Softball National Team starts by playing at the top levels of USA Softball. USA Softball fields the following teams for international competitions:

- Women's and Men's National Teams
- Junior Women's and Junior Men's National Teams
- Women's and Men's Slow Pitch National Teams
- Women's and Men's Futures Slow Pitch National Teams

*USA Softball may also field additional teams on a year-by-year basis

UMPIRES



Most umpires want to know how they can be selected to umpire at World Championships, Regional Games, or even the Olympics. Once an umpire has been registered as a USA Softball umpire for at least seven years, worked at least four USA Softball National Championships, two of which are in the same category of play and from an upper level national championship, they can apply for the USA Softball Elite umpire program. Once they have gained this status they can apply for an WBSG Umpire Certification School. Once certified, umpires are eligible to represent USA Softball at World Championships, Pan American Games or even the Olympics.



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TIM SABIN: ACHIEVING MY GOAL

USA Softball of Cincinnati umpire Tim Sabin makes the call in every state



July 22, 2018 is a day that USA Softball of Cincinnati umpire Tim Sabin will always remember. Not only was he getting the opportunity to umpire in beautiful Waipio, Hawaii, it also was the day he was able to check off a lifelong goal to umpire a game in each and every one of the 50 states. Sabin, who was calling at a USA Softball of Hawaii fast pitch competition at the Patsy C. Mink Central Oahu Regional Park, achieved this accomplishment after being assigned the plate on a beautiful Sunday afternoon.

Sabin worked his first game at Cincinnati's Rumpke Park back in 1997 on April Fools' Day. Starting as a slow pitch umpire to test the waters in a new role in the game, soon after his first time to call he purchased equipment and began to umpire fast pitch.

Sabin's road to all 50 states started after just his third year of umpiring as he received his first out-of-state assignments – a collegiate game at Thomas More College in Kentucky, an invitational tournament in Canton, Mich. and then his first National Championship in Bloomington, Ind.

One day while walking on the beach in Florida with his wife, the idea of trekking across the country while calling the game he loves hit him, and he began to plan out the necessary path to act on the idea. Taking classes and attending umpire schools through USA Softball, Sabin set out to see the country and also experience the differences in how softball is played and umpired from coast to coast.

After an additional assignment to a USA Softball National Championship in Normal, Ill. Sabin earned another National Championship opportunity in Stratford, Conn. Having now called in six states, he took advantage of the New England trip by adding Massachusetts and Rhode Island before heading south to Alabama and Georgia to mark off another two states. Suddenly, with 10 states in just five years, the belief that he could achieve his goal started to become attainable, but little did he know that the journey would take only 21 years.

Another opportunity to add to his list of states came in 2003 when he attended an Advanced National Umpire School Killeen, Texas, crossing off Louisiana, Arkansas and Mississippi on the route. It was on this trip that Sabin learned how his dream had made its way through the USA Softball ranks after a scheduled game in Shreveport, La. had been cancelled due to rain. Thinking he'd have to make up the state at a later date, then-USA Softball of Louisiana Umpire-in-Chief Ike Wheeler had a game waiting on the return trip to "make up" that state. Additional trips that same year were to Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and Florida, putting Sabin at just over one-third of the U.S. visited.

The journey continued over the next few years as Sabin added a few states each season. The 2007 season saw Sabin visit Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland and Pennsylvania while in 2009 he took a trip to the Pacific Northwest by way of Oregon, Washington and Alaska, bringing his total number of states to 37. After taking a couple years off, Sabin resumed his travels in 2013 with Oklahoma, South Dakota and Idaho and added the northern territories in 2014 with Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, and Nebraska. In 2015 he visited Utah, Colorado, and Arizona and a 2016 trip to New Mexico left him with just two states left on his list: North Carolina and Hawaii. A May 27, 2017 assignment in North Carolina brought him within one state of his goal – which was achieved in July of this year.

Along the way, Sabin showed his versatility by working a variety of divisions of play, calling fast and slow pitch in both Adult and Junior Olympic (JO) play. In his journey, he had the opportunity to work numerous USA Softball National Championships, NCAA Division I, II III and NAIA collegiate games, plus recreational games across all divisions of play.

Sabin was able to achieve this goal with the help of assigning assistance from National Umpire Staff members including Steve Riswold, Steve Roscia, and Jerry Fick among others. Sabin also received help from many Local Association UICs, including Stan Finch (Hawaii), Johnny Campbell (New Mexico), Tim Watts (Nebraska), and Ralph Anderson (Utah) and local leaders like Justin Lauby (Arizona), Jack Sauder (Michigan), Steve Fee (Pennsylvania), Kenny Carson (Washington), and Jack Eppley (Alaska).

Along the way, Sabin has remained appreciative of the hospitality he's received in his numerous assignments and enjoyed the opportunities to trade stories with umpires he had worked with. For Sabin, it was a great run and he hopes that he has a chance to return to many places where memories have been made.

Sabin has also proved, along with help from his friends in all fifty states, that with USA Softball any goal can be achieved!



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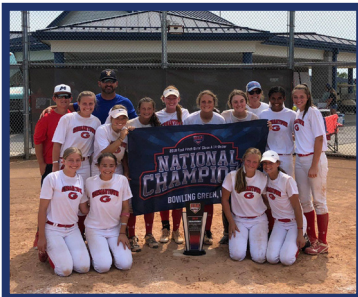


USA Softball Girls' Class A 10-Under National Championship

Montgomery, Alabama | July 22-29
Championship: Knockout Divas 9, Ohio Stingrays 8
[Click here for the complete bracket](#)

USA Softball Girls' Class A 12-Under National Championship

Spartanburg, South Carolina | July 22-29
Championship: Georgina Impact 2023-Lunsford 9, Florida Impact-Bergen 0
[Click here for the complete bracket](#)



USA Softball Girls' Class A 14-Under National Championship

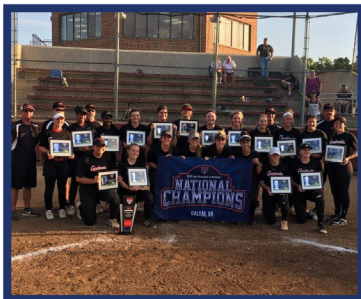
Bowling Green, Kentucky | July 22-29
Championship: Germantown Red Devils 9, Ohio Lasers 4
[Click here for the complete bracket](#)

USA Softball Girls' Class A 16-Under National Championship

Kent, Washington | July 22-29
Championship: WA Ladyhawks-Breer 7, Santa Fe Inferno Humphrey 16U 0
[Click here for the complete bracket](#)



2018 USA SOFTBALL JO NATIONAL CHAMPIONS ARE CROWNED! (CONT.)



USA Softball Girls' Class A 18-Under National Championship

Salem, Virginia | July 22-29

Championship: Carolina Cardinals Chandler 7, OFC Heat Orange-Urton 0

[Click here for the complete bracket](#)



USA Softball Girls' 16-Under GOLD National Championship

Plano, Texas | July 15-21

Championship: Texas Glory 16U-Naudin 9, Santa Fe Inferno-Lovett 0

[Click here for the complete bracket](#)



USA Softball Girls' 18-Under GOLD National Championship

Plano, Texas | July 15-21

Championship: Rock Gold-Waye 5, Team GA Gold-Henning 2

[Click here for the complete bracket](#)

CAROLINA CARDINALS DYNASTY

Saturday, July 21, 2018 is a day that Carolina Cardinals – Chandler Head Coach Rick McHone will carry with him. While the team compiled a perfect 7-0 record en route to the 2018 USA Softball Girls' 18-Under Class A Fast Pitch National Championship, a feat which is notable all on it's own, it also marked the day that the team claimed the program's third-consecutive 18-Under title, becoming one of a handful of teams to earn a coveted three-peat.

