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BALLS AND STRIKES

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USA Softball
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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Who is John Scolinos, I wondered. No matter; I was just happy to be there.

In 1996, Coach Scolinos was 78 years old and five years retired from a college coaching career that began in 1948. He shuffled to the stage to an impressive standing ovation, wearing dark polyester pants, a light blue shirt, and a string around his neck from which home plate hung – a full-sized, stark-white home plate.

Seriously, I wondered, who is this guy?

After speaking for twenty-five minutes, not once mentioning the prop hanging around his neck, Coach Scolinos appeared to notice the snickering among some of the coaches. Even those who knew Coach Scolinos had to wonder exactly where he was going with this, or if he had simply forgotten about home plate since he'd gotten on stage. Then, finally... "You're probably all wondering why I'm wearing home plate around my neck," he said, his voice growing irascible. I laughed along with the others, acknowledging the possibility. "I may be old, but I'm not crazy. The reason I stand before you today is to share with you baseball people what I've learned in my life, what I've learned about home plate in my 78 years." Several hands went up when Scolinos asked how many Little League coaches were in the room. "Do you know how wide home plate is in Little League?"

After a pause, someone offered, "Seventeen inches?," more of a question than answer.

"That's right," he said. "How about in Babe Ruth's day? Any Babe Ruth coaches in the house?" Another long pause. "Seventeen inches?," a guess from another reluctant coach.

"That's right," said Scolinos. "Now, how many high school coaches do we have in the room?" Hundreds of hands shot up, as the pattern began to appear. "How wide is home plate in high school baseball?"

"Seventeen inches," they said, sounding more confident.

"You're right!" Scolinos barked. "And you college coaches, how wide is home plate in college?"

"Seventeen inches!" we said, in unison.

"Any Minor League coaches here? How wide is home plate in pro ball?"....."Seventeen inches!"

"RIGHT! And in the Major Leagues, how wide home plate is in the Major Leagues?"

"Seventeen inches!"

"SEV-EN-TEEN INCHES!" he confirmed, his voice bellowing off the walls. "And what do they do with a Big League pitcher who can't throw the ball over seventeen inches?" Pause. "They send him to Pocatello!" he hollered, drawing raucous laughter. "What they don't do is this: they don't say, 'Ah, that's okay, Jimmy. If you can't hit a seventeen-inch target? We'll make it eighteen inches or nineteen inches. We'll make it twenty inches so you have a better chance of hitting it. If you can't hit that, let us know so we can make it wider still, say twenty-five inches."

Pause. "Coaches... what do we do when your best player shows up late to practice? Or when our team rules forbid facial hair and a guy shows up unshaven? What if he gets caught drinking? Do we hold him accountable? Or do we change the rules to fit him? Do we widen home plate?"

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

A good friend of mine sent me one of those "you gotta read this" emails recently. He knew I was involved with USA Softball and thought I'd appreciate what it had to say. Many times when I receive something like that I take it with a grain of salt, as it invariably is something that really isn't all that relevant or inspiring. But this one was different. This one got my attention, both as it relates to our sport and to life in general. Some of you may be familiar with it, but I know I wasn't and I decided it was worth repeating to our entire softball community so here it is, written from the perspective of its author, Chris Sperry.

Twenty years ago, in Nashville, Tennessee, during the first week of January, 1996, more than 4,000 baseball coaches descended upon the Opryland Hotel for the 52nd annual American Baseball Coaches Association convention.

While I waited in line to register with the hotel staff, I heard other more veteran coaches rumbling about the lineup of speakers scheduled to present during the weekend. One name, in particular, kept resurfacing, always with the same sentiment – "John Scolinos is here? Oh, man, worth every penny of my airfare."

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT (CONT.)



The chuckles gradually faded as four thousand coaches grew quiet, the fog lifting as the old coach's message began to unfold. He turned the plate toward himself and, using a Sharpie, began to draw something. When he turned it toward the crowd, point up, a house was revealed, complete with a freshly drawn door and two windows. "This is the problem in our homes today. With our marriages, with the way we parent our kids, with our discipline. We don't teach accountability to our kids, and there is no consequence for failing to meet standards. We just widen the plate!"

Pause. Then, to the point at the top of the house he added a small American flag. "This is the problem in our schools today. The quality of our education is going downhill fast and teachers have been stripped of the tools they need to be successful, and to educate and discipline our young people. We are allowing others to widen home plate! Where is that getting us?"

Silence. He replaced the flag with a Cross. "And this is the problem in the Church, where powerful people in positions of authority have taken advantage of young children, only to have such an atrocity swept under the rug for years. Our church leaders are widening home plate for themselves! And we allow it."

"And the same is true with our government. Our so called representatives make rules for us that don't apply to themselves. They take bribes from lobbyists and foreign countries. They no longer serve us. And we allow them to widen home plate! We see our country falling into a dark abyss while we just watch."

I was amazed. At a baseball convention where I expected to learn something about curve balls and bunting and how to run better practices, I had learned something far more valuable. From an old man with home plate strung around his neck, I had learned something about life, about myself, about my own weaknesses and about my responsibilities as a leader. I had to hold myself and others accountable to that which I knew to be right, lest our families, our faith, and our society continue down an undesirable path.

"If I am lucky," Coach Scolinos concluded, "you will remember one thing from this old coach today. It is this: If we fail to hold ourselves to a higher standard, a standard of what we know to be right; if we fail to hold our spouses and our children to the same standards, if we are unwilling or unable to provide a consequence when they do not meet the standard; and if our schools and churches and our government fail to hold themselves accountable to those they serve, there is but one thing to look forward to ..."

With that, he held home plate in front of his chest, turned it around, and revealed its dark black backside, "...We have dark days ahead!"

Note: Coach Scolinos died in 2009 at the age of 91, but not before touching the lives of hundreds of players and coaches. He is the best clinic speaker the ABCA has ever known because he was so much more than a baseball coach. His message was clear: "Coaches, keep your players—no matter how good they are—your own children, your churches, your government, and most of all, keep yourself at seventeen inches."

Now, I'm asking all of you, how wide is home plate at all levels in the game of softball?

That's right, seventeen inches.

"Don't widen the plate."

See you at the ballpark.

John Gouveia





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INAUGURAL GOLD BALL GALA

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USA Softball held the inaugural Gold Ball Gala, which serves as a fundraiser for the USA Softball National Team Program. Read more about the event on page 37.

