

BALLS AND STRIKES

A YEAR IN REVIEW

TEXAS SOFTBALL COMMUNITY RALLIES
IN HONOR OF JASMINE MELENDEZ

OC BATBUSTERS GARCIA AND
GEORGIA IMPACT PREMIER
LEWIS WIN INAUGURAL US GAMES

REGION 5 RED VICTORIOUS AT 2020
USA SOFTBALL ALL-AMERICAN GAMES

USA SOFTBALL JOINS
FORCES WITH THE
ALLIANCE FASTPITCH TO
OFFER NATIONAL
REGISTRATION FOR
ATHLETES AND COACHES

RECORD NUMBER OF TEAMS PARTICIPATE
IN GOLD NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS; JO
CUP STREAMED ON MLB.COM

FASTPITCH CARES GIVES BACK WITH
HELP OF SOFTBALL COMMUNITY

TOKYO OLYMPIC GAMES
POSTPONED 2021 DUE
TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

USA SOFTBALL HALL OF FAME COMPLEX
COMPLETES RENOVATION WITH
4,000-SEAT UPPER DECK

USA SOFTBALL MARKS BRIGHT FUTURE
FOR MEN'S NATIONAL TEAM WITH
ATHLETE POOL ANNOUNCEMENT

USA SOFTBALL UMPIRE MICHAEL KUSZAY
TAKES TALENTS FROM DIAMOND TO ER

U.S. WOMEN'S NATIONAL
TEAM REMAINS NO. 1 IN THE
WORLD PER WBC RANKINGS

USA SOFTBALL MOURNS PASSING OF
LONGTIME SOFTBALL LEADER, DON PORTER

USA SOFTBALL LAUNCHES
NATIONWIDE HIGH
PERFORMANCE PROGRAM




SOFTBALL



DELANEY SPAULDING
INFIELDER, USA SOFTBALL
NIKETEAM.COM





MONICA ABBOTT | USA Softball
A2000 MA14 GM



AUBREE MUNRO | USA Softball
A2000 AM1 GM



KELSEY STEWART | USA Softball
A2000 KS7 GM



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BALLS AND STRIKES

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ALL YEAR LONG!

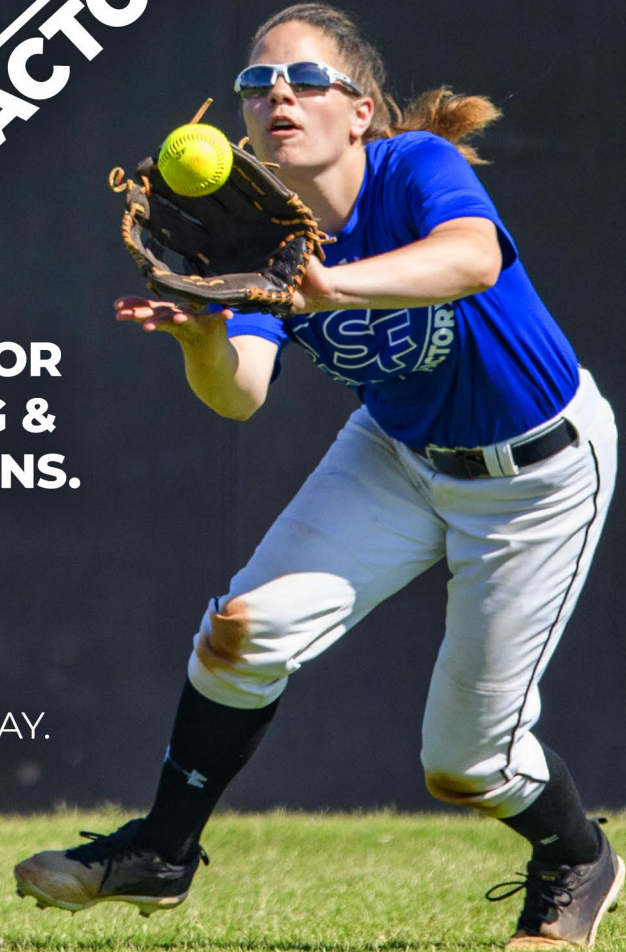


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NEWS & NOTES

USA SOFTBALL ANNOUNCES SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT WITH VISIT CENTRAL FLORIDA

USA Softball announced a sponsorship agreement with Visit Central Florida (VCF), effective through December 2021. VCF seeks to promote tourism and economic development through sports and is the only organization in the state to earn both the Sports Organization of the Year award and the Florida Sports Foundation's Sports Commission of the Year award.

"We are excited to partner with Visit Central Florida," said USA Softball Chief Executive Officer, Craig Cress. "Their support through the years of USA Softball of Florida at a grassroots level has been tremendous, and we look forward to all of Polk County being able to come and watch our USA Softball National Teams play great softball in the future."

In an effort to raise awareness and promote sport development in Polk County, the partnership includes co-branded digital media materials, marketing materials and the opportunity to host USA Softball National Teams in the future.

"We are proud of the long relationship we have with USA Softball, from holding regional tournaments to culminating in their visit to Lakeland last year," said Visit Central Florida Director, Mark Jackson. "We're honored to support the Women's National Team and the 'Stand Beside Her' tour and look forward to cheering on Team USA in the 2021 Olympics."

A long-time supporter of USA Softball, VCF has worked closely with one of USA Softball's 67 local associations, USA Softball of Florida, in organizing multiple grassroots-level events and ensuring the best experience for all in attendance.

"Polk County has been a very good supporter of USA Softball of Florida for many years and continues to support our program," said USA Softball of Florida Commissioner, Carlton Benton. "They are a pleasure to work with and I believe will be a very good partner."





NEWS & NOTES

ELLIS APPOINTED TO USA SOFTBALL BOARD OF DIRECTORS



USA Softball announced the addition of James Ellis (Johnson City, Tenn.) to the Board of Directors. Currently serving as the Commissioner for USA Softball of Tennessee, Ellis will replace Carlton Benton as the Southeast Region Vice President. His appointment comes as a result of the recent regional elections during the USA Softball Annual Council Meeting.

“It is an honor to serve on the USA Softball Board of Directors and to represent the Southeast Region,” Ellis said. “Our previous Vice President, Carlton Benton, did a remarkable job and I hope to continue on the same path.”