In an ever-changing culture in the sport of softball in which teams may focus on showcase tournaments, Championship Play is what drives the Carolina Cardinals. "We teach the kids to approach every game as an elimination game," said McHone, and that approach to the game has helped the program place hundreds of athletes at various colleges to continue their careers.

Founded in 1989 by Ray Chandler, the Carolina Cardinals have emerged as one of the premier girls fast pitch organizations in the country. Chandler's vision for his athletes was simple:

"The team foundation is centered around knowing and believing in the importance of the physical, mental and spiritual pieces of the game. These young ladies know that attitude and effort can make the difference on the field and off! The Carolina Cardinals team knows that striving to be a better ball player is really about striving to be a better person. These girls believe that life's most valuable lessons are found on every corner of the field. They know that the time spent on the DIAMOND will be what makes them SHINE in life."

This philosophy is what drew in McHone to the Cardinals program. "His [Ray] vision for the kids and coaching philosophies aligned with ours," he recalls.

For McHone, it all began in 1997 when he first got into coaching youth fast pitch softball, having made the transition from competitive slow pitch softball for many years. Joining the Cardinals program in 2003 as the first 8-Under team within the organization, McHone knew it was a great fit.

A longtime competitor in the USA Softball JO program, the Cardinals organization has attended USA Softball National Championships for many years. Their first 18-Under Class A National title came in 2006 under the guidance of Chandler, fueling an 18-Under dynasty that has now amassed five National Championships.



Sadly, Chandler passed away in 2010 and with his passing and encouragement from Ray's wife Sharyn, McHone found himself as the next leader of the Carolina Cardinals organization. Under McHone's leadership, the team continues to operate under the vision and legacy of their founder.

Their journey to the three-peat started in 2016 in Bloomington, Ind., where the team overcame adversity en route to the Championship title. After going undefeated through bracket play to land in the Championship Game, a loss to Ohio Lasers forced the "if-necessary" game, where the Cardinals edged out their opponents in a 2-1 win.

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Deciding they wanted to defend their title, the team set their sights on Salem, Ore. for the 2017 National Championships. The team went undefeated and walked away as back-to-back champs with a dominating 13-5 win over All American Mizuno for the title.

"After we left Oregon, the kids were already talking about a three-peat," mused McHone.

Traveling to Salem, Va. for the 2018 edition of the National Championship, the Cardinals once again went undefeated and took home the trophy after a 7-0, shutout win over OFC Heat Orange.

"I'm still amazed at how much these kids, several of them part of the three Championship teams, pulled together to put such an amazing run together over what seemed to be at times bigger and stronger teams," said McHone.

While claiming three-straight National Championships is an achievement the team and coaching staff is proud to have accomplished, it's the messaging off the field that McHone and the Cardinals organization want their athletes to take away.

"We teach our young ladies that you do not have to be greatly gifted to have a great attitude and give your best effort 100% of the time. Those attributes should be a part of your daily routine."

With a 20-player roster, McHone is often asked how they make it work in a culture in which the name on the back of the jersey can sometimes take precedence over the team.

"We teach our kids to work together collectively for a common goal," McHone said.

"Much like in life, you can get more accomplished if you work together rather than pulling against each other," he continued. "Our players pull for each other to succeed and in the end, should we not all be working for a common goal on and off the field?"

That mentality resonated with the athletes in the program.

"I think nowadays people switch teams if they don't get the opportunity to play as much as they would like," said former Carolina Cardinals team member and current South Carolina Volunteer Assistant Coach Taylor Wike. "When you play for the Cardinals it's different. You understand that it is just an honor to get to wear that jersey with 'Cardinals' on the front and a ribbon with Ray Chandler's name on the sleeve."

In the end, the Cardinals organization is proud of the role they have played in the lives of the athletes who have participated in their programs.

"As Ray used to tell me 'Touch as many lives as you can,'" said McHone. Those seven words construct a powerful message that to this day has stuck with not only the Carolina Cardinals organization, but for McHone personally. As the many teachers, business owners, coaches, doctors and lawyers who once put on a Cardinals jersey can attest, their time spent on the DIAMOND is what helped them to SHINE in life.

"Although I learned so much on the field as a Cardinal there was so much more off the field that shaped me into who I am today," Wike added. "I learned what it meant to love your teammates, to truly want what is best for each and every girl around you, and I've carried that with me throughout my career into my coaching career. I learned that although winning is important it isn't everything. The relationships you make with your team is really what it's about."

"Playing with the Cardinals impacted my life forever," she continued. "Without the Cardinals I know I would not be where I am today and I would not be the person I am. I, along with so many other girls who played for the Cardinals, are forever in debt to them."

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THE IMPORTANCE OF A COOL DOWN

BY: HAYLIE MCCLENEY



Softball is probably one of the most intense sports to play, and recovery, or lack thereof is an extremely important and often overlooked piece of the puzzle to be successful. We play multiple games a day, for multiple days in a row, and the effects that can have on our body (particularly on our recovery) are profound. Lack of sleep from early morning games following late games the night before, improper fueling in between games, and dehydration are just a few of the obstacles that prevent you from feeling fresh for your next game. Playing dehydrated, sunburned, feeling as if my legs would literally fall off, and not feeling anywhere near 100% ready to play, is something even I have experienced throughout my career.

I think that one of the biggest factors that has directly benefited the Women's National Team and me specifically is the addition of a post-game cool down to our regimen. The cool down as a part of a post participation necessity has often been an afterthought, but if utilized properly, could be the difference maker for athletes to feel better recovered and prepared for championship Sunday after a long and grueling multi-day tournament.

Why cooldown? There are multiple physiological arguments for why we should cool down.

Number 1: Activating our Parasympathetic nervous system.

The parasympathetic nervous system is responsible for calming the body down, slowing down heart rate, and helping facilitate recovery after a stressful event (a game, strenuous workout, or even daily practice). Relaxation itself is an important component of recovery and returning the body back to homeostasis (its resting state) after exercise.

Number 2: Heart rate variability.

Static stretching daily for 15 minutes has been shown to improve heart rate variability (HRV). Increasing your HRV means we are increasing the time in between our heartbeats. Since there is more time in between, our body is doing less work per beat, meaning it is more recovered and allowing for better circulation. It is a good measurement to assess whether your body is recovered or not, because the research tells us that a high HRV means that the parasympathetic nervous system (the one responsible for rest and relaxation, is activated). Static stretching has its time and place in the recovery process and is best-used post activity as opposed to pre-activity.

Number 3: Reducing muscle stiffness and soreness.

Adding a foam roll or even using a softball for soft tissue work post-game or post-workout has been shown to reduce soreness in athletes 24 and 48 hours post exercise. Foam rolling reduces soreness by getting out those "knots" and spots of tightness after a long workout or competition. It also keeps the body moving, which allows blood flow to still be high in order to get metabolites out and anti-inflammatory nutrients in. Metabolites are the things in our blood stream that occur as the result of muscle metabolism, but in simpler terms it's the byproduct of your muscle's chemical system to gain energy. When these byproducts (metabolites) add up, it can result in stiffness and muscle fatigue.