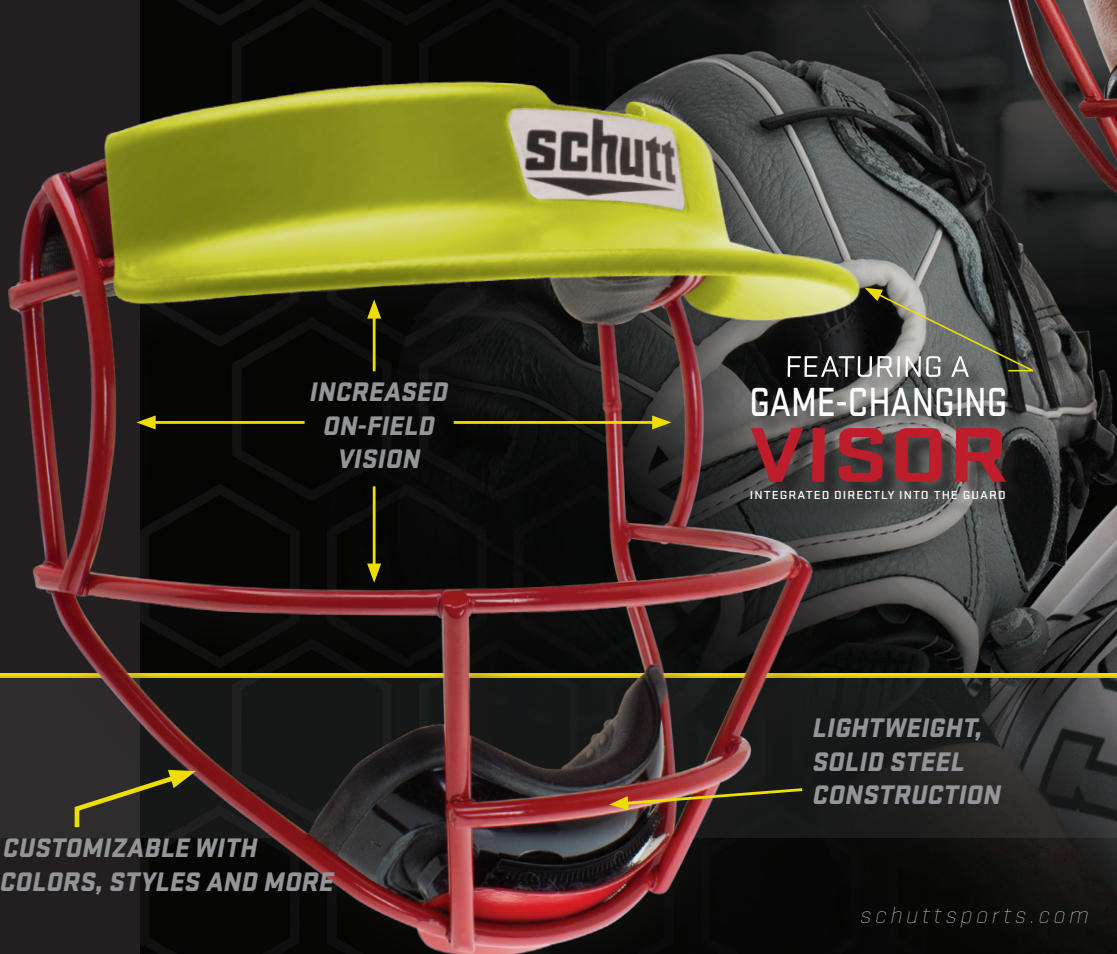
RENOVATIONS UNVEILED DURING NCAA WCWS



Part 1 of renovations to the USA Softball Hall of Fame Stadium – OGE Energy Field were on full display during the 2019 NCAA Women’s College World Series (WCWS). Read more about the renovations on page 23.

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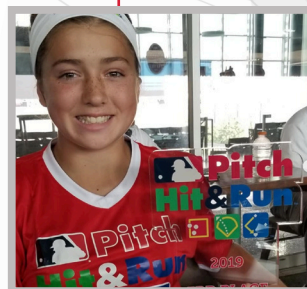


NATASHA WATLEY

Two-time Olympian and MLB Youth Softball Ambassador Natasha Watley attended the 2019 MLB All-Star Game.

"CLEARLY #CLEVELAND IS NO MISTAKE BY THE LAKE". #ASG2019 DID NOT DISAPPOINT. HONORED TO BE A PART OF THE @

MLBMOVEMENT OF RECOGNIZING SOFTBALL & GIRLS, AND SHOWING US WE BELONG!! BETWEEN ALL THE HEADLINES OF FEMALE ATHLETES RIGHT NOW & ALL SOFTBALL COMMUNITY DOING THEIR PART TO GROW THE GAME....WHAT A TIME TO BE A YOUNG GIRL! THANK YOU #MLB #USASOFTBALL @PLAYBALL @INDIANS FOR A GREAT WEEKEND



ELIZABETH PEERY

placed third at the MLB Pitch, Hit and Run Finals during the 2019 MLB All-Star Game!



ASIA posing in front of the USA Softball of Southern California step-and-repeat at State Championships.



USA SOFTBALL OF RHODE ISLAND

recently held their annual State Tournaments – and Fast Pitch Nation was the winner of the 18U State Championship!

FACES AROUND THE COUNTRY

Each year, people across the United States play the game of softball from coast-to-coast. Here, we highlight some of the faces around the country who are playing #USASoftball!



MEMBERS OF FRENCH VALLEY 8U

pose after winning the USA Softball of Southern California 8-Under Class C State Championship!

STATE CHAMPIONS!!!!!!!!!!!! THESE GIRLS CONTINUE TO SURPRISE ME AT HOW HARD THEY PLAY AND PUSH THEMSELVES TO WIN. CONGRATS BATTITUDES!!!! LET'S CONTINUE OUR WINNING STREAK AND TAKE 1ST PLACE AT REGIONALS NEXT WEEKEND IN SAN DIEGO. WHEN WE WIN NEXT WEEKEND WE'LL BE CONSIDERED THE BEST 8U SOFTBALL TEAM IN THE ENTIRE US. LET'S DO THIS. #FVSOFTBALL#SOFTBALLWINNERS #FIRSTPLACE #STATECHAMPIONS #USASOFTBALL



THE BUD LIGHT/DVORAK MOTORS/ WAX BLASTER SQUAD posing after finishing third at the Men's Class C division at the 2019 McQuades Softball Tournament.



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Papa Gunn and I sporting our USA whites for today's championship games for the 18 golds. I think we got to much sun this weekend, LOL. Got the game done in 1:30 mins..... who needs two hours??? It was a great weekend of ball.

– Josh Francis,
USA Softball umpire from Washington

My oldest daughter and I after our 10th game of the weekend.
– Cesar Peralta,
USA Softball umpire from California



16/18 Open Gold Championship today with Alec Azim! Had a blast! Thank you Hays, KS for having us!!!

– Riley Cobb,
USA Softball umpire from Kansas



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COACH'S RESPONSE... "GIRLS 10 AND UNDER ARE JUST LEARNING THE GAME OF FASTPITCH. THEY WANT FAST BAT SPEED SO THEY CAN WAIT ON A PITCH AND SEE IT LONGER BUT STILL HAVE A QUICK BAT THROUGH THE ZONE."

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MOM'S RESPONSE... "MY DAUGHTER IS PLAYING FASTPITCH, SOCCER AND CHEERLEADING... SHE LIKES SOFTBALL, BUT I DON'T 100% KNOW IF SHE IS GOING TO PLAY NEXT SEASON OR NOT BUT I WANT TO GET HER A HIGH QUALITY FASTPITCH BAT SO SHE HAS FUN AND DOES WELL, BUT I DON'T WANT TO PAY TOO MUCH EITHER...."



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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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NEWS & NOTES

USA SOFTBALL INTERNATIONAL CUP HEADS TO COLUMBUS, GA.



Fans were treated to world-class softball as the 2019 USA Softball Women's National Team claimed the USA Softball International Cup title. Held July 1-7 at South Commons Softball Complex, the complete order of finish was:

- * 1st place - Team USA
- * 2nd place - Japan
- * 3rd place - U19 Women's Nat'l Team
- * 4th place - Scrap Yard Fast Pitch
- * 5th place - Mexico
- * 6th place - China
- * 7th place - Puerto Rico
- * 8th place - Chinese Taipei
- * 9th place - Philippines
- * 10th place - Peru

RACHEL GARCIA VOTED BACK-TO-BACK USA SOFTBALL COLLEGIATE PLAYER OF THE YEAR



Rachel Garcia, a redshirt junior from UCLA, earned back-to-back Player of the Year honors. The award, which is considered the most prestigious honor in Division I women's softball, is designed to recognize outstanding athletic achievement by female collegiate softball players across the country

GOLD BALL GALA UNITES PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF USA SOFTBALL NATIONAL TEAMS



Softball royalty descended upon Oklahoma City at the inaugural USA Softball Gold Ball Gala, presented by Scrap Yard Sports. A fundraiser event for the USA Softball National Team Program, it was an evening to remember as members of the 2019 USA Softball Women's National Team (WNT) and over 20 alumni came together to celebrate USA Softball National Team athletes past, present and future.

THE 2019 INTERNATIONAL SEASON FOR USA SOFTBALL BEGINS



The 2019 international season for the Red, White and Blue is underway! Members of the Men's National Team (MNT), Women's National Team (WNT) and U-19 WNT will compete both abroad and in the U.S.