In addition to serving as the USA Softball of Tennessee Commissioner for 12 years, Ellis’ involvement in the USA Softball Council spans a total of 32 years and includes roles within the Legislative, Commissioner Appointments, Membership, and Ethics Committees.

“At this point in my career, I wanted the opportunity to give back to a program that has been a large part of my life,” Ellis added. “USA Softball has provided me the opportunity to gain a wealth of knowledge for our sport and to develop friendships across the nation that otherwise would not have been possible. We are faced with many challenges in our great sport and I look forward to working

with the Board, National Staff and everyone involved within USA Softball to continue providing the excellent service that has been and will continue to be expected from the National Governing Body of Softball.”

USA SOFTBALL PARTNERS WITH TEAMGENIUS FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE PROGRAM

USA Softball announced today it has partnered with TeamGenius, the leading player evaluation app for tryouts, evaluations and player development, to serve as the athlete evaluation system for USA Softball High Performance Program (HPP) Identifiers.

“We are excited to partner with TeamGenius and provide a top-notch evaluation system for athletes and coaches within our High Performance Program,” said USA Softball Chief Executive Officer, Craig Cress. “This partnership allows for a more efficient and organized evaluation process for our HPP Identifiers taking place around the country. It will serve as a



NEWS & NOTES

resource for HPP athletes who want to know what areas to focus on for further improvement and growth as well as coaches whose dedication is essential to the success of this program.”

In an effort to make the evaluation process at HPP Identifiers more efficient, this partnership provides athletes and coaches with fast and accurate statistics during the tryout process. The TeamGenius app features the capability to take images and video, and eliminates dozens of hours of administrative work by providing immediate access to evaluation reports, fundamental data and more.

“We are thrilled to support the USA Softball High Performance Program and the 30,000+ players involved every year,” said TeamGenius Chief Executive Officer, Chris Knutson. “It’s exciting to work with an organization who is dedicated to player development, and willing to make investments that help their staff deliver on that commitment at a national level. We look forward to a great partnership.”

CHAMPRO LAUNCHES UNIFORM PROGRAM FOR USA SOFTBALL



CHAMPRO®

USA Softball announced a Uniform Pilot Program in partnership with Champro, effective through December 2024. Founded in 1986, Champro has grown to offer the most comprehensive line of sporting goods equipment and apparel in the industry and will be recognized as an official uniform supplier for all grassroot programs across the 67 USA Softball local associations.

“USA Softball is proud to add Champro as an official uniform supplier for our grassroot programs,” said USA Softball Chief Executive Officer, Craig Cress. “By adding Champro to our vendor list, our 67 local associations will have access to exclusive pricing on merchandise and customized gear with the ability to include USA Softball member badges to any item. We look forward to working together with Champro as we continue to promote USA Softball across the United States and enhance the benefits that our members receive.”

Through the launch of an online uniform program, Champro will seek to provide softball players and coaches with the best products at an affordable price and is the only uniform manufacturer with the licensing rights to utilize the USA Softball member badge on uniforms.

“Champro is thrilled to partner with USA Softball and offer teams a wide range of customized, high performance uniforms at exceptional values,” said Champro Chief Executive Officer, Wilson Hunt. “Orders can be placed now on <http://usa.softball.axioathletic.com/> and beginning in February, you can experience our new uniform builder offering the easiest and most versatile uniform design process available everywhere.”

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FACES ON THE FIELD



ANDREA, 48

Massachusetts

USA Softball of
Massachusetts

HER START

2015

WHAT DIVISION SHE UMPIRES

Youth Fast Pitch and Adult Slow Pitch

FAVORITE THING ABOUT UMPIRING

There are so many things I love about umpiring softball -- the comradery of the umpires, knowing that I can always get better and the support I get from my Umpire-In-Chief. However, my favorite aspect of umpiring is devoting my time to youth, especially to young female athletes. So many girls stop participating in our sport in middle school, and if I can be a part of a positive experience that keeps them coming back, I know I have done a good job. Without umpires, there would be no softball and I love being another spoke in the wheel to provide a healthy, fun and competitive experience for young female athletes.

HER GOALS

I strive to learn something new every time I am on the field. I want to get better with every pitch, every inning and every game. I love learning from my fellow umpires and being able to improve every game or situation.

BEST EXPERIENCE

Although I cannot name just one experience that has been the best, I can say that every time I get to a field and I hear the players chatting in the dugout about how much they appreciate having a female umpire, it reminds me of how important it is for me to be a role model for these athletes. Hearing players talk about how important they find it to have an umpire that looks like them makes me feel pretty good!

PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENT

I am most proud of the fact that once I started umpiring, I stuck with it. I never played softball but grew up watching my late father umpire baseball and I simply wanted to him proud, so I joined my high school board before becoming a part of the USA Softball umpire program. As a woman, becoming a part of the high school board was not easy, but I stuck with it and for that I am proud. I hope more women step out of their comfort zone and become officials.

TOUGHEST OBSTACLE

Self-doubt.

USA SOFTBALL NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP/STATE TOURNAMENT EXPERIENCE

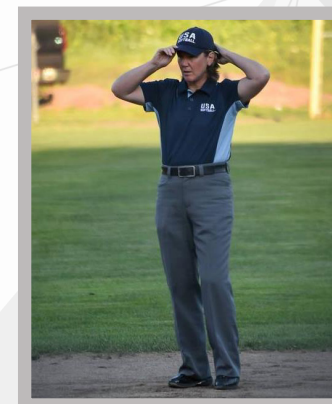
Blue, Bronze, Silver and Gold Medal, NIF, and Elite

FAVORITE THING ABOUT UMPIRING FOR USA SOFTBALL

The "Family" of USA Softball umpires is something that I will carry with me forever. If any of the members of "team blue" that I've fortunate enough to work with or for, are reading this. Thank you!

MORE FROM ANDREA

If it weren't for the leadership of USA Softball of Massachusetts, I would not be as successful as I am.



FACES ON THE FIELD



MOE, 42

Fort Worth, Texas

USA Softball of
Dallas/Fort Worth

HIS START

Fall 2020

WHAT DIVISION HE UMPIRES

Youth Fast-Pitch

FAVORITE THING ABOUT UMPIRING

With my daughter being a 2020 graduate, umpiring allows me to continue going out to the ball fields on the weekends.