Foam rolling keeps your blood flowing and flushes these metabolites out of the system to make your muscles feel fresh. In addition, soft tissue modalities (those various treatments and tools to assist with recovery) restore range of motion to the joints, which may be important for preventing injury due to fatigue.

Number 4: Restoring blood flow.

Stretching and foam rolling both aid in maintaining blood flow to the muscles, which may lead to increased nutrient delivery and removal of metabolites that make our muscles feel fatigued and stiff.

Here is an example of a typical cool down for post-game. This rotation should take roughly 10 -15 minutes:

Foam Roll or Softball, 1 min each: Quads, IT Bands, Lat/ Shoulder, bottom of foot

Static Stretch or Band Stretch 1 min each: Hamstrings, Hip Flexors, Glutes

Haylie McCleney has been a member of the Women's National Team and is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist. If you'd like to contact Haylie for consultations, email mccleneystrength@gmail.com



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OUR JOURNEY TO GOLD

BY: KELSEY STEWART



August 12, 2018 – the day that has arguably been one of the most important days for the sport of softball here in the U.S. in such a long time. USA softball qualified for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan.

It happened more than a month ago but still feels absolutely unbelievable and so surreal.

Before I go into telling more about that day, let me take you back a little bit... The 2018 summer makes up my fifth year playing for USA Softball, which sounds like a long time, right? Well, there are two other players who have been a part of this program for eight years now. With softball out of the Olympics, USA Softball was an afterthought for so many people – but not for Valerie Arioto and Michelle Moultrie. Along with a few others, they

really kept the Olympic dream alive for so many of us. They are definitely the last two people who want credit or want to be recognized, but they deserve it. Year in and year out, they put their blood, sweat and tears into this program, and at times put their lives on hold to make this dream a reality not just for themselves but for all of us as well. The hope they held out for finally happened when softball was voted back in the Olympics on August 3, 2016. After that, the real work for every team had just begun.

The journey for the World Championship team started on June 12, 2018 with training camp, where we finally had a chance to figure each other out. We honestly had about 13 days to learn each person on the team, along with coaches, before we had to start winning.

I know most people are reading this and thinking, “Thirteen Days? You’re 17 women who are ‘supposedly’ the best in the world ...that should be plenty of time.” College teams have six months to prepare before season whenever a new team comes on to campus every year. I’m not telling you this to feel sorry for us, I’m just trying to explain so everyone understands exactly what this team just did this summer. It was honestly nothing short of amazing.

Wearing those three letters across your chest – there isn’t any room for excuses. We simply didn’t make any.

Fast forward to July, where we traveled to Irvine, Calif. to compete in the USA Softball International Cup. It is such a great tournament to see some international competition before the World Championship. We won the Gold against Japan in the Championship Game, highlighted by Valerie Arioto’s three homeruns in the final game. Even though we had won, we were still so far from playing our best.

At that point, we were about two and a half weeks out from the World Championship in Chiba, Japan. We once again went our separate ways and with only six games under our belt, were expected to compete as a complete unit just a few weeks later.

I still didn't know everyone like I felt I should. A team competes and flows at its best when you know exactly what the person is doing in front of you, behind you, to your left, to your right, and then some. You also have to be able to trust your coaching staff without a doubt. We were again just six games in.

On July 26, 2018, we flew from San Francisco, Calif. to Tokyo, Japan. We were very fortunate and honored to be able to stay on Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) in Iwakuni, Japan, which was quite the experience in itself. Commanding Officer Col Fuerst, Sergeant Major Gregory, Mayor Fukuda, and their staffs really took care of each and every one of us. We went a week before the World Championship was set to begin and trained together in hopes of putting all the puzzle pieces together. Just like that, it was time to earn our right to go to Tokyo 2020.

Every game, we show up and we go hard.

It doesn't matter who we're playing because it is all about us.

We can never control everything but what we can always control is our energy, effort, and our attitudes. Sometimes that is hard pill to swallow in

international play, and it is definitely something Coach Eriksen drills into our brains. When things happened not necessarily in our favor, you wouldn't even notice because our bounce back was unbelievable.

One game that sticks out was our game against Puerto Rico. A typhoon had just rolled in and it started as a light drizzle during batting practice. Then, it turned into a "Can you see? No, just put your glove in front of your face."

That whole game was about finding something deeper inside of ourselves to get through it and play through the rain. It brought out our inner kid, something I'll never forget with that group of amazing group of women.

We ended up going undefeated in bracket play, we beat Australia and ended up playing Japan in the semifinal. We won that game in extra innings, and it was such a fun game and another instance where we truly need everyone on our team.

Coach Eriksen did Coach Eriksen things - connecting pitchers with position players. I still haven't figured it out, but it allowed us to utilize the depth in our lineup. I personally thought it was brilliant, and something you honestly can't defend.

Team USA advanced to the grand finale. At this point, we were waiting for the winner of Canada vs Japan.

I remember seeing that Japan had just won over Canada and every emotion possible came over me. Not many people get it, but that's perfectly fine. We had just qualified for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

USA Softball was back in the Olympics ...such a long time coming.

I looked at Val, Michelle, Janie Reed, and Haylie McCleney. I say those names because I've been through every USA Softball journey with them and the tears start rolling. We really did it. All those years of listening to everyone try to pick us apart, staying positive and keeping it about US finally paid off.

Despite qualifying, the work was not over. The cherry on top would be a World Championship win under our belt. We earned the right to play on Sunday and that's what we want every time.

"Every game, we show up and we go hard.

It doesn't matter who we're playing because it is all about us."



I remember walking into the stadium, looking at Aubree Munro and saying, "I have National Championship vibes," where she looked at me and said, "I've had them all morning." At that moment I knew.

Aubree and I have won seven championships together now. We honestly just get each other. We know what each other needs and 99.99% of the time, we are always on the same page. We hadn't even started warming up and we were on the same page. That is exactly what one of strengths was for this team. We didn't have individuals. We had a group of 17 women who were on the same page.

"That is exactly what one of our strengths was for this team. We didn't have individuals."

We end up going into 10 innings with Japan. It was back and forth the entire game. We were facing Ueno, who is arguably the best pitcher in the world, outside of our USA pitchers. I'm not going to lie, she was bringing it all game.

In the top of the 10th inning, Japan's Fujita hit a two-run homerun to go up, 6-4, but I honestly wasn't worried at all. I knew we were going to at least get two runs back because this team has a "so what?" mentality.

Ali Aguilar starts on second per the international tiebreaker rule. Valerie comes up and moves the runner over. Delaney Spaulding comes up and hits a bloop shot, line drive in the book, down the right field line to score Ali. Then the GOAT, Michelle Moultrie, had a base hit through the 3-4 hole. With one out, we had runners at first and third. Kasey Cooper has a good at-bat, but brought the second out.

Aubree stepped up and had one of those amazing at-bats she does in high-pressure situations. On every team, you have a few players who thrive under pressure, and Aubree is one of those players. Trust me when I say, I pick her every single time. On a 3-2 count, Aubree hit a gap shot in the left center gap and scored Delaney to tie the game. The ball ended up bouncing over the fence which resulted in a ground-rule double.