NATIONAL OFFICE WELCOMES NEW STAFF MEMBERS

The USA Softball National Office welcomed Julie Whiteaker as the new Event Coordinator for USA Softball while four interns join the team for the 2019 season. The USA Softball Membership Department staff welcomes Brooke Robbins (New Lenox, Ill.) and Chelsea Alexander (Ada, Okla.), and the Communications Department welcomes Devin Kane (Edwardsville, Ill.) and Morgan Palmer (Meeker, Okla.).

THE CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON FOR USA SOFTBALL IS UNDERWAY

The 2019 USA Softball Championship Play season is officially underway as teams set their sights on coveted USA Softball National and Territorial Championship Finals.

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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!



"Attending the WCWS for the first time.....what an incredible environment for softball fans....my daughter informed me during one of the games that she would end up playing here one day....love her confidence & goals #WCWS #USASoftball #OKC #futuregoals"

@TRWTNM



"The Women's College World Series and the Gold Ball Gala!! Two major events in Oklahoma City where we met Softball Legends, the current USA Olympic Team and watched unbelievable athletes make incredible plays. Thank you softball! #WCWS #USASoftball #teamSCmajeski"

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"Living the dream at the Softball Hall of Fame with our Region 1(Red) All American Team. #USASoftball"

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"The joy of softball !! #USASoftball #USAAllAmericanGames #OKC #playhardhavefun #livingthedream #dreambigworkhard #blessedto represent"

@LMRKANSAS



"Best day ever for Cam! She got to meet her favorite player Monica Abbott from the US Olympic Team and have her jersey signed! #ma14 @monicaabbott #usasoftball@usasoftball"

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A DANGEROUS LINEUP



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GET READY FOR THE 2019 USA SOFTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON!



The 2019 Championship Play season is upon us! From coast-to-coast, the quest to compete for a coveted USA Softball National or Territorial Championship has begun. With the new season come new updates – read some of the changes to expect for 2019 below



CERTIFICATION MARKS FOR CERTIFIED EQUIPMENT

USA Softball has unveiled the new Certification Marks for USA Softball Championship Play. These Certification Marks, which are visible on all bats and balls on USA Softball’s Certified Equipment, have been approved to be implemented immediately.



Certification Marks for Bats

Per the Official Rules of Softball, the official bat for USA Softball Championship Play must meet all the USA Softball specifications and the requirements of Rule 3, Section 1. Bats bearing the Certification Marks from 2000, 2004 and 2013 will be grandfathered in so long as they are not on the Non-Approved Bat List with the 2000 or 2004 Certification Mark. Bats must be included on a list of approved bat models published by USA Softball or must, in the sole opinion and discretion of the umpire, have been manufactured prior to 2000 and if tested, would comply with the USA Softball Bat Performance. This includes wooden bats, while Senior softball bats may be used in Senior Championship Play only.

There are two types of USA Softball Certification Marks for bats, one for all divisions of play and one only for Adult Fast Pitch and Slow Pitch.

Certification Marks for Balls

For USA Softball Championship Play, players may use only balls which meet all requirements of USA Softball Official Rules of Softball Rule 3, Section 3. Previous Certification Marks will be grandfathered in.

There are two types of USA Softball Certification Marks for balls. One signifies Ball Compression of 300 pounds or less while the other signifies Ball Compression of 301-to-375 pounds.

National Championship Qualifiers

Beginning with the 2019 Championship season, each USA Softball state/metro may determine how teams qualify for the following Girls' Junior Olympic (JO) Class A National Championship Finals: 10-Under East, 10-Under West, 12-Under, 14-Under, 16-Under and 18-Under per USA Softball Code, Article 314 H.

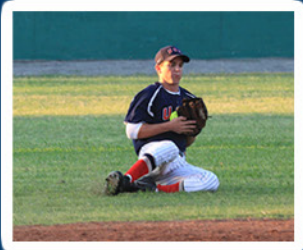
Article 314 H

All teams are eligible to qualify for the USA Softball Class A Fast Pitch National Championship Finals through their Local Association.



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USA SOFTBALL HALL OF FAME COMPLEX CONTINUES \$20 MILLION RENOVATION

The Softball Capital of the World® has undergone major renovations – helping secure the venue as the home of the NCAA Women's College World Series® (WCWS) through 2035 while giving the facility a modernized look with upgraded features for both the fan experience and media coverage.

With renovations split into multiple phases, most noticeable changes occurred during the 2018-19 offseason and were unveiled during the 2019 NCAA WCWS. Demolition to the existing press box, hospitality and media workspaces made way for the construction of a modern, three-story press box. The lowest level of the press box is dedicated to media with an all-new press conference area, workroom and hospitality areas for media members. The main concourse level will house hospitality suites, media row and event-operations while the third level is dedicated to broadcast and radio operations.

When arriving, visitors were met by a beautiful brick façade with ticket windows, ADA accessible-ramps and two new entrances to the venue.

The final phase of renovations began earlier this summer in June – a phase that addresses the upper concourse expansion. A second level of seating will increase the capacity of the venue by an additional 4,000 seats while new restrooms and concession stands will enhance the fan experience.



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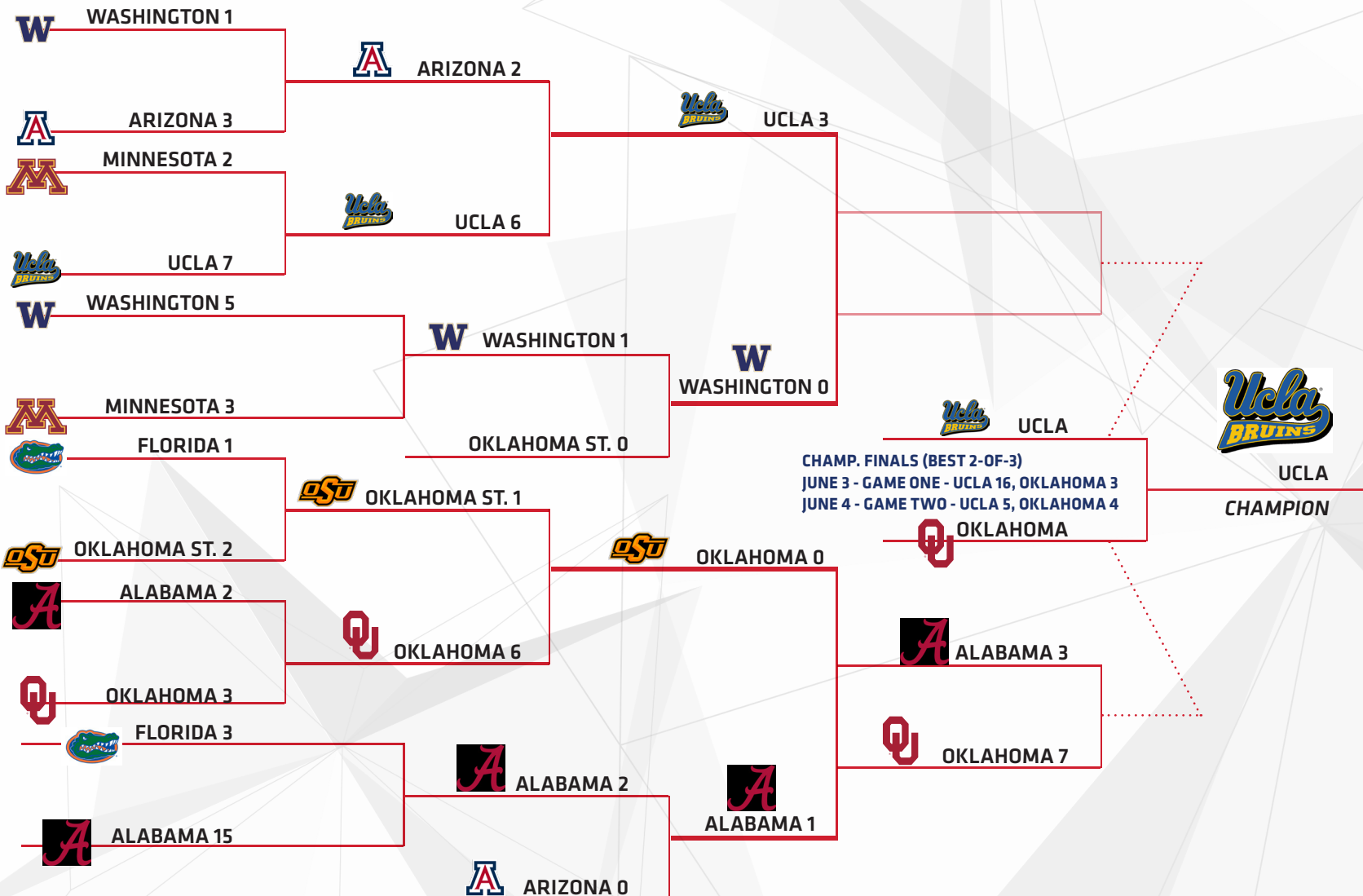
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WCWS RECAP