HIS GOALS

To be a knowledgeable and strong umpire who's capable of calling any level of softball.

BEST EXPERIENCE

Having young players from previous tournaments come up to me just to tell me hi.

PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENT

The amount that I feel I have grown in just one season.

TOUGHEST OBSTACLE

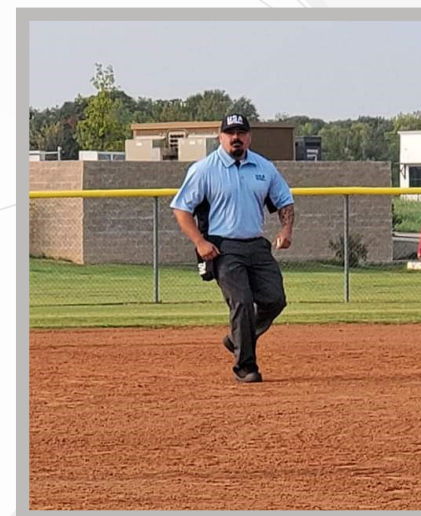
Being a former select coach, I've had to learn to shut off thought processes that are coach related while umpiring.

FAVORITE THING ABOUT UMPIRING FOR USA SOFTBALL

The amount of support I've received since starting this fall. I wouldn't be where I'm at now if I didn't have veteran umpiring always willing to answer questions, correct errors and praise good calls and good practices.

MORE FROM MOE

I had a good grasp of the rules when I started, but there are many little things that can happen that I had never thought of or encountered before becoming an umpire. I hope anyone that reads this will have a better appreciation for anyone willing to sacrifice their time to make sure their child has a fair and safe environment to play ball in.



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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...."

LIGHTNING
LLFP13
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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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- Approved by USASB, USSSA, NSA, ISA
- Meets all softball association standards
- 30"/17oz, 29"/16oz, 28"/15oz, 27"/14oz, 26"/13oz

FACES ON THE FIELD



ARIANNA, 13

Windham, NH

Polar Crush

USA Softball of
Massachusetts

HER START

I began playing softball when I was five years old. My mom would always play catch with me when I was young, and I have loved it ever since.

FAVORITE THING ABOUT PLAYING SOFTBALL

My favorite thing about playing softball is being a part of a competitive team and making life-long friends.

HER GOALS

My goal in softball is to play at the Division I level for UCLA.

BEST EXPERIENCE

I have had many great experiences so far in softball, but the best experience was making the 2020 USA Softball All American Team and getting to play at the USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex. I faced great competition and made new friends as well.

PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENT

The softball accomplishment that I am most proud of is going to Nationals in Maryland as a 10U player and hitting my first over the fence homerun. We ended up coming in fifth place out of 42 teams.

TOUGHEST OBSTACLE

My toughest obstacle to overcome was always being the youngest girl on the team and having to work extra hard all the time to earn my spot in the line up and on the field.

ROLE MODEL IN THE GAME

Jen Schro and Paige Halstead are my role models. I have attended Jen Schro's clinics and watch all of her videos. She is very inspirational, and I have learned a lot about catching and the sport of softball from her. I also admire Paige as a catcher. She always knows what is going on in the field.

FACES ON THE FIELD



BOB, 60

Rochester, Minn.

USA Softball of
Minnesota

HIS START

2008

WHAT DIVISION HE UMPIRES

Girls' Fast-Pitch

FAVORITE THING ABOUT UMPIRING

Calling a good game with good game management

HIS GOALS

Attaining Elite status and being WBSC certified

BEST EXPERIENCE

Being selected to umpire CBS and ESPN games at a tournament in Denver, Co.

PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENT

Being recognized and respected by coaches and players as an umpire with a passion for the game.

TOUGHEST OBSTACLE

I am my own obstacle because I always keep a higher expectation of myself.

USA SOFTBALL UMPIRE AWARDS PROGRAM MEMBERSHIP

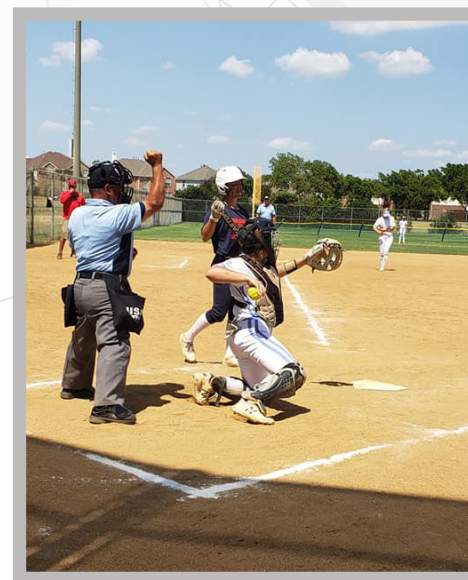
I am a member of the National Indicator Fraternity

USA SOFTBALL NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP/STATE TOURNAMENT EXPERIENCE

I have umpired 12 National Championships

FAVORITE THING ABOUT UMPIRING FOR USA SOFTBALL

USA Softball is the National Governing Body of Softball and I am very proud to serve in it.



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SOCIAL MEDIA: YOU POSTED IT!



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!

2010 Hit Chicks
#halloweenhavoc
#usasoftball #fastpitch
#10U

@HITCHICKSBALL



08 Hit Chicks #halloweenhavoc
#usasoftball #12u #fastpitch

@HITCHICKSBALL

Keep grinding! Played against 18A teams today & she's only 13! #softball #fastpitch
#usasoftball #OSA16U #proud

@HOLLYOLBERDING1



#USASoftball Elite
Showdown tournament 14U
Champions! Congratulations
@ctdiamonds! What a great
weekend of softball!

@COLDPLAYMXOXO

Perfect example of an excellent
student athlete! Great job,
Michelly! #BAHPStudent
#BASoftball #USASoftball

@BELAIRATTENDAN1

Bel Air High School
Congratulations to Lady Highlander, Michelle Balcazar, representing Bel Air in playing for the U-16 USA Softball High Performance Program! GO BIG RED!!
#Bigredpride



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#unity #unityconnell
#homerun #usasoftball
#usavastatenationals

@SARABGRAHAMM



#hpp #usasoftball
#south

@HARRISON3TESSIE



SOCIAL MEDIA: YOU POSTED IT!