With runners at second and third, it was my turn. I remember after Delaney scored, she came up to me and said, "I want you up, you can, no, you will do this."

The first pitch was a called strike. I did not agree with him so I called a timeout, not letting this umpire decide my at-bat.

I go over to Coach Dobson and Coach Eriksen, and let them know my thoughts. Coach Eriksen had his signature chuckle, told me it was fine and to calm down. He is one of the best at zoning you in and helping control your heartbeat. Then, as I was walking away, Coach Dobson looked me in the eyes and said, "It only takes one pitch." And let me tell you, in moments where you just want to do well for your team,

"Just like that, we were World Champions once again."

simple things that you already know seem to be the most brilliant things.

I go back up to the plate and swing at a ball over my head. It's fine, I'm fine, life is fine. I still had another pitch.

Next pitch, which I swear was on the plate but later found out it was really far out, I hit down the third base line to score Michelle. Just like that, we were World Champions once again.

I remember Coach Tarr making sure I touched first base and then, tackling me were Haylie and Michelle. The NFL-like tackles resulted in a post-win dog pile with the entire team.

On August 12, 2018 USA Softball not only became back-to-back World Champions but qualified for the Olympics. The dream is now a reality for so many people.

I'm so excited that 10-year-old girls can look at us the way I looked at Laura Berg, Natasha Watley, Caitlin Lowe, and Lovie Jung, and know that they can dream like I did at that age.

Being part of something so much bigger than yourself is one of the most humbling things ever. Being part of USA Softball is something even more.

To the 16 other women and coaches I got to go to battle with this past summer, thank you for making it the hardest but most rewarding summer of my career.

I can't wait to see what Team USA does next. Stay tuned. **We are all very Gold-minded.**

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JUNIOR MEN'S NATIONAL TEAM COMPETES AT WBSC JUNIOR MEN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP



The 2018 USA Softball Junior Men's National Team (JMNT) headed to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada for the XII World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Junior Men's World Championship (JMWC). Held July 7-15, the Red, White and Blue was on a mission to shock the world, having fallen shy of the medal stand in every JMWC since a Silver Medal finish in 1985.

Placed into Pool B, Team USA was scheduled to take the field against Canada, Czech Republic, Guatemala, Hong Kong and New Zealand with the top four finishers heading into the playoff rounds.

It was a tough schedule for the Red, White and Blue as the team had gone 3-11 and 2-11 all-time against Canada and New Zealand, respectively – but the team was ready to face the competition head on.

In their World Championship opener, the JMNT suffered a 10-3 (six inning) loss to host country Canada. A strong showing at the plate by New Zealand handed the team their second loss of the tournament as the U.S. fell 11-1 (five innings).

Bouncing back with back-to-back wins over Hong Kong, 11-1 (five innings) and Guatemala, 3-0), the U.S. stood tied in Pool B play. Strong pitching by Craig Lewis and Nathan Landry bolstered a hot-hitting offense for Team USA in the wins.

A late rally fell just shy in a 6-5 loss to Czech Republic to put Team USA in fourth-place at the conclusion of pool play action. Facing off against Argentina in their first game of playoffs, the U.S. saw their World Championship run come to an end with a 9-2 (six innings) loss.

SCOREBOARD:

- JULY 7:** USA 3, CANADA 10 (SIX INNINGS)
- JULY 8:** USA 1, NEW ZEALAND 11 (FIVE INNINGS)
- JULY 9:** USA 11, HONG KONG 1 (FIVE INNINGS)
- JULY 10:** USA 3, GUATEMALA 0
- JULY 12:** USA 5, CZECH REPUBLIC 6
- JULY 13:** USA 2, ARGENTINA 9 (SIX INNINGS)

MY SUMMER WITH TEAM USA

BY: PAUL MIKLOVIC



My first interaction with Team USA was in Midland, Mich. when I was playing in a tournament in 2015 and the Junior Men's National Team held tryouts. Roughly a year later, the team returned to Midland with their roster and competed in the 2016 WBSC Junior Men's Softball World Championship.

I recall on both occasions having conversations with my dad in which he told me that one day, he believed I could play on the Junior Men's National Team. He assured me that although it would take a lot of work, it could be achieved. I was skeptical at first, not knowing if I would be able to play at that level. The biggest tournament I had played in to date at the time was the Michigan State tournament, and that was nowhere near competing against some of the best Junior Teams in the world.

One more year passed. I was playing in a local tournament in a wood bat tournament, when the new coaching staff of the Junior Men's National Team came to scout players for the 2018 cycle. Later that fall, I received an email from USA Softball telling me that I had been invited to a tryout for the 2018 Junior Men's National Team.

The tryouts were held in Clearwater, Fla. from December 31 - January 4, so when I got the invitation, I knew I had the time to prepare. Countless Saturday mornings were spent in the cages, working towards my goal. I sacrificed a lot of time to practice because I knew it would all be worth it if I made the team. Past coaches, players, parents, and community friends helped me when they learned that I had a shot at playing for Team USA.

When I finally arrived at the tryouts, the nerves set in. Even though I knew I had prepared and put in the work, I still was nervous. The following days were spent playing in the cold, wind and rain with every athlete deserving to be on the team.

In the end, only 20 players would make the training team roster. At the conclusion of the Selection Camp, the coaches and the Selection Committee spent the entire last night determining who would be on the team. On the day we went home, everyone was speculating who was going to make the cut. The roster was not to be posted until the following day, so the long day of travel was spent wondering if I would be on the team or not. The next morning, we received an email. I quickly opened it. Relief and excitement filled me after I saw my name underneath the words "2018 Junior Men's Training Team".

The next few months flew by. The next time we would gather would be in April, where we would compete in our first tournament in Las Vegas. Up until that time, I spent even more time preparing – more hitting, more skill work, and more conditioning.

When we finally arrived in Las Vegas, we were able to interact as a team for the first time. It truly sunk in as I put on my full uniform before our first game – there was no better feeling than stepping onto the field wearing "USA" across my chest. I remember a crowd starting to form around our diamonds when we played, as people were eager to see how we performed.

When you put on that uniform it feels like you have your whole country behind you, and that was something truly special.

After games, our opponents would shake our hands and wish us luck on the rest of our journey. After two wins and two losses, we were eliminated from the tournament but despite this, we were able to see what we needed to improve on moving forward.

Within the next two months, we traveled to Fargo, Houston, and Salt Lake City for training camps and weekend tournaments. We would fly home between each tournament, and it always felt like an eternity before we met back up. All of the players would be eager to regroup again because we spent so much time together that it felt odd to be away from each other. When we were together, the days were spent practicing or playing softball, while the nights were spent swimming, eating and playing more card games than I can remember. The time we spent together off the field was just as important as the time on the field because it improved our team chemistry. With this, our level of play

increased throughout the months, and we began to play better as a team.

This was all leading to our main goal: the 2018 Junior Men's Softball World Championship.

We arrived in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada about four days before the tournament began. These days were used for practice and a few exhibition games before the tournament officially began.

Finally, the day we had been waiting for was here. On July 7, Team USA faced the home team of Canada in our first game of the tournament, right after the Opening Ceremony. In the stands sat roughly 3,000 spectators to watch the rivalry game set the standards for the tournament.