RACHEL GARCIA EARNS BACK-TO-BACK USA SOFTBALL NATIONAL COLLEGIATE PLAYER OF THE YEAR HONORS



Series (WCWS),

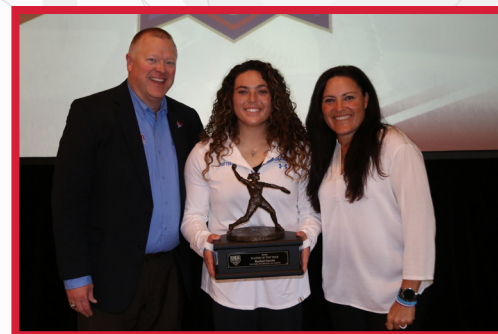
Garcia was named the Most Outstanding Player of the WCWS. Other 2019 accolades include being named the winner of the Honda Sport Award, being the first to ever be named both Pac-12 Conference Player and Pitcher of the Year in the same season, Schutt Sports/NFCA Division I National Pitcher of the Year, NFCA First Team All-American and All-Pac-12 First Team. She is also nominated for the ESPY for Best College Athlete.

The other finalists for the 2019 award were 2019 Colonial Athletic Association Pitcher of the Year Megan Good from James Madison University and 2019 Big 12 Player of the Year Sydney Romero from the University of Oklahoma.

Garcia is the fourth athlete to claim multiple and back-to-back Player of the Year honors. Previous recipients of the USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year award are Stacey Nuverman (UCLA, 2002), Cat Osterman (Texas, 2003, 2005 and 2006), Jessica Van der Linden (Florida State, 2004), Monica Abbott (Tennessee, 2007), Angela Tincer (Virginia Tech, 2008), Danielle Lawrie (Washington, 2009 and 2010), Ashley Hansen (Stanford, 2011), Keilani Ricketts (Oklahoma, 2012 and 2013), Lacey Waldrop (Florida State, 2014), Lauren Haeger (Florida, 2015), Sierra Romero (Michigan, 2016), Kelly Barnhill (Florida, 2017) and Rachel Garcia (UCLA, 2018).

UCLA's Rachel Garcia has been named the 2019 USA Softball National Collegiate Player of the Year. The award, which is considered the most prestigious honor in Division I women's softball, is designed to recognize outstanding athletic achievement by female collegiate softball players across the country.

Garcia, also the 2018 award winner, helped lead the UCLA Bruins to their 13th overall National Championship. For her efforts at the 2019 NCAA Women's College World



The USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year is voted on by coaching representatives of 10 Division I Conferences in the 10 USA Softball Regions, members of the media who consistently cover Division I Softball across the country as well as past winners of the award.

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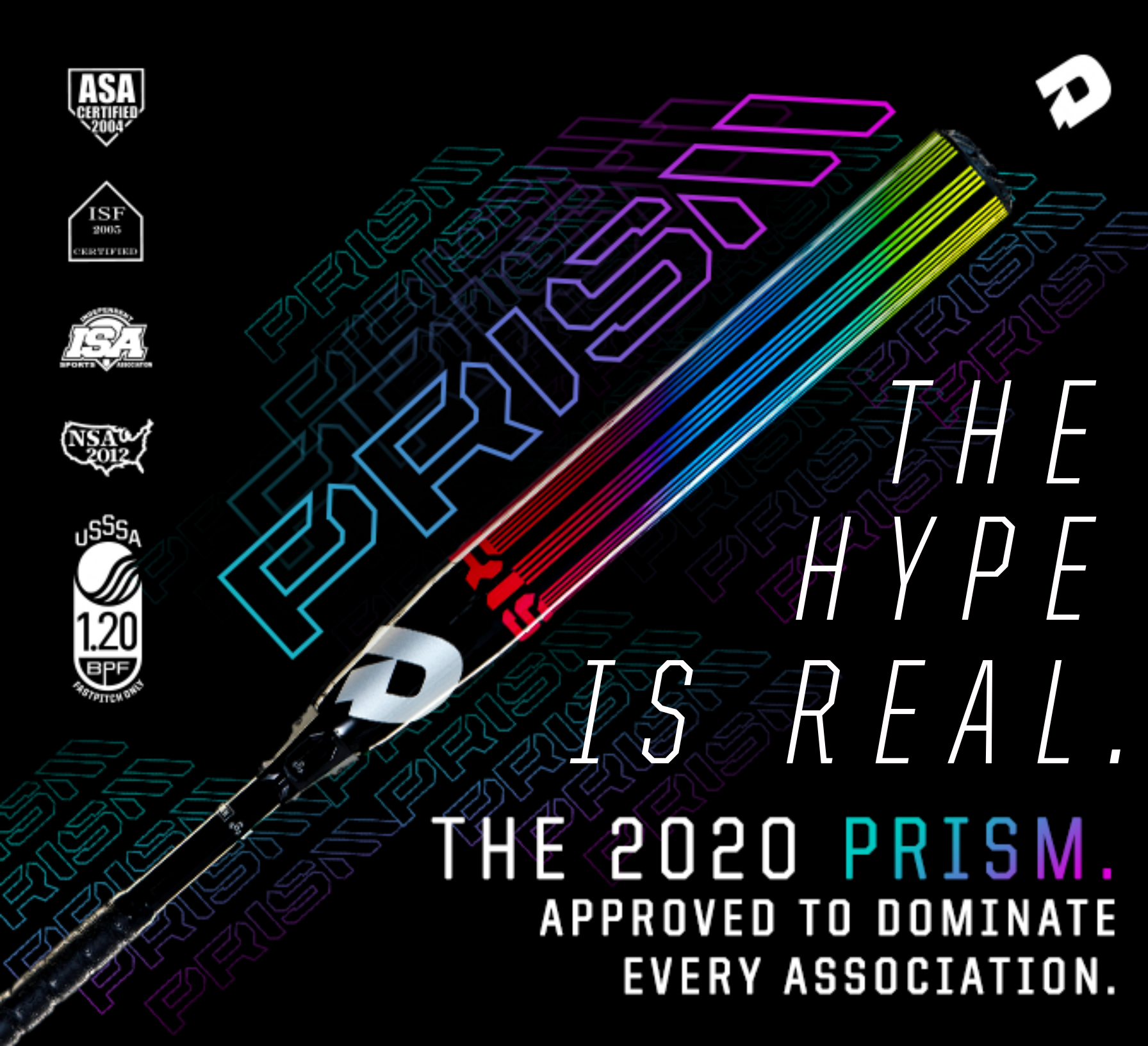