Texas Glory 2930 wins the USA Softball Toys for Tots event in Ennis, TX. Great job, ladies!

@TEXASGLORY.FP



Headed home from the USA Softball High Performance Program tryouts with @toni.mishnick. It was cold and windy but she did her thing on the field.

@BOOFYM



Super proud of these 4 young ladies for trying out at USA Softball Identifier. All 4 balled out and showcased their skills!



@TXBOMBER_FLORES07



16u squad in.... ARIZONA 🍌🌵

@LADY_ROADRUNNERS_SOFTBALL



I don't shoutout or talk enough about my 2018 Sumter Softball Allstar Team! One of the traits I admire most is heart.

They showed what it means to have heart, skill, talent, teamwork and so much more.... Sumter is a special place filled with some amazing and talented people!

@JERSEYJOE_Y000



Xmas bling tournament @ladytitans2011_naranjo came out 1st place Champions. Almost pitched a shut out. Game ending pitch.

@MKSALAZAR88



Ellie was on cloud 9 after running into some of the country's best softball players at D-Bat Herriman. We got into the car to leave and Ellie was wearing a smile from ear to ear along with her Team USA t-shirt 🇺🇸 and signed softball 🇺🇸 Thank you for inspiring my little to keep grinding!

@WONDER_WOMAN0226



@USASoftball
#USASoftball

F21

BAT COLLECTION

READY TO LAUNCH



High Performance Program



USA Softball announced the launch of the High Performance Program (HPP), a program that is designed to serve as a pipeline to the USA Softball National Team Program. Inclusive to all that wish to participate, the HPP focuses on developing player skills, while teaching and growing the game of softball in the Junior Olympic (JO) Girls' Fast Pitch division.

“We are excited to officially launch the USA Softball High Performance Program,” said Chief Executive Officer, Craig Cress. “Because the High Performance Program serves as a direct pipeline to the National Team Program, players will have a clear pathway to representing the U.S. at a future WBSC World Cup. Additionally, all players who participate will develop their skills which is essential to growing the game and contributing to the USA Softball mission.”



The HPP consists of four levels: local area identifiers, local area invitational tryouts, regional team events and USA Softball Junior Women's National Team (JWNT) age-specific tryouts. Athletes first participate in identifiers and tryouts at the local level with the top athletes named to their respective area pool. From the area, teams are formed to participate in regional events and athletes that stand out as the most elite then advance for possible national team trial, pool, or team participation. Following the JWNT selection process, athletes officially named to the JWNT would represent the U.S. at a World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) international event.

Participating athletes will be evaluated based on their performances at each tryout with additional metric testing being included for athletes who are selected to attend the JWNT tryouts. Through such evaluation, placement, training and re-evaluation each year, the HPP can identify athletes for advancement consideration and work to discover future Women's National Team athletes.

Additional information for the High Performance Program can be found at HPP.USASoftball.com.





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National Teams Spotlight *Thanksgiving*

Members of the 2019-2020 USA Softball National Teams shared their favorite parts of #Thanksgiving and what they were most thankful for this holiday season.

CAT OSTERMAN | WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM



"I'm most thankful for being able to have spent more time with my family, and my family being safe, healthy and happy."

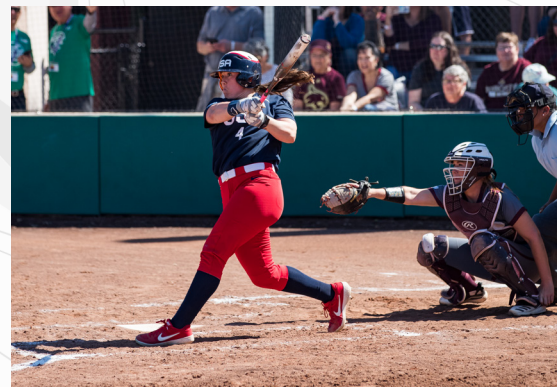
Favorite Thanksgiving Dish: "Stuffing! I absolutely love stuffing," she said. "Cranberry sauce is a close second."

VALERIE ARIOTO | WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM



"I am thankful for my amazing support system and family. I am grateful to be surrounded by so much love!"

AMANDA CHIDESTER | WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM



"I am thankful for the health of my family!"
Favorite Thanksgiving Dish: "Turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy combo on a roll!"

TAYLOR EDWARDS | WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM



"I'm most thankful for the health and safety of my family. This year has been crazy for people across the world but day to day, we can make a change and work to stay positive for the future."

Favorite Thanksgiving Tradition: "Playing board games with my family. I love when we get competitive against each other and laugh until it hurts."

Favorite Thanksgiving Dish: "Definitely sweet potato casserole. It's the perfect thing to end an amazing day with family."



MONICA ABBOTT | WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM



Favorite Thanksgiving Tradition: "Our recent Thanksgiving traditions have included doing a turkey trot in the morning which is fun."
Favorite Thanksgiving Dish: "Pumpkin Pie, for sure."

"I am thankful for being surrounded by a strong and loving community of family and friends, and how COVID has made us closer."



National Teams Spotlight *Thanksgiving*

MICHELLE MOULTRIE
WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM



"I am thankful for community."

Favorite Thanksgiving Tradition: "I love to help cook on Thanksgiving and I love being surrounded by family."

Favorite Thanksgiving Dish: "Grandma's homemade dinner rolls."

CLAIRE GINDER
U-17 WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM



"This year I am most thankful for how much closer I've been able to get with my family. They're my rock and I'm so thankful for the support I have from them."

HAILYN SOKOLSKI
U-17 WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM



Favorite Thanksgiving Tradition: "Every year I look forward to our Thanksgiving tradition of setting up our Christmas tree right before Thanksgiving."

Favorite Thanksgiving Dish: "The fruit bowl. I don't know why, but during Thanksgiving dinner it is 100% better!"

AVERY HODGE
U-17 WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM



Favorite Thanksgiving Tradition: "Hunting with my dad and uncle."

Favorite Thanksgiving Dish: "Sweet potatoes with marshmallows."