Looking out into the crowd, I was able to see players, coaches, and fans from all over the world. We knew it would be tough, playing Canada and their home crowd, but we had been preparing for this moment for a long time. As I looked around, I knew my team was ready to play, and everyone was feeling the same energy I was feeling.

What happened next was the most memorable thing I took from my experience with USA Softball. The music began playing and our names were announced. Hearing my name called as I stepped out onto the field next to my teammates was incredible. We stood there as our National Anthem played, and I felt an enormous sense of pride and honor that I got to represent my country. I looked back on all the work it took to get there, and I knew that every second was worth it. It was a moment that every player dreams of.

It was a close game going into the sixth inning. Until then Canada led by just one run, but after a hitting spree by Canada, the game ended, 10-3. We went on to lose to New Zealand, win

against Hong Kong and Guatemala, and lose to the Czech Republic to end the preliminary round. In our first elimination game, we lost to Argentina, which unfortunately put an end to our 2018 journey.

Ultimately, we were disappointed that we fell short of our goals, but nevertheless, we enjoyed every second of it.

If someone would have told me a few years ago that I would get to compete for our country against some of the best young softball players in the world, I would have never believed it. That in and of itself is a huge accomplishment and something that I will always be proud of.

Along the way, I made friendships I will cherish forever. Playing for Team USA was more than I could have ever hoped for, and it was the experience of a lifetime. USA Softball gave me an opportunity that exceeded my expectations, and one that I will remember for the rest of my life. Now that it is over, the only thing I can do is keep playing and improving, working towards playing for Team USA once more.

I'd like to say a special thank you to the USA Softball Junior Men's National Team Coaching Staff: Tyron McKinney, Mike Armitage, Tony Aresco, and Bob Piddock. Your commitment and dedication to the program was more than generous.

Also, a thank you to everyone else from USA Softball that has helped make this possible.

Next, thank you to coaches Tyler Bader, Delbert Benson and Bill Kunkle in addition to anyone else who helped me prepare for my journey.

Thank you to my family, especially my parents, for being my biggest fans, supporters, and coaches.

Finally, thank you to my fellow "#JMNTPLAYERS" for every memory you gave me. I had an absolute blast, and it was an honor to play beside all of you.



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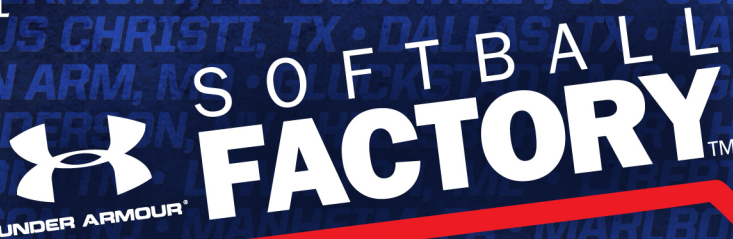
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MAKE IT A THREE-PEAT!

NY Gremlins join USA Softball record books en route to Men's Major Fast Pitch National Championship



For the third-consecutive year, the NY Gremlins went undefeated to capture the USA Softball Men's Major Fast Pitch National Championship. The NY Gremlins, out of Clifton Park, N.Y., won their fourth national title in seven years after defeating Hill United Chiefs 11-3 (six innings) and become just the fourth team in USA Softball history to three-peat in the Men's Major Fast Pitch National Championship division.

En route to claiming the championship title, the Gremlins outscored their opponents 41-10, only going the full seven innings in two of their five contests. In their opening game of the Men's Major Fast Pitch National Championship, the

NY Gremlins shutout Tin Cup 11-0 (five innings) behind a no-hitter in the circle by Juan Potolicchio. Potolicchio fanned 10 batters with the lone base runner of the game getting on after a fielding error. Offensively, Roy Mathieu had a perfect outing in the batter's box, going 3-for-3 with four RBIs, including a two-run shot over the right field fence to plate three runs.

Moving on to their next game in bracket play, the NY Gremlins posted another run-rule victory in an 8-1 (five innings) win over the Kansas City Monarchs. Strong pitching and timely hitting once again proved to be the key to victory for the NY Gremlins. Andrew Kirkpatrick got the 'W' in the circle after fanning six and allowing just one earned run in five innings. Kirkpatrick also produced at the plate, joining Erick Ochoa in the home run club as both batters accounted for three-of-eight runs in the contest.

It was a pitcher's duel in the next contest for the NY Gremlins as they edged out JB Bombers 4-0 to remain in the winner's bracket. Erick Ochoa started the game off with a bang, taking advantage of two leadoff walks by hitting a three-run blast in the top of the first inning. Plating an additional insurance run in the third inning, the four runs proved to be enough to hand the NY Gremlins the win.

The NY Gremlins earned a spot in the Championship Game after a tightly-contested battle against eventual runner-up Hill United Chiefs. Down by six runs after three complete innings, the NY Gremlins slowly chipped away at the lead before a walk off grand slam by Malarczuk Ladliso sealed the win.

Hill United Chiefs posted a 17-5 win over Hallman Twins to earn the rematch against the NY Gremlins in the Championship Game. Hill United Chiefs once again took an early lead after a leadoff, solo home run by Brad Ezekiel. The NY Gremlins responded in the top of the third, taking the lead for good with a two-run home run by Ben Enoka. Additional home runs by Bryan Abrey and Zenon Winters kept the offense rolling for the NY Gremlins as they earned the 11-3 (six innings) win to hold on to the Men's Major Fast Pitch National title.





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MEN'S NATIONAL TEAM PREPS FOR 2019 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP AT INTERCONTINENTAL CUP

The USA Softball Men's National Team headed to Prague, Czech Republic as the team began preparation for next year's World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Men's World Championship.

Facing off against Argentina, Czech Republic, Denmark, Japan and New Zealand, the Red, White and Blue didn't get the outcome they expected - but the event provided opportunities for the Coaching staff and players to evaluate and find areas for improvement for the 2019 season.

Suffering a pair of losses on their opening day of the competition, Team USA lost an early lead in a 5-4 (eight inning) loss to Denmark before falling 7-0 (five innings) to reigning World Champions New Zealand.

The U.S. picked up their sole win of the event in a thrilling 5-4 upset over Argentina. Strong pitching by Joel Cooley and a walk-off, two-run home run by Jonathan Lynch sealed the win for the Red, White and Blue.

Despite outperforming their opponents at the plate, the U.S. could not get the timely hit in a 6-1 loss to host country Czech Republic. In their final contest of the Intercontinental Cup, a seventh-inning rally was not enough as Team USA fell 10-7 to Japan.



Nick Mullins



Jeff Nowaczyk

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MINNEAPOLIS • Jan. 18-19, 2019 • Hilton Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport

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PORTLAND • Jan. 25-26, 2019 • Sheraton Portland Airport

KANSAS CITY • Feb. 1-2, 2019 • Overland Park Marriott

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"THE DIRT" NFCA PODCAST PRESENTED BY TURFACE ATHLETICS Each Wednesday, NFCA Director of Education Joanna Lane hosts a discussion about an issue facing softball coaches, or spotlights a member coach making a difference. Visit NFCA.org or download the free Apple or Google Play app for all episodes.