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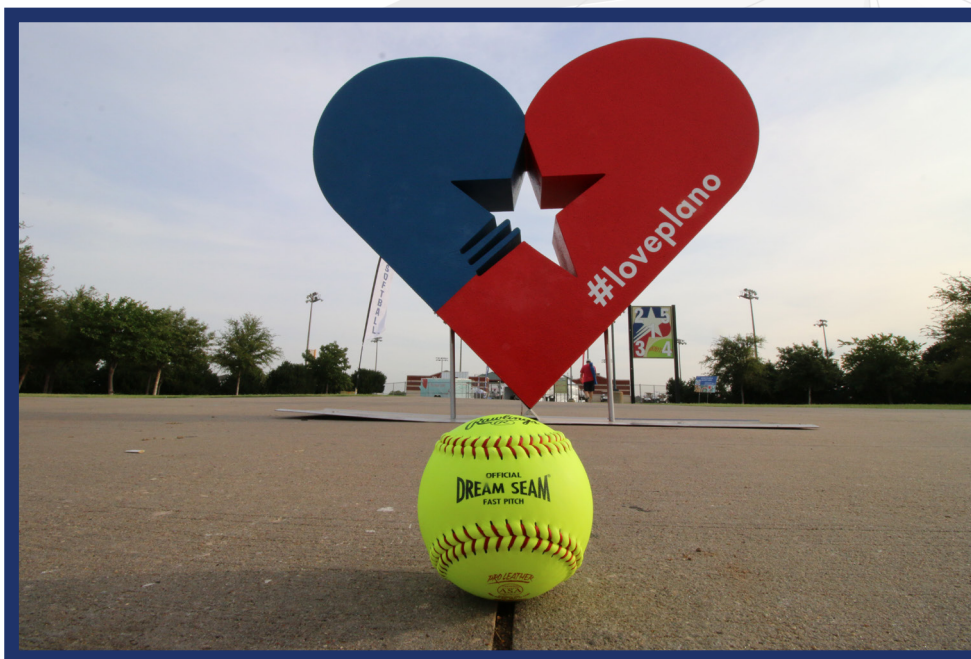




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BORDER BATTLE XI RETURNS TO MIDLAND, MICH.



The top slow pitch softball in the world returns to U.S. soil as Border Battle XI will be held **July 26-28 at Dow Diamond in Midland, Mich.** The USA Softball Men's Slow Pitch National Team (MSPNT), Men's Futures Slow Pitch National Team (Men's Futures), Women's Slow Pitch National Team (WSPNT) and inaugural Women's Futures Slow Pitch National Team (Women's Futures) will compete in three days of action against Canada's Men's and Women's Slow Pitch National Team rosters as well as grassroots clubs.

FRIDAY JULY 26, 2019

MATCHUP

9:30AM	CANADA	VS	ON POINT
11:00AM	USA FUTURES	VS	LOW BOBS/SHIRTS & LOGOS
12:30PM	USA	VS	ON POINT
2:30PM	CANADA	VS	WALLACE LAWN CARE/GILLIES
4:00PM	USA FUTURES	VS	COMATOSE
5:30PM	USA	VS	WALLACE LAWN CARE/GILLIES
7:00PM	USA FUTURES	VS	CANADA
9:00PM	USA FUTURES	VS	CANADA

SATURDAY JULY 27, 2019

	TEAM 1	VS	TEAM 2
9:30AM	USA FUTURES	VS	ON POINT
11:00AM	USA	VS	LOW BOBS/SHIRTS & LOGOS
12:30PM	CANADA	VS	LOW BOBS/SHIRTS & LOGOS
2:30PM	USA	VS	COMATOSE
4:00PM	COED FUTURES 1	VS	COED FUTURES 2
5:30PM	USA	VS	CANADA
<i>WOMEN'S BORDER BATTLE</i>			
7:00PM	USA	VS	CANADA
<i>MEN'S BORDER BATTLE</i>			
9:00PM	USA FUTURES	VS	WALLACE LAWN CARE/GILLIES

SUNDAY JULY 28, 2019

	TEAM 1	VS	TEAM 2
9:30AM	CANADA	VS	COMATOSE
11:00AM	USA	VS	USA FUTURES
<i>MEN'S SLOW PITCH SHOWDOWN</i>			
1:00PM	USA	VS	USA FUTURES
<i>WOMEN'S SLOW PITCH SHOWDOWN</i>			



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WHERE IN THE WORLD IS TEAM USA?

This summer has been Red, White, Blue and GOLD as members of the USA Softball National Team Program have traveled across the globe competing on the international stage. So where has Team USA played and how did they fare? Check out the map below for more information!



WHAT'S TO COME?

There are several events still on the calendar for the USA Softball National Teams:

- August 4-11: Pan American Games - Lima, Peru - Women's National Team
- August 11-17: U19 Women's World Cup - Irvine, Calif. - U-19 Women's National Team
- August 30-September 1: Japan Cup - Takasaki City, Japan - Women's National Team

MEN'S NATIONAL TEAM FINISHES FIFTH AT WBSC MEN'S SOFTBALL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP



The USA Softball Men's National Team recently competed at the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Men's Softball World Championship, where the team finished with a 7-3 record and a fifth-place finish.

Team USA fared well in Round Robin action, going 5-2 in pool play to earn the No. 3 seed in the playoffs. Facing off against would-be champion Argentina, a 9-0 loss eliminated Team USA from medal contention.

An extra-inning thriller over Australia allowed the U.S. to advance to the fifth-place game.

Matt Palazzo (Pleasant Hill, Iowa) and Erick Ochoa (Imperial, Calif.) went yard to plate five runs for Team USA who went onto claim a 5-4 victory over world-ranked No. 8 Venezuela. The U.S. climbed in the 2019 final World Championship standings compared to the 2017 WBSC Men's Softball World Championship, when the U.S. finished sixth overall with a 6-3 record.

With the win, the Red, White and Blue finished with a .272 team batting average, 5 home runs, 48 RBI and a 7-3 record. Team USA last stood on the podium at the 2000 edition in East London, South Africa.

June 14 USA 5, No.19 Netherlands 3

June 15 USA 0, No. 4 Australia 1

June 16 USA 8, No. 12 South Africa 1

June 17 USA 1, No. 2 Canada 4

June 18 USA 7, No. 22 Singapore 0

June 19 USA 12, No. 11 Denmark 4

June 20 USA 7, No. 8 Venezuela 4

June 21 USA 0, No. 5 Argentina 9

June 22 USA 8, No. 4 Australia 6 (8)