WILL PONCE
U-18 MEN'S NATIONAL TEAM



Favorite Thanksgiving Tradition: "Being with family and having dinner together."

Favorite Thanksgiving Dish: "Mashed Potatoes!"

"I'm most thankful for still getting opportunities to play baseball and softball through the pandemic."

BLAKE KERR
U-18 MEN'S NATIONAL TEAM



"I'm most thankful for the health and safety of my friends and family during this pandemic."

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2021 GOLD

SALEM, VIRGINIA SET TO HOST 2021 GOLD NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

USA Softball officially announced details for the 2021 USA Softball 16-Under and 18-Under GOLD National Championships, the pinnacle of Junior Olympic (JO) Championship Play. Hosted by USA Softball of Virginia, elite teams from across the United States will once again have the opportunity to compete for a coveted USA Softball GOLD National Championship title in their respective division. Slated for July 18-24, games will be played across three locations in Salem, Virginia: Botetourt Sports Complex, Burton Softball Field and James Moyer Sports Complex.

For more information, teams can visit USASoftball.com.

“The Roanoke Valley in Virginia is pleased to host the 2021 USA Softball 16U & 18U GOLD National Championships,” said USA Softball of Virginia Commissioner, John McPhail. “The Roanoke Valley has hosted 56 USA Softball National Championships (formerly ASA) and we believe that you will find our staff qualified and able to assist you. Our facilities are some of the best in the country with the Botetourt Sports Complex winning ASA Complex of the Year for 2012 and the Moyer Sports Complex winning ASA Complex of the Year for 2011. Four Parks and Recreation Departments that include the City of Salem, City of Roanoke, Roanoke County, and Botetourt County along with USA Softball of Piedmont Virginia and Virginia’s Blue Ridge will come together to bring you this prestigious event.”

The 2021 GOLD National Championships will include 48 berths for each competing division with each team earning a berth through a network of regional qualifying tournaments and through allocated berths.



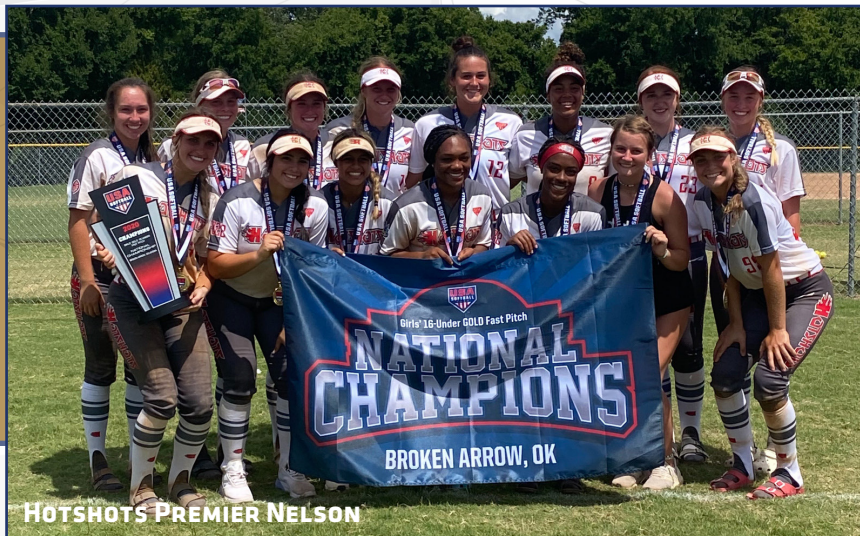
QUALIFYING TOURNAMENTS CAN BE FOUND HERE >>



2021 GOLD

2020 GOLD NATIONALS RESULTS

At the 2020 GOLD Nationals, the 16-Under division saw Hotshots Premier Nelson bring home the Championship title with an impressive 10-1 record through double elimination bracket play, dropping their solo loss to Texas Bombers Burgess before battling through the loser's bracket with seven-straight wins to advance to the Championship finale where they would best California Breeze Birch, 5-2, for the 16-Under GOLD Nationals Championship title.



HOTSHOTS PREMIER NELSON

Birmingham Thunderbolts claimed the 18-Under division title in complete dominance, tallying an undefeated 6-0 record through double-elimination bracket play before dropping the Championship contest, 5-4, against Hotshots Premier Dumezich to force the if-necessary game. With everything on the line in the winner-take-all contest, both teams were strong in the circle and kept battling offensively, but it was Birmingham Thunderbolts who came out on top with a 3-2 victory to claim the 18-Under GOLD Nationals Championship trophy.



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2021 JUNIOR OLYMPIC CUP



USA Softball announced that the 2021 USA Softball Junior Olympic (JO) Cup will be held in Columbus, Ga. June 19-25. The 14-Under division will kick off the tournament at Idle Hour Sports Complex before joining the 16-Under and 18-Under divisions at South Commons Complex, where a 2021 Junior Olympic Champion will be crowned in their respective age divisions.

[Click here to visit the 2021 USA Softball Junior Olympic Cup event page >>](#)

A recipient of the 2019 Complex of the year, presented by Stabilizer Solutions, South Commons is most notably known for hosting the historic 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games for the sport of softball, where the Red, White and Blue claimed the first-ever Olympic Gold medal.

“The Sports Council of Columbus, Georgia is elated to host the 2021 USA Softball Junior Olympic Cup,” said Columbus, GA Sports Council Executive Director, Merri Sherman. South Commons Softball Complex has seen some of the best in the world compete and we look forward to continuing that legacy when the JO teams take the fields. Players and fans will enjoy the many restaurants and amenities our vibrant city has to offer.



To everyone involved—players, coaches, support staff and fans—I offer the sincere hospitality for which our city has become so well known.”

Created in 2015, the USA Softball JO Cup serves as an opportunity for evaluation by the USA Softball coaching staff and the Women’s National Team Selection Committee (WNTSC). The inaugural USA Softball JO Cup included a total of 32 teams competing in the 18-Under division and has since grown to include a 16-Under division the past five years (2016-2020) and 14-Under division the past three years (2018-2020).

2021 JUNIOR OLYMPIC CUP



"I am really excited to have our top Michigan Finesse teams participating in the 2021 USA Softball JO Cup," said Michigan Finesse Head Coach, Donny Dreher. "Ninety-six teams over three age groups at one great complex. It's the perfect format for players and college coaches."