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THE LATEST INNOVATIONS IN SOFTBALL EQUIPMENT Make sure you don't miss our exhibit show, where you can check in with your favorite companies and see the latest and greatest in softball training, technology and apparel.

FORUMS TO DISCUSS CHANGES, THE FUTURE OF THE SPORT AND NETWORK Our member groups and various NFCA committees will conduct their annual in-person meetings and come together for several full-membership discussion events, including the Fastpitch Issues Forum and the always-popular Softball Summit. Registration opens in late August.



Jessica Mendoza giving keynote speech at 2017 Convention.

CHAMPIONS CROWNED IN MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SLOW PITCH NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 2018 Championship Season in the Men's and Women's Slow Pitch division came to a conclusion after another exciting year.

Kicking off the 2018 USA Softball Slow Pitch Championship season August 24-26 were the Men's Class B National Championship in Prairie Island, Minn., and the Women's Open National Championship held in Portland, Ore. Claiming the Men's B title was Heartland Investors, while Smash It/Derby Girls/Easton was tabbed the Women's Open Champion.

Click here for a recap

Dirt Dogs/FYZICAL/Davidson/DPC claimed the 2018 USA Softball Men's Class C Slow Pitch National Championship title after dropping into the loser's bracket but battling their way to the Championship Game. **Click here for a recap**

Concluding the 2018 Championship season with a pair of titles were H. Auto/RDD/All In/Sprizzi/Easton, the Super Slow Pitch Champion, and WC Monsta/Team Chent, the Men's Class A Slow Pitch Champion. H. Auto/RDD/All In/Sprizzi/Easton defeated Team Racks/Yeahhh 41-38 in the "if-necessary" game of the Supers while WC Monsta/Team Chent defeated Thunder/Flippin Keys 29-19 in the Men's Class A title game. **Click here for a recap**

Men's B All-Americans and Tournament Individual Awards:

- Dan Cayton, All American Restoration Monsta
- Artie Barcelo, All American Restoration Monsta
- Jeff Renno, All American Restoration Monsta
- Losson White, All American Restoration Monsta
- Damon Wegner, Comatose/S2N/Monsta
- Austin Andrews, Comatose/S2N/Monsta
- Tony Mueller, Dugout47 Airstack Budlight
- Drew Knutson, Dugout47 Airstack Budlight
- Scott Novak, Eurotech/Primetime/Easton/Klutch
- Brandon Patzig, Eurotech/Primetime/Easton/Klutch
- Mike Feldman, Heartland Investors
- Chris Dahl, Heartland Investors
- Blaine Horsager, Heartland Investors
- Geno Buck, Heartland Investors
- Scott Huffman, Heartland Investors

Batting Champion: Brandon Patzig, Evolution

Homerun Champion: Dan Cayton, All American Restoration Monsta

Tournament MVP: Mike Feldman, Heartland Investors



CHAMPIONS CROWNED IN MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SLOW PITCH NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS (CONT.)



Women's Open All-Americans and Tournament Individual Awards:

Kasey Castor, All Armed Forces
 Val Proulx, All Armed Forces
 Nikki Mills, All Armed Forces
 Savannah Brown, SN/Thunder/Respect/EA
 Dara Toman, SN/Thunder/Respect/EA
 Kasey Loomis, SN/Thunder/Respect/EA
 Jess Kallander, All Armed Forces
 Nikki Freiberg, All Armed Forces
 Brianna Benesh, Smash It/Derby Girls/Easton
 Jordan Brown, SN/Thunder/Respect/EA
 Carmen Fowler, All Armed Forces
 Fiana Finau, Smash It/Derby Girls/Easton
 Kristen Shifflett, Smash It/Derby Girls/Easton
 Christan Dowling, Smash It/Derby Girls/Easton
 Tara Salcedo, Smash It/Derby Girls/Easton

Tournament MVP: Tara Salcedo,
 Smash It/Derby Girls/Easton

Men's Supers All-Americans and Tournament Individual Awards:

Jeff Keske - H. Auto
 Adam Ussery - Team Racks
 Greg Connell - H. Auto
 Daniel Cayton - Team Racks
 AJ Montano - Team Racks
 Jeremy Yates - H. Auto
 Brandon Dillon - Team Racks
 Brian Wegman - H. Auto
 Travis Clark - H. Auto
 Donnie Hammonds - T's 13
 Bryson Baker - H. Auto

Jason Martel - Team Racks
 Joey Bulens - T's 13
 Bubba Mack - H. Auto
 Bill Pinkham - Team Racks

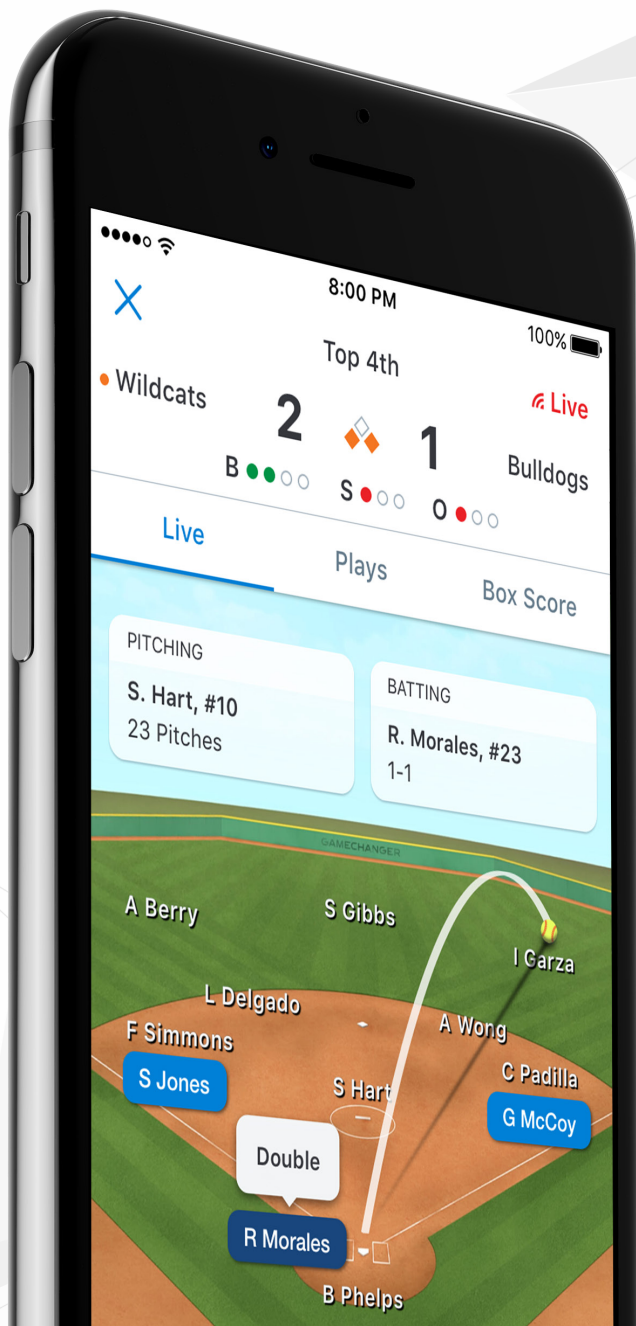
Batting Champion: Donnie Hammonds, T's 13 - .950
HR Champion: Jason Martel - Team Racks - 11
MVP: Bryson Baker - H. Auto