June 23 USA 5, No. 8 Venezuela 4

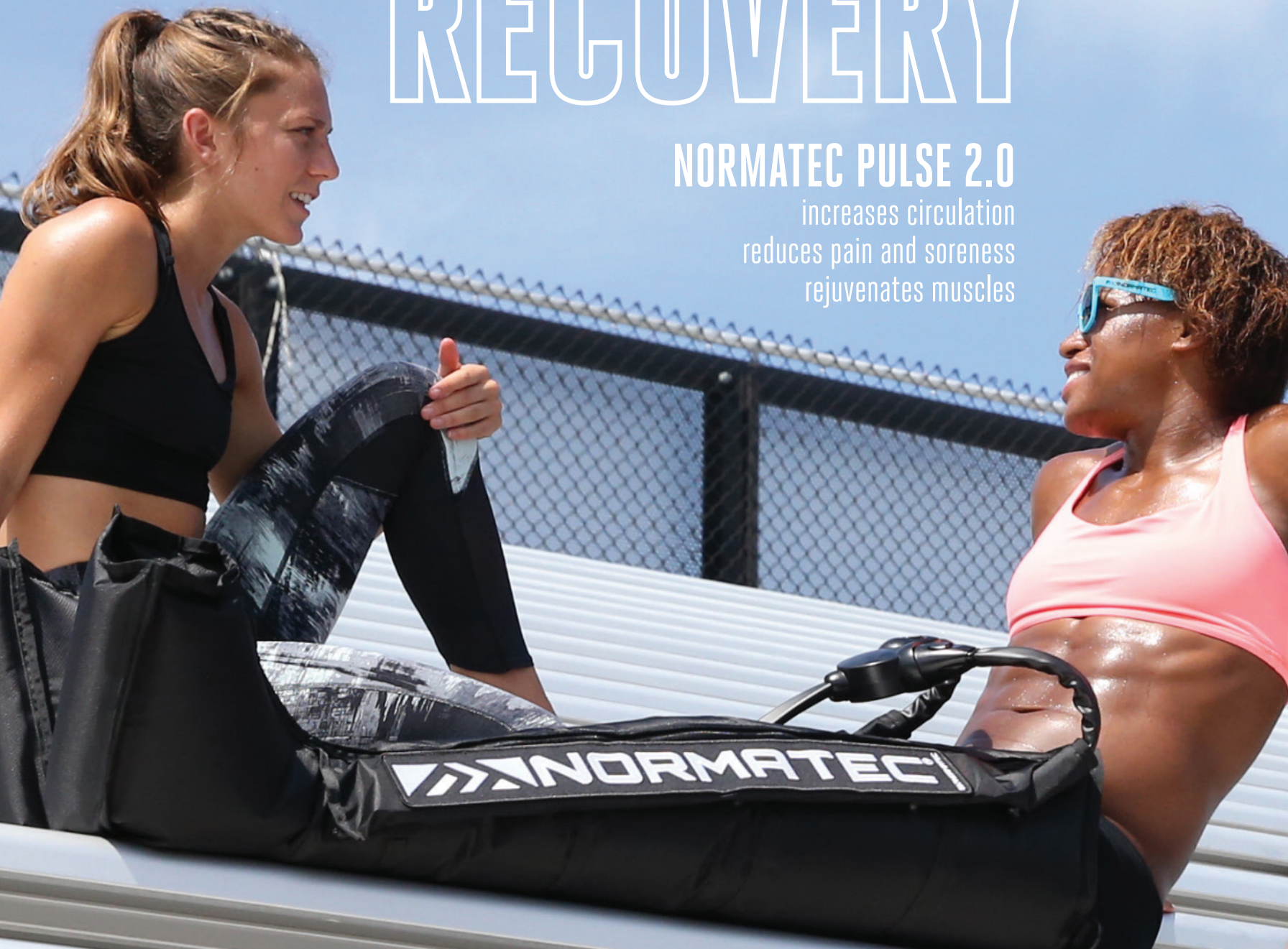
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GOLD BALL GALA RAISES FUNDS FOR NATIONAL TEAM PROGRAM



Softball royalty descended upon Oklahoma City at the inaugural USA Softball Gold Ball Gala, presented by Scrap Yard Sports. A fundraiser event for the USA Softball National Team Program, it was an evening to remember as members of the 2019 USA Softball Women's National Team (WNT) and over 20 alumni came together to celebrate USA Softball National Team athletes past, present and future.

Thanks to the generous support of donors, sponsors and attendees, the athletes within the USA Softball National Team Program will benefit from the monies raised as all proceeds will go directly to help fund both current and future National Teams in their efforts to stand atop the podium.

Over 200 guests were treated to an evening filled with moving speeches from keynote speaker Sue Enquist and three-time Olympic

Gold Medalist Leah O'Brien-Amico. Both Enquist and O'Brien-Amico gave messages of unity and pride for the National Team program, passionately speaking about the support behind the athletes who represent the Red, White and Blue. Current WNT member Aubree Munro and Head Coach Ken Eriksen, who was recently announced as the Head Coach for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, also spoke on their experiences representing the United States and the Gold Medal standard for Team USA.

With the success of this year's Gold Ball Gala, USA Softball has also officially announced the date and location of the 2nd annual event. Held May 27, 2020, the 2nd Gold Ball Gala will return to Oklahoma City and will be highlighted by the 2020 Women's National Team that will represent Team USA at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

"On behalf of USA Softball and our National Team athletes, I would like to thank each and every donor, sponsor and attendee who supported our inaugural Gold Ball Gala," said USA Softball Chief Executive Officer, Craig Cress. "It's these passionate individuals who believe in the sport and the athletes who represent Team USA that we are able to stand atop that podium time and time again. To be able to bring together both past, present and future for our sport was truly special and we

look forward to the 2nd Gold Ball Gala next May."

Presented by Scrap Yard Sports, several sponsors stepped up to the plate to show their support for the National Team Program at the Gold Ball Gala - Major League Baseball (Gold Level Sponsor), USA Softball of Dallas/Ft. Worth, USA Softball of Ohio and USA Softball of Texas (Silver Level Sponsor) and Cheek & Falcone, PLLC (Bronze Medal Sponsor).

"Thank you to all who attended and supported USA Softball in any way possible," said USA Softball Women's National Team member, Delaney Spaulding. "The inaugural Gold Ball Gala was a complete success thanks to you all and I cannot wait to get the 2019 season started with your support. Go USA!"



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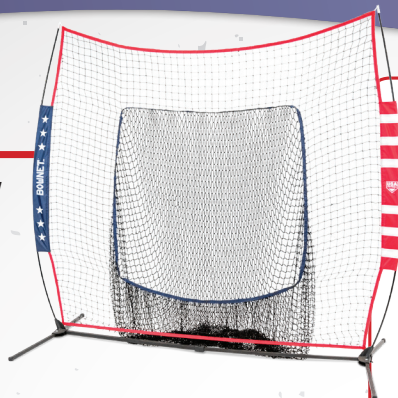


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USA Ball Bag

(BN-BALL BAG USA SB)

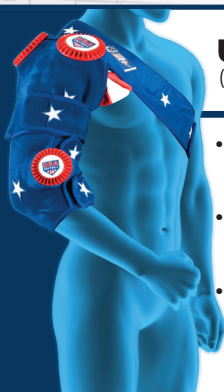
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USA SOFTBALL NATIONAL OFFICE UPDATES



USA Softball announced their internship class for the 2019 summer, bringing in young and ambitious sports industry talent from across the country to help the organization during its busiest season. Each intern spends the summer based at USA Softball’s headquarters in Oklahoma City and will also travel with the organization to help administer and cover elite tournaments around the country. The USA Softball Membership Department staff welcomes Brooke Robbins (New Lenox, Ill.) and Chelsea Alexander (Ada, Okla.), and the Communications Department welcomes Devin Kane (Edwardsville, Ill.) and Morgan Palmer (Meeker, Okla.).

Julie Whiteaker hired as Event Coordinator for National Office

Julie Whiteaker (Ukiah, Calif.) was brought on in May as an Event Coordinator for the National Office. In her position, Whiteaker joins the USA Softball Membership Department where her primary responsibilities include the management of USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex events and assisting with paperwork associated with National Championship Play.

Whiteaker joins the USA Softball National Office after five years of working for the City of Ukiah as a Sports Coordinator. In that role, Whiteaker coordinated camps, special events and sports programming, including adult slow pitch leagues and tournaments while working with the local USA Softball of Northern California association. In addition to event management, Whiteaker also solicited sponsorships, trained event staff, and coordinated umpires to officiate games.

“Working for USA Softball is not only a dream, but a passion of mine,” said Whiteaker. “I am excited to be a part of the National Office Staff and help continue improving softball amongst players everywhere.”

National Office seeks Event Coordinator

The USA Softball National Office is seeking applications for an Event Coordinator. This individual’s primary responsibility will be working USA Softball events at the USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex in Oklahoma City. This is a full-time position at the National Office in Oklahoma City, Okla. with a benefits package.

Megan Schallom named National Teams Manager

Following the retirement of long-time National Teams Coordinator Polly McCormick, USA Softball is proud to announce that Megan Schallom has been named the National Teams Manager. Schallom, who has worked for USA Softball as an Event Manager since 2017, will assume the role immediately.