The 2021 JO Cup will include a total of 96 teams across the 14-Under, 16-Under and 18-Under divisions. It will feature a five-game guarantee with three pool play games and a double-elimination bracket into a single Championship Game per division. A blind draw will be conducted for bracket play with protection given to the first and second-place finishers from the 2020 USA Softball JO Cup.

"The 2020 JO Cup for us was an amazing experience," said Lady Lightning Gold DPS Corn Head Coach, John Corn. "From the fields, to the staff, to the umpires, everything was done professionally. We really appreciate the opportunity to play and look forward to returning in 2021."

A host to a variety of events through the years, including the 2019 USA Softball International Cup, South Commons Complex is a premier park containing eight softball fields, which includes a five-field hub with a roundhouse and a three-field fan with a stadium, indoor score booth, concessions and restrooms. After undergoing a multi-million-dollar renovation, the South Commons softball facilities are unparalleled in the region. The renovations included new LED lighting, new scoreboards, field drainage systems, stadium seats, fencing, renovated restrooms and concessions, paint, sidewalks, ADA compliant ramps, netting, Wi-Fi and internet access, updated umpire rooms, press box and skyboxes.


"Bringing this prestigious event to the site of the first Olympic Softball competition back in 1996 is exciting news for USA Softball of Georgia," said USA Softball of Georgia JO Commissioner, Ernie Yarbrough. "In addition to being the venue for previous international competition, Columbus is the host city for our high school state championships and many NCAA invitational events. The Columbus Sports Council, Columbus Parks & Recreation, and the Columbus City Government do a terrific job of hosting events of this magnitude."



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WELCOME NEW COMMISSIONERS

In the year of 2020, USA Softball recognized newly selected USA Softball Local Association Commissioners following the retirement of former Commissioners in their respective locations.

Individuals recently appointed to the Commissioner role include:



Bill Rodriguez named Commissioner of USA Softball of San Antonio
Rodriguez has resumed the role immediately following the retirement of former Commissioner Herman Garza.

"I am honored to be selected as the Commissioner of USA Softball of San Antonio," said Rodriguez. "I am looking forward to working with all of the staff involved in this great city and to keep softball on the rise. I would like to thank Herman Garza for all of the time, hard work and effort he gave in making softball a priority in the city of San Antonio."

Tracy Morgan appointed Commissioner of USA Softball of Alabama
Morgan assumed responsibilities immediately following the resignation of former Commissioner, Natalie Norman.

"I am very honored to be selected as the Commissioner of USA Softball of Alabama," said Morgan. "The opportunity to continue building USA Softball of Alabama is very exciting to me. My time as a player, fourth-generation umpire and most recently a JO Commissioner, has formed a passion for our game and the USA Softball brand. I can't wait to continue growing the USA Softball program with the incredible staff here in Alabama and making it an enjoyable experience for all participants."



John McPhail selected as Commissioner of USA Softball of Central Virginia
McPhail has assumed responsibilities immediately following the retirement of former Commissioner, Henry Pollard.



"I am honored that USA Softball has put faith in my abilities to lead Central Virginia in the future," said McPhail. "Following Commissioner Pollard and all that he has done for USA Softball will not be easy and I thank him for his leadership. I will work hard with my current staff, and city and county localities to keep the positive USA Softball presence in Central Virginia."



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2021 HOF COMPLEX SCHEDULE



USA Softball has revealed the 2021 schedule for the USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex – OGE Energy Field – INTEGRIS Field, meaning players, coaches, umpires and fans alike can look forward to events from March through October at the Softball Capital of the World®. Following completion of the \$27.5 million-dollar renovation voted and approved by the citizens of Oklahoma City, USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex reopened its doors for the first time in July 2020 for the Heart of America Fastpitch League (HFL) 4th of July Showdown prior to hosting the USA Softball GOLD National Championships. Events

returning to the Hall of Fame Complex for the 2021 season include the highly touted NCAA Women's College Softball World Series (WCWS) and USA Softball All-American Games, in addition to the inaugural Alliance Fastpitch Championship Series. The newly renovated facility will also welcome top participants in the USA Softball Men's Major Fast Pitch and the Men's Class A, B and C Slow Pitch divisions of play to compete and showcase their skills in Oklahoma City through their respective USA Softball National Championships.

[Click here for the complete 2021 schedule of events at the USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex](#)

2021 HOF Complex Schedule

“We are looking forward to welcoming back some signature events as well as hosting a handful of new events at the USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex,” said USA Softball Chief Executive Officer, Craig Cress. “Coming off a season where we completed stadium construction and dealt with the impact of COVID-19, we continue to work with state and local officials to not only offer a full slate of events but most importantly, provide a safe and enjoyable experience for all who visit the Softball Capital of the World®.”

Kicking off the 2021 season will be a series of collegiate softball tournaments held throughout the month of March, and details will be released when available. USA Softball will welcome back Special Olympics of Oklahoma on April 7, while the 16-Under and 18-Under Girls' Fast Pitch Spring Challenge (April 16-18) and Capital City Classic (April 23-25) return for the first time since 2018. The Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association (OSSAA) will host both their Slow Pitch State Championships (May 4-5) and Fast Pitch State Championships throughout the Oct. 7-9 and Oct. 14-16 weekends.

Also returning to the USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex is the Big XII Conference Championship (May 14-15) prior to the NCAA WCWS (June 3-9), which features the top eight teams in Division I softball competing for the coveted National Championship title.

New to the schedule is the Alliance Fastpitch Championship Series, where Tier 1 and Tier 2 teams in both the 16-Under and 18-Under divisions will compete in Oklahoma City July 24-Aug. 2. The USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex will then host five consecutive events, beginning August 6-7 with the Men's Major Fast Pitch National Championship followed by the USA Softball All-American Games, a prestigious tournament intended to provide national exposure to elite athletes in the 12-Under Junior Olympic (JO) Fast Pitch division.



The All-American Games will be followed by the Men's Class C Slow Pitch National Championship (Aug. 27-29), the Men's Class B Slow Pitch National Championship (Sept. 3-4) and the Men's Class A Slow Pitch National Championship (Sept. 5-6), while the High School Frenzy will take place Sept. 24-25 followed by the OSSAA Fast Pitch State Championships.