Men's Class A All-Americans and Tournament Individual Awards:

David Johnson - WC Monsta/Team Chent
 Ryan Dacko - WC Monsta/Team Chent
 Johnathon Williams - WC Monsta/Team Chent
 Filip Washington - WC Monsta/Team Chent
 Steven Lopez - WC Monsta/Team Chent
 Jared Hunt - WC Monsta/Team Chent
 Josh Brown - Thunder/Flippin Keys
 Kyle Pearson (LA) - Thunder/Flippin Keys
 Kyle Pearson (FL) - Thunder/Flippin Keys
 Zack Messer - Thunder/Flippin Keys
 Shannon Smith - Thunder/Flippin Keys
 Cory Briggs - EGL Foundation/Fillies Softball/VSP/ASP
 Davis Bilardello - EGL Foundation/Fillies Softball/VSP/ASP
 Marcus Thornton - EGL Foundation/Fillies Softball/VSP/ASP
 Brett Rettenmeier - WC Monsta/Team Jer Bear

Batting Champion: David Johnson,
 WC Monsta/Team Chent
Home Run Champion: Daniel McClement,
 WC Monsta/Team Jer Bear

Tournament MVP: Daniel Lopez, WC Monsta/Team Chent



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“Don't you get tired of the bruises and cuts?”

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“Why would you want to eat out of the trunk of your car?”

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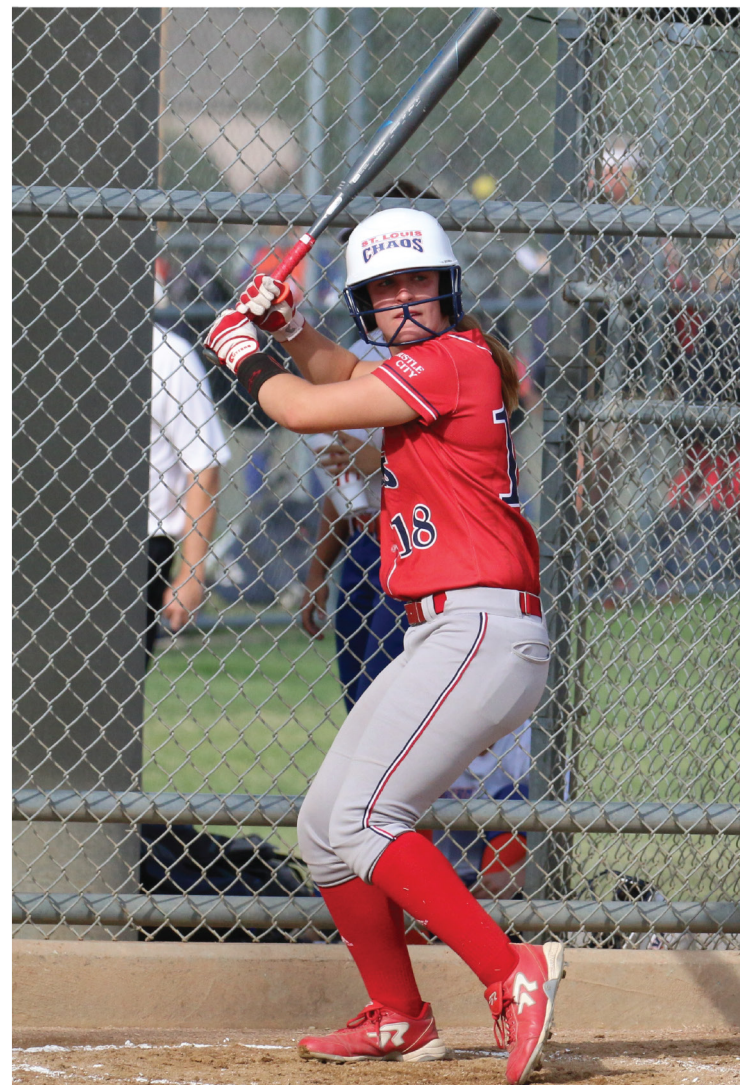


Dietary Supplements: 5 Things to Know Now

We're all surrounded by advertising and marketing messaging - 24/7, 365 days a year. And sometimes that messaging promises things that are just too good to be true.

Many adults take all of that with a large grain of salt. But when the consumer is a young athlete, and when the promise is improved performance through nutritional supplements, it's a different story. That's a potentially dangerous combination - first, because kids may not be able to evaluate the messaging critically; second, because the idea of risk-free performance improvement is so powerfully attractive.

"At the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency [USADA], we try to emphasize the positive through the TrueSport program," says Amy Eichner, Ph.D, USADA's Special Advisor on Drugs and Supplements. "But we also have an obligation not to shy away from discussing the negatives - issues like nutritional supplements. We owe it to young athletes, parents, and coaches to deliver accurate information to drive good decisions. And as USADA, we have the knowledge and the credentials to do that in a uniquely effective way."



Here Are 5 Essential TRUE and FALSE Points To Know – and Share – Right Now.

Points that can empower a frank, fact-based conversation.

1. Supplements Are Regulated, Just Like Medicine.

FALSE. The FDA ensures all medications are made according to strict rules and that they are safe and effective. But it doesn't test or regulate nutritional supplements the same way. Because of this, supplements may contain ingredients that aren't legal, or aren't listed on the label. Supplements may not be the same from batch to batch, and they may even contain substances that are considered performance-enhancing drugs.

2. Supplements May Lead to Malnutrition.

TRUE. When athletes rely on supplements in place of a varied diet, the over-all effect may be that they are subtracting nutrition instead of supplementing it. For example: protein powders are often made of isolated whey protein and are missing other vital ingredients found in real foods, like eggs, dairy products, meat, and legumes. Protein powders are lacking the other nutrients, so you're shortchanging yourself. There have also been studies showing that key nutrients on the supplement label are missing or present in lower quantities than stated.

3. Energy Supplements Don't Pose Any Risks.

FALSE. Nobody disputes that energy supplements work. That's because they contain stimulants like caffeine. Unfortunately, kids may not have the experience to make informed choices about caffeine use. Secondly, there could be more caffeine than you think. Ingredients like green tea



also deliver a massive amount of caffeine. Some energy supplements contain up to 250mg of caffeine. To put that in perspective, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that adolescents over 12 should limit caffeine intake to 85-100mg/day. And children under 12 shouldn't consume caffeine at all!

4. Supplements May Promote a "Shortcut Mentality."

TRUE. There's no "magic bullet" for athletic performance. But if young athletes rely on supplements instead of real food, hard work, rest, and proper nutrition, they may start to believe otherwise. Being an athlete requires

discipline, commitment, and hard work – the same qualities required for success in life. Looking for the easy way to reach a goal rather than the right way can create negative patterns of behavior, and take you places you really don't want to go.

5. Supplements Are Largely Unnecessary for Young Athletes.

TRUE. Strength and speed come naturally as young athletes mature. So, it makes sense to focus on other things, like skill acquisition, cognitive development, work ethic, sleep, nutrition, and other good habits. If youngsters rely on the "extra" strength or speed promised by a supplement, they may miss out on those critical factors. They're trading lasting skills and abilities for short-term gains – gains that will eventually even out as their teammates catch up in terms of physical development.