KEN ERIKSEN NAMED HEAD COACH FOR TOKYO 2020 OLYMPIC GAMES



USA Softball announced on May 21 that long-time Women's National Team (WNT) leader Ken Eriksen (Tampa, Fla.) would be the Head Coach for the Tokyo 2020 U.S. Olympic Softball Team. Selected by members of the USA Softball Women's National Team Selection Committee (WNTSC), Eriksen will lead the Red, White and Blue in their return to the Olympic Games as Team USA looks to reclaim the Gold Medal from host country Japan.

"Ken Eriksen has a proven track record in not only leading our Women's National Team program to the top of the podium, but also maintaining that success and developing world-class athletes," said USA Softball Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Craig Cress. "His accolades speak volumes and in the 11 years that softball has been off the

Olympic program, he has been a constant for our Women's National Team. He has built upon the legacy established before him, and we are confident that he will guide the team to the Gold in 2020."

Eriksen's journey to Olympic Head Coach began in the 1987 as men's fast pitch player before transitioning into coaching within the USA Softball WNT program in 2002. Currently the Head Coach at the University of South Florida, Eriksen has previous Olympic experience, having served as an Assistant Coach for the 2004 U.S. Olympic Softball Team.

"First of all, I am humbled by the fact that I am able to follow in the footsteps of two of my mentors in fast pitch softball, Ralph Raymond and Mike Candrea, the last two coaches to lead Team USA in the Olympics," said Eriksen. "Coach Raymond and I had shared a few dinners and talked the game many times over the last 25 years. I will miss him tremendously. Coach Candrea's philosophy has been one for the ages. He always puts the 'game' above everything. It's all about the 'game' and how you approach it with people that fit your approach as a coach. His simplicity and his athlete-centered approach has lent itself well to Team USA even after he retired from the National Team."

Eriksen is establishing himself as one of the winningest coaches in USA Softball WNT history and currently sits second in wins for the program behind fellow Hall of Fame coach Ralph Raymond. Compiling a 52-4 record at the helm of Team USA in major international competitions (Olympic Games, World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) World Championship and Pan American Games), Eriksen will look to lead Team USA in its quest to claim the Gold Medal in Tokyo.

Since taking over the WNT program in 2011, Eriksen ushered in a new era of USA Softball with a roster comprised of international rookies.

"To be handed the keys to this program back in 2011 after all the great players retired from Team USA was a challenge and an honor," Eriksen continued.

While continuing the legacy established before him, Eriksen has provided a steady constant for the program during the years softball was not a part of the Olympic Games platform. Fostering an "us" environment, Eriksen's dedication and commitment to the USA Softball WNT program culminated with a Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games berth which was earned at the 2018 WBSC World Championship last August in Chiba, Japan.

KEN ERIKSEN NAMED HEAD COACH FOR TOKYO 2020 OLYMPIC GAMES (CONT.)

“Winning the World Championship and the Olympic bid in 2018, it was an affirmation of how Team USA has approached and prepared for the biggest stages since our first National Team Program was put on the field.”

As a player, Eriksen began playing USA Softball when he joined the Clearwater Bombers, playing from 1987-1992 while batting .347 in 1992 and .456 in the Men’s Major Fast Pitch Nationals. Eriksen was a part of the Miller-Toyota team and Tampa Smokers up until 1997 when he won the Men’s Major Fast Pitch National Championship with his fellow teammates. Eriksen racked up additional honors on the international scene, earning a silver medal at the Pan American Games (1991) and was a three-time Olympic Festival participant (1993, 1994 and 1995), where he took home an additional silver medal at the 1995 Olympic Festival. Eriksen also played for the USA Select Team in 1988, which was the first American athletic team to compete in Cuba in over 30 years.

After hanging up his cleats as a player, his first Head Coach role with the USA Softball National Team program came in 1997 when he led the USA Softball Junior Men’s National Team (JMNT) at the WBSC Junior Men’s World Championship in St. John’s, Newfoundland. Five years later, he joined the WNT as an

assistant coach in 2002 - the same year the team captured a Gold Medal at the WBSC World Championship. A highlight of his Team USA coaching resume includes being an assistant coach in the 2003 Pan American Games where the team won Gold and going on to coach at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens where the U.S. Olympic Softball Team would put on one of the most dominant performances in Olympic history. Eriksen tacked on another Gold Medal as an assistant coach at the 2010 WBSC Championship in Caracas, Venezuela before his Head Coach appointment in 2011.

With softball off the Olympic program following the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Eriksen was instrumental in continuing the gold standard set by his predecessors - often times with rosters comprised of rookies and veterans of the international stage. In his tenure as Head Coach, Eriksen has guided the U.S. to two WBSC World Championship Gold Medals (2016, 2018) and two Silver Medals (2012, 2014), a Pan American Games Gold Medal (2011) and Silver Medal (2015). Through it all, Eriksen credits the athletes within the program.

“The players that kept the dream alive for every girl that has played this game deserve all the credit,” said Eriksen. “There have been so many who’s names will not be on the roster in Tokyo that

have helped us maintain a gold level standard. I will never forget what they did for this program and for the United States.”

Collegiately, Eriksen has been at the helm of the University of South Florida softball program since 1996. Since Eriksen's first year, the Bulls have gone to 14 NCAA post season appearances, two NCAA Super Regionals, a College World Series berth, seven conference titles (in three conferences: SASA, BIG EAST, and The American), has produced 975 wins and a numerous amount of All-Americans, Academic All-Americans, All-Conference players, and NCAA All-Region players.

“I am proud to be selected as the next head coach to lead Team USA to its re-entry into the Olympic Games in Tokyo 2020. It goes without saying that if you don’t have people and an organization that believes in you none of this is possible. I’ve been fortunate to have had a tremendous amount of support from family, the National Governing Body, the NFCA, USF, Assistant Coaches with our Team USA program, and lastly many USA alums from both the men’s and women’s programs. Thank you to the USA Softball National Team Selection Committee and Board of Directors. We hope to continue to represent the Red, White, and Blue in the class manner that we have. Go Eagles.”

*Eriksen’s coaching nomination is pending the approval of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC).

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IN MEMORY -

USA Softball mourns passing of two National Team coaches



Ralph Raymond (Worcester, Ma.), two-time Olympic Head Coach and Hall of Fame member, passed away on Tuesday, April 23. He was 94 and four days shy of his birthday, April 27, 1924.

An avid supporter of women's fast pitch softball, Raymond was instrumental in the growth of the game due to his involvement with the legendary Raybestos Brakettes. Starting out as an assistant coach, Raymond took over as manager in 1968, a position he held until 1994.

Joining the U.S. Olympic Team coaching staff, Raymond guided Team USA to a Gold Medal at the 1996 and 2000 Olympic Games. Raymond earned the accolade of winningest manager in USA Softball history with a 332-9 record for a .974 winning percentage, compiling a 72-1 record in winning five ISF (now known as the WBSC) World Championships (1974, 1978, 1986, 1990, and 1994). He went to the Pan American Games where the team achieved Gold three times (1979, 1995 and 1999) and silver once (1983).

With a mindset to play the game the right way, Raymond was pivotal in the popularization of the sport of softball prior to the 1996 Olympic Games during the U.S. pre-Olympic tour.

In his tenure with the Brakettes and Team USA, Raymond's impact on the game will endure due through some of the legends of the game he coached, including Kathy Arendsen, Joan Joyce, Sue Enquist, Lisa Fernandez, Dot Richardson, Laura Berg and Michele Smith.

IN MEMORY - USA Softball mourns passing of two National Team coaches (cont.)



Denny Bruckert (Gillespie, III.), who was instrumental in the development of men's fast pitch softball and coached the Men's National Team program, passed away on Thursday, May 2. Bruckert led the Men's National Team from August, 2013 until stepping away from the program in August of 2017 due to health concerns.

"When you talk about influential and genuine people in the men's fast pitch game, Coach Bruckert is one of the first names to come to mind," said USA Softball Chief Executive Officer, Craig Cress. "His love for the game and the players he coached was unrivaled

and he was greatly respected within the fast pitch community for his passion and commitment to the game. The impact that Coach Bruckert made will forever be felt by those within the USA Softball program. Our heartfelt condolences go out to his wife Susan, his family, friends and all those who were fortunate to play for him or coach at his side."