Additional events to be held at the USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex may be added at a later date. For more information on the USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex, visit USASoftball.com. Many tournaments are open for teams to register and additional information, including Tournament Directors, hotels and maps can be found by visiting TournamentUSASoftball.

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TEXAS SOFTBALL COMMUNITY RALLIES TOGETHER IN HONOR OF JASMINE MELENDEZ

In response to the devastating death of Jasmine Melendez (Midland, TX), a 15-year-old Midland High School student-athlete, the Texas softball community rallied together in honor of the star athlete and in support of her family.

Melendez was passionate about softball and was a member of the Midland High School softball team as well as the Midland United Girls Softball Association (MUGS), a USA Softball of Texas registered league. She was well known at the MUGS Complex where she spent many of her weekends on the field, including the weekend before her passing where she sent two balls over the fence at the Fall Classic Softball Tournament.



“Jasmine grew up playing at the MUGS Complex and had a lot of good moments on those fields,” said MUGS President and USA Softball of Texas Deputy JO Commissioner, Rick Maddox. “Though I didn’t know her personally, I always heard great things not only about her talent on the field but also her character off the field.”

Following her death, USA Softball of Texas and MUGS joined forces and hosted the Midland United Girls’ Softball Thanksgiving Brawl. Featuring a morning and afternoon clinic with Women’s National Team Members, Cat Osterman and Valerie Arioto, all proceeds from the Thanksgiving Brawl were donated to the Melendez family in honor of Jasmine. The tournament quickly reached max capacity and generated a total of \$9,920 in addition to \$1,500 that was donated by the USA Softball of Texas umpires who worked the tournament.

TEXAS SOFTBALL COMMUNITY RALLIES TOGETHER IN HONOR OF JASMINE MELENDEZ



“This is what USA Softball is all about,” said USA Softball of Texas JO Commissioner, Scott Stone. “For all of us to come together from an Olympian status to the local league status in an effort to honor and support a member of our softball community ...and to see things like our umpires give up their pay for the tournament in order to support the Melendez family – It was just really special to see.”

In addition to the MUGS Thanksgiving Brawl, the MUGS Complex also hosted a Ragball Fundraiser Tournament and held a moment of silence in honor of Jasmine during league games that were held on Oct. 22. Multiple fundraisers were also organized in support of the Melendez family including two GoFundMe accounts that were set up by the Midland High School softball team. The first account was set up in support of the family’s medical and funeral expenses and the second was to create a scholarship account in honor of the hard work and dedication Jasmine had given to the program.

“It was a great thing to see the effort put into honoring Jasmine and supporting her family,” said Maddox. “If something happens to anyone in the softball community, I think it’s safe to say that the whole softball family will come together and try to help out as much as we can.”



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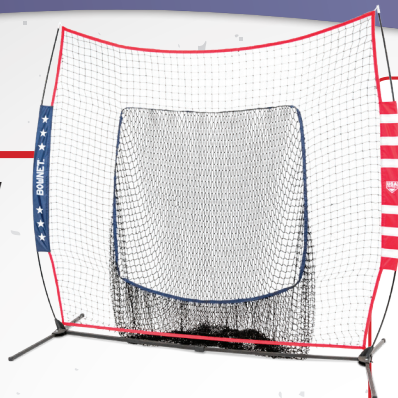


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USA Ball Bag

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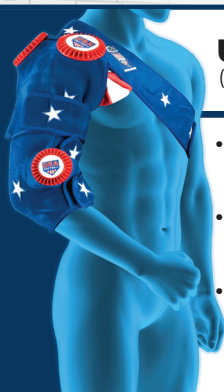
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2021 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

USA SOFTBALL ANNOUNCES DETAILS FOR 2021 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

USA Softball annually conducts over 100 National Championships in each of its major disciplines of sport, including slow pitch, fast pitch and modified pitch. Champions go home as the unchallenged best team in the nation for their respective division each year!



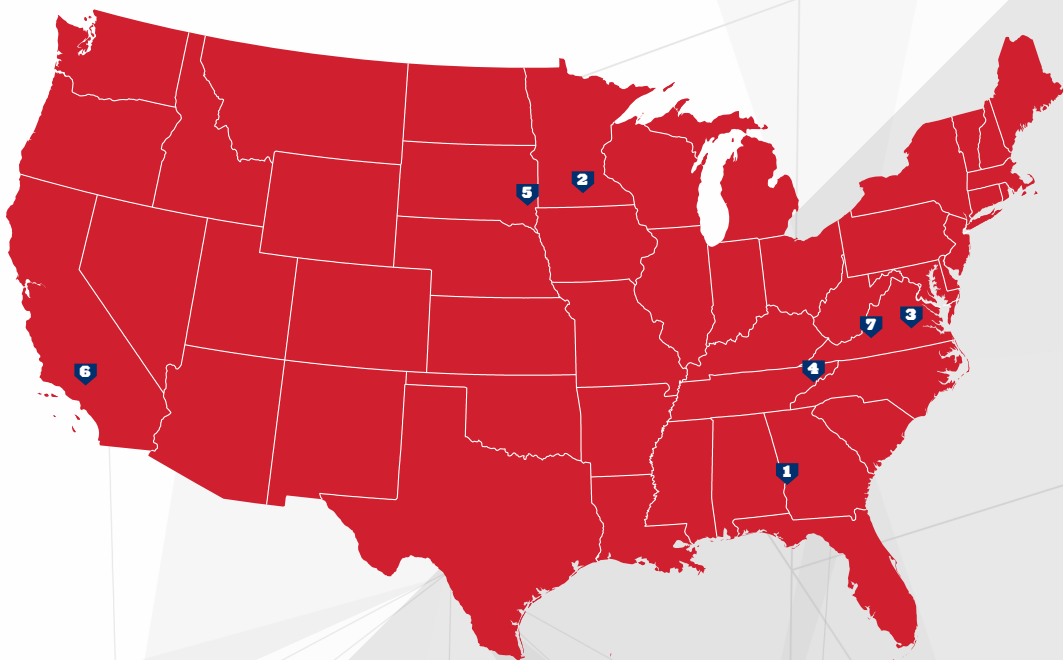
DATES AND LOCATIONS FOR 2021 USA SOFTBALL NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED!
FOR A COMPLETE LISTING, VISIT USASOFTBALL.COM.