The TrueSport Supplement Guide details the benefits of a food-first nutrition strategy, providing food and supplement comparisons, real-life testimonials by Olympians, and ways to help parents realize and reduce the risks associated with dietary supplements with their young athletes. Visit learn.truesport.org/publications/ for more information.



This series of TrueTalk features is inspired by the values and principles of TrueSport – an initiative powered by USADA, the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency.

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PLAYER'S RESPONSE... "I AM PLAYING 8U FOR MY FIRST SEASON AND I REALLY NEED A BAT WITH A LARGE SWEETSPOT TO GIVE MYSELF THE BEST CHANCE OF GETTING SOLID HITS ON BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE PITCHES AS I LEARN HOW TO HIT A FASTPITCH BALL..."

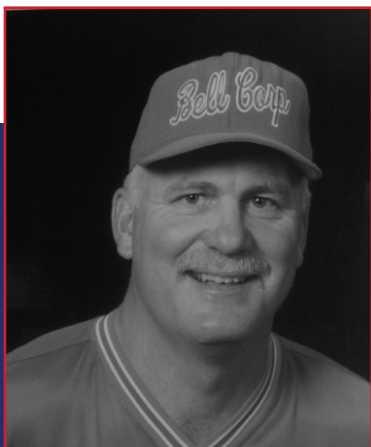


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2018 NATIONAL SOFTBALL HALL OF FAME SPOTLIGHT

Each issue, we'll be highlighting two inductees of the 2018 National Softball Hall of Fame Class.



Todd Joerling
2018
Defiance, Mo.
Slow Pitch Player

Joerling got his start when he was 14 years old after stepping in to play for his brother's team in order to avoid a forfeit. As the saying goes, the rest is history. He is a 16-time national champion who earned USA Softball All-American accolades 10 times during his storied career, including an MVP nod in 1999 at the Men's Super Slow Pitch National Championship. With over 2,000 home runs hit during his 13-year career at the major level, Joerling's play also earned him a spot on the first-ever USA Softball Men's Slow Pitch National Team, which defeated Canada at the inaugural Border Battle. While his achievements on the field speak for themselves, many refer to Joerling as a true ambassador of the game.



Bill Silves
2018
Mount Vernon, Wash.
Umpire

Loved by his peers and respected by teams, William "Wild Bill" Silves was a highly respected USA Softball umpire for over 45 years. At the age of 18, he attended his first umpire school, which began a life-long passion for the sport of softball. After putting in the work on the field, Bill's skills earned him the opportunity to umpire at his first USA Softball National Championship at the 1979 Women's Major Fast Pitch National Championship, where he would be assigned to the Championship Game. His accolades continued as he got the call at three more USA Softball National Championships and several WBSC-sanctioned events in Canada. While his on-field achievements show the amount of work he put into his craft, Bill is also well respected for his efforts to grow the umpire program off the field. Having served as an Umpire-in-Chief locally, regionally and nationally, his commitment to the growth and development of umpires is second-to-none. Having served as an instructor at 27 USA Softball National Umpire Schools, Bill's infectious enthusiasm sets the gold standard for the USA Softball Umpire program.

PLAY USA SOFTBALL

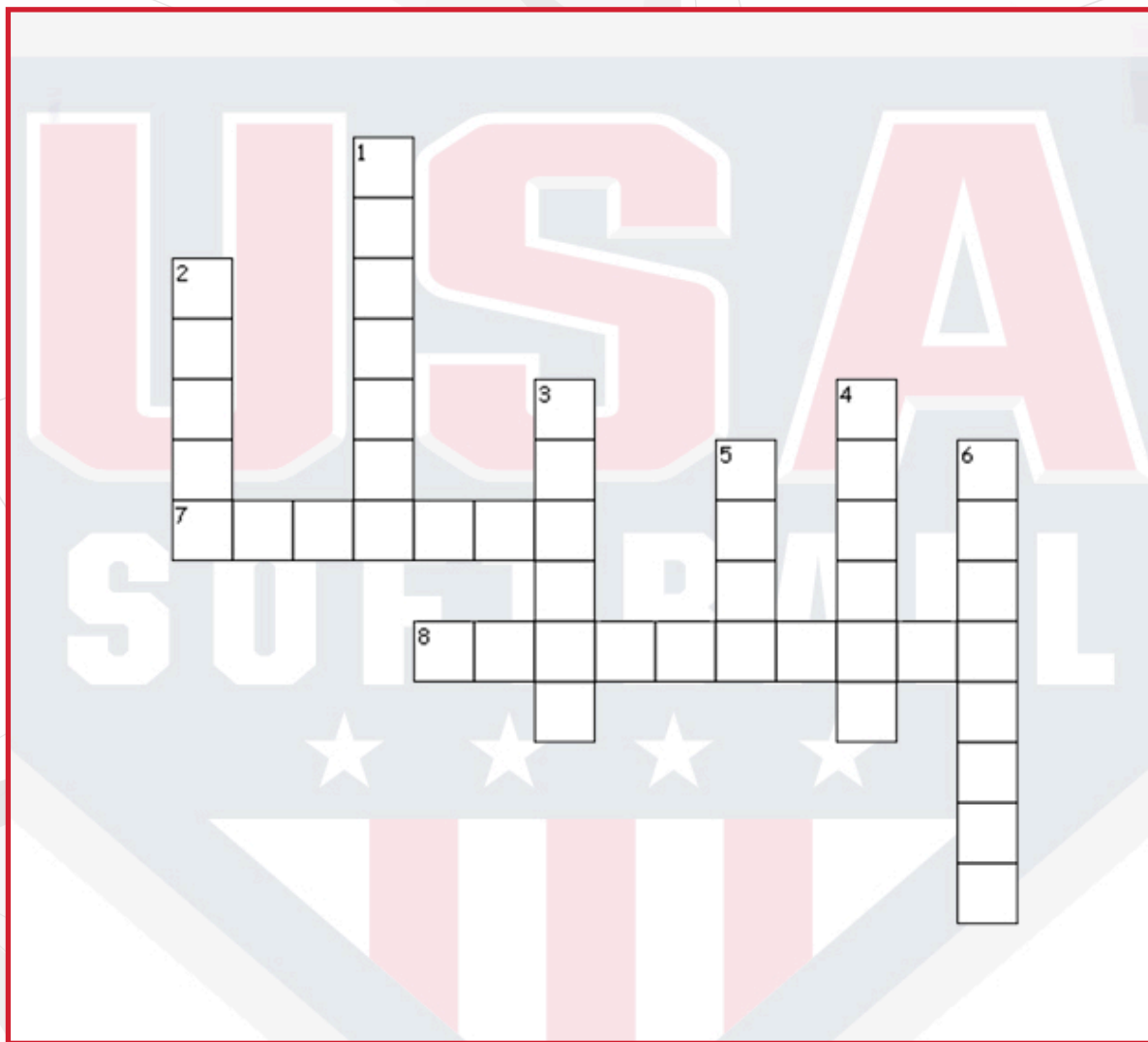
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

- 7. four base hit
- 8. a play in which two offensive players are put out

DOWN

- 1. The team at bat
- 2. a person who assists with the direction of their team
- 3. the listing of starting players and substitutes
- 4. a hit which results in reaching first base only
- 5. term used by umpire to suspend play
- 6. the term used by the plate umpire to indicate that a play shall start



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