During his time as Head Coach of the program, Bruckert played a key role in developing men's fast pitch through his work coaching on the National Team in addition to hosting a series of exposure camps and National Invitational Tournaments (NITs) throughout the

United States. During Bruckert's time at the helm of the program, the MNT finished with a combined record of 16-10 at the 2013, 2015 and 2017 WBSC Men's World Championships.

Prior to becoming Head Coach, Bruckert served as an assistant coach at the 1996 International Softball Federation (ISF), now WBSC, Men's World Championship where the team finished fourth, as well as the 1999 Pan American Games, where the team earned a silver medal. Before joining the National Team program, Bruckert coached seven USA Softball Men's Major Fast Pitch National Championship squads. He coached the Decatur Pride to back-to-back National Championships in 1994 and 1995 and added another in 1999 prior to the team's disbanding. Bruckert added another three Men's Major Fast Pitch titles to his resume: in 2002 with the St. Joseph Frontier Casino Players, in 2005 with the Tampa Bay Smokers, in 2006 with the Green Bay Circle Tap, and in 2012 with the New York Gremlins. Bruckert was first inducted into the USA Softball of Illinois Hall of Fame before becoming a member of the National Softball Hall of Fame in 2012.

At the time of his resignation, current Head Coach Gregg Leather (Staten Island, N.Y.) said, "Denny has been a mentor to me for a long time and we will work hard to continue the progress he has made with the program."

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USA SOFTBALL LAUNCHES NEW AMATEUR RESOURCE CENTER IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL



USA Softball, in partnership with Major League Baseball (MLB) launched an Amateur Resource Center (ARC), a website designed to promote grassroots education for coaches, parents, umpires and youth athletes. Covering important topics that relate to youth softball, the website also features original content from members of the USA Softball National Team programs and instructional videos covering the basic fundamentals of softball.

“The Amateur Resource Center is another step in USA Softball’s commitment to the growth of grassroots softball,” said USA Softball Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Craig Cress. “As the National Governing Body, our commitment to providing the softball community with developmental tools and educational content is extremely important to our entire organization.”

Designed with the template followed by fellow National Governing Body (NGB) member USA Baseball, the ARC website is completely free of charge. Featuring resources that cover topics like health and safety and age-specific fundamental focuses, visitors can also access instructional videos featuring members of Team USA for beginner, intermediate and advanced levels.

“We are very excited to see USA Softball launch the new Amateur Resource Center,” said MLB Executive Vice President of Baseball and Softball Development, Tony Reagins. “We know this platform will serve as a valuable resource for young women seeking to improve their skills on the field and learn about additional opportunities off of it. We look forward to continuing our shared efforts with USA Softball to not only grow softball across the nation, but to also provide meaningful support for those looking to play and advance within the game.”

The ARC website is one of the many resources USA Softball provides to members across the United States. In addition to the ACE (Aspire, Challenge, Educate) Coach Education Program, USA Softball has strategically aligned with education partners like the National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) and TrueSport, a movement powered by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), to aid in the development of the sport of softball at the grassroots level.

“We are grateful for the support of MLB who shares the same mission in growing the game at the grassroots level,” Cress continued. “We look forward to developing additional content for USA Softball members on the ARC platform and continuing our educational initiatives.”

For more information on the USA Softball Amateur Resource Center, please visit USASoftballEducation.com.



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2019 HOF



BRITT HIGHTOWER

2019 // HOUSTON, TEXAS // SLOW PITCH PLAYER

Dedication. Defense. Teammates. Love for the game. Long ball slugger Britt Hightower credits all four with the success he had in a storied playing career that began in 1984. It wasn't uncommon for Hightower to be seen at the park following a strict batting practice routine that included hitting anywhere from 200-300 balls per day. That dedication to his performance at the plate could only be matched by his ability to play defense. Considered by many to be one of the top five outfielder's to ever play the game of slow pitch softball, Hightower put a lot of emphasis on his work in the field knowing that one missed play could result in an offensive surge for your opponent. Playing with the legendary Ritch's Superior for the majority of his elite playing career, Hightower credits former teammates and friends with instilling a preparation mentality that led to his continued success.

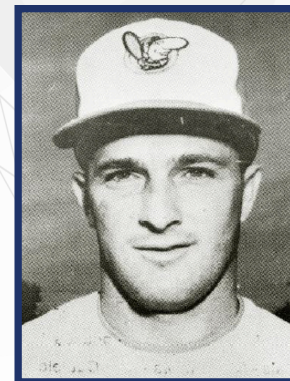
Preparation was a key to his success as he lauds five USA Softball Super Slow Pitch National Championship titles and is a six-time First Team All American.

Ultimately, a love for the game and the friendships that the game brings are what Hightower will remember the most when reflecting upon his career. "I won't play softball forever," he once stated, "but I will always have the friends that I have made in softball for a lifetime."

MIKE NYE

2019 // JACKSONVILLE, FLA. // SLOW PITCH PLAYER

Mike Nye learned from an early age what it took to win games. Getting his start in softball at the age of 12 after playing pickup for his brother's team, four years into his playing career Nye got his first taste of upper level slow pitch softball and never looked back. Winning his first National Championship in 1976 with Warren Motors, Nye earned MVP accolades after hitting .793, a noteworthy accomplishment considering there was no limit on the pitching arc. An eight-time All-American during his 25-year career at the Major level, Nye accumulated seven National titles – including two in 1989 in the Super and Major divisions. With lightning-fast speed, Nye is considered by many to be the greatest pure hitter that ever played and gave everything he had on both sides of the ball. "I like to play the game the way it is supposed to be played," he once told fellow Hall of Famer Mike Macenko. "Take that extra base, break up that double play and always think positive." Playing every game like it was his last, that mentality fostered a passion for the game that can only be described with one word – winner.



RICK HAVERCROFT

2019 // SAGINAW, MICH. // UMPIRE

When you hear the name Rick Havercroft, the first thing you think of is men's fast pitch. A product of the Michigan umpire program, Havercroft was the guy you wanted on the field during a Championship Game – not only for his knowledge of the rules and his mechanics, but because of the respect he earned from the players and coaches. At the grassroots level, Havercroft umpired countless State tournaments in addition to nine men's Major, a Women's Class A and Men's 40-Over Fast Pitch Championships. His ability to command the game led to an assignment at the 1996 WBSC Men's World Championship and when USA Softball held the inaugural American Challenge Series in 2007, Havercroft was one of the first to receive the call. When he stepped away from the plate, Havercroft instilled his knowledge and experiences with the next generation of umpires, continuing the standard of excellence he helped contribute to. His efforts both on and off the field have earned him the title of Hall of Famer.

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FROM THE VAULT



Since it's construction in 1987, the USA Softball Hall of Fame Stadium has had quite a few facelifts en route to earning the title of The Mecca of Softball®.

This photo, taken in 1999, shows the Hall of Fame Stadium in all it's original glory – grassy hills and all!

Just three years later, construction of permanent outfield seating would begin – increasing the seating capacity of the venue by 3,000 seats.

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ACROSS

- 3. Usually located in the outfield, it displays the results of the game.
- 5. A player who enters the game as a base running substitute.

DOWN

- 1. An award given to a team who places first.
- 2. A hit that results in the awarding of all four bases.
- 4. An official for the game who is charged with calling balls and strikes.
- 6. Worn by participants, these generally have metal or plastic spikes.

Across

- 3. Usually located in the outfield, it displays the results of the game.
- 5. A player who enters the game as a base running substitute

Down

- 1. An award given to a team who places first.
- 2. A hit that results in the awarding of all four bases
- 4. An official for the game who is charged with calling balls and strikes.
- 6. Worn by participants, these generally have metal or plastic spikes.

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