2021 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

MAP OUT YOUR ROAD TO A 2021 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Details for the 2021 USA Softball Girls' Class A Fast Pitch National Championships and GOLD National Championships in the Girls' Junior Olympic (JO) Division have been announced. Spread across six states, teams will once again have the opportunity to compete for a coveted USA Softball National Championship title in their respective division.

Start mapping out your road to a National Championship!



CHAMPIONSHIP EVENTS

1. USA Softball Girls' Fast Pitch 10-Under Class A East Fast Pitch National Championship
July 22-25 | Columbus, GA.
2. USA Softball Girls' Fast Pitch 10-Under Class A West Fast Pitch National Championship
July 22-25 | North Mankato, Minn.
3. USA Softball Girls' Fast Pitch 12-Under Class A Fast Pitch National Championship
July 20-25 | Richmond, Va.
4. USA Softball Girls' Fast Pitch 14-Under Class A Fast Pitch National Championship
July 19-25 | Johnson City, Tenn.
5. USA Softball Girls' Fast Pitch 16-Under Class A Fast Pitch National Championship
July 25-Aug. 1 | Sioux Falls, S.D.
6. USA Softball Girls' Fast Pitch 18-Under Class A Fast Pitch National Championship
Aug. 3-8 | Lancaster, Calif.
7. USA Softball Girls' Fast Pitch 16-Under and 18-Under GOLD National Championships
July 18-24 | Salem, Va.

Additional details for the 2021 USA Softball Girls' Class A Fast Pitch National Championships and GOLD National Championships in the Girls' JO division can be found on USASoftball.com!

TOURNAMENTUSASOFTBALL.COM

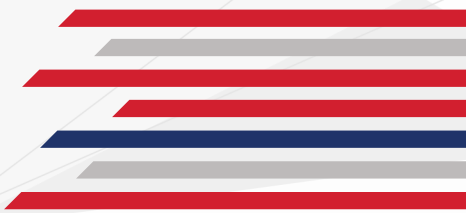
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NFCA RENEWED PARTNERSHIP

USA Softball, the National Governing Body (NGB) of Softball in the U.S., is proud to renew its three-year contract with National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) as an Official Sponsor. Comprised of fast pitch softball coaches from all competitive levels of play, the NFCA annually hosts a Convention, which offers networking opportunities, divisional meetings and educational speaker sessions with some of the game's most successful coaches.

“We are proud to partner with the NFCA and expand upon the relationship we have established for many years,” said USA Softball Chief Executive Officer, Craig Cress. “As the National Governing Body of Softball, it is our responsibility to grow the game and provide as many educational and development opportunities for all who participate, including coaches. By partnering with the NFCA, who has a very strong and respected presence in the softball community, we will be able to not only continue our support of these grass-roots initiatives but also provide additional assets to our ACE Coach Education Program.”

As part of the partnership, USA Softball and NFCA will continue to work jointly to create additional education material for the ACE (Aspire, Challenge, Encourage) Coach Education Program along with select international softball clinics. Developed by USA Softball, the ACE Coach Education program is designed to provide softball coaches of all levels – from

beginning coaches to experienced veterans – an opportunity to be educated as a coach with a national softball organization. In addition to education material, ACE Coaches will also have an opportunity to purchase a first-time discounted membership to join the NFCA.

USA Softball will also serve as the title sponsor of the Softball Summit during the NFCA Convention. The summit serves as an open forum for the NFCA membership to discuss business and relevant issues across the landscape of softball.

“We are thrilled to extend our partnership with USA Softball as an NFCA Official Sponsor,” said NFCA Executive Director, Carol Bruggeman. “To join forces with the National Governing Body of Softball, especially with the excitement surrounding the upcoming Olympic Games, is very rewarding and presents unique opportunities for our Association. This partnership highlights education, awareness, and diversity; three items critical to continued growth of the sport. USA Softball Executive Officer Craig Cress and Director of National Teams Chris Sebren are leaders in the industry and it has been a pleasure working with them to advance the sport. The NFCA is very appreciative of their loyal support.”



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USA SOFTBALL OF ARKANSAS GIVES BACK TO ARKANSAS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL IN EFFORT TO SUPPORT THE NICU AND CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS

In an effort to support the Arkansas Children's Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and Childhood Cancer Awareness, USA Softball of Arkansas hosted two fundraisers selling t-shirts and autographed softballs to generate funds that were donated to the local hospital.

"Giving back to your local community, especially something as special as the Children's Hospital, is important," said USA Softball of Arkansas Commissioner, Walker Clark. "It's what we should all be doing. Anytime that we are able to give back and support, that's what we do here at USA Softball of Arkansas."

For the first fundraiser, USA Softball of Arkansas brought in USA Softball Women's National Team members Cat Osterman and Kelsey Stewart to the Hiland Dairy Classic softball tournament in remembrance of Carol Hudgens, a close friend to Walker and his wife, Holly Clark. Osterman and Stewart signed softballs and from those proceeds, a total of \$2,000 was donated to the Arkansas Children's Hospital, which was where Carol had asked all donations to be made in honor of her former role as the Hospital's Vice President of Finance. USA Softball of Arkansas also honored Carol's daughter, Ashley Wise, along with the daughter of a USA Softball of Arkansas umpire, Nici Belknap, by selecting the NICU as the department to receive the donation. Both Hudgens and Belknap





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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 47...

currently work as NICU nurses at the hospital.

“The first time Walker and I met Carol was through softball,” said Holly Clark. “Our daughters were a couple years apart but played at the same ballpark, so they quickly became a part of our softball family. You have your real family, then you have your softball family and we are just really glad we were able to support our softball family by giving back to something that is so important.”

The second fundraiser was in support of Childhood Cancer Awareness and was initiated by USA Softball of Arkansas Tournament Director, Robert Byrd, who battled cancer at a young age. With the goal of raising money for children battling this disease, USA Softball of Arkansas and Byrd designed a logo and sold 250 t-shirts at the “Hitting for Cancer” softball tournament which generated \$2500 for the Hematology/Oncology (HEM/ONC) departments at the Arkansas Children’s Hospital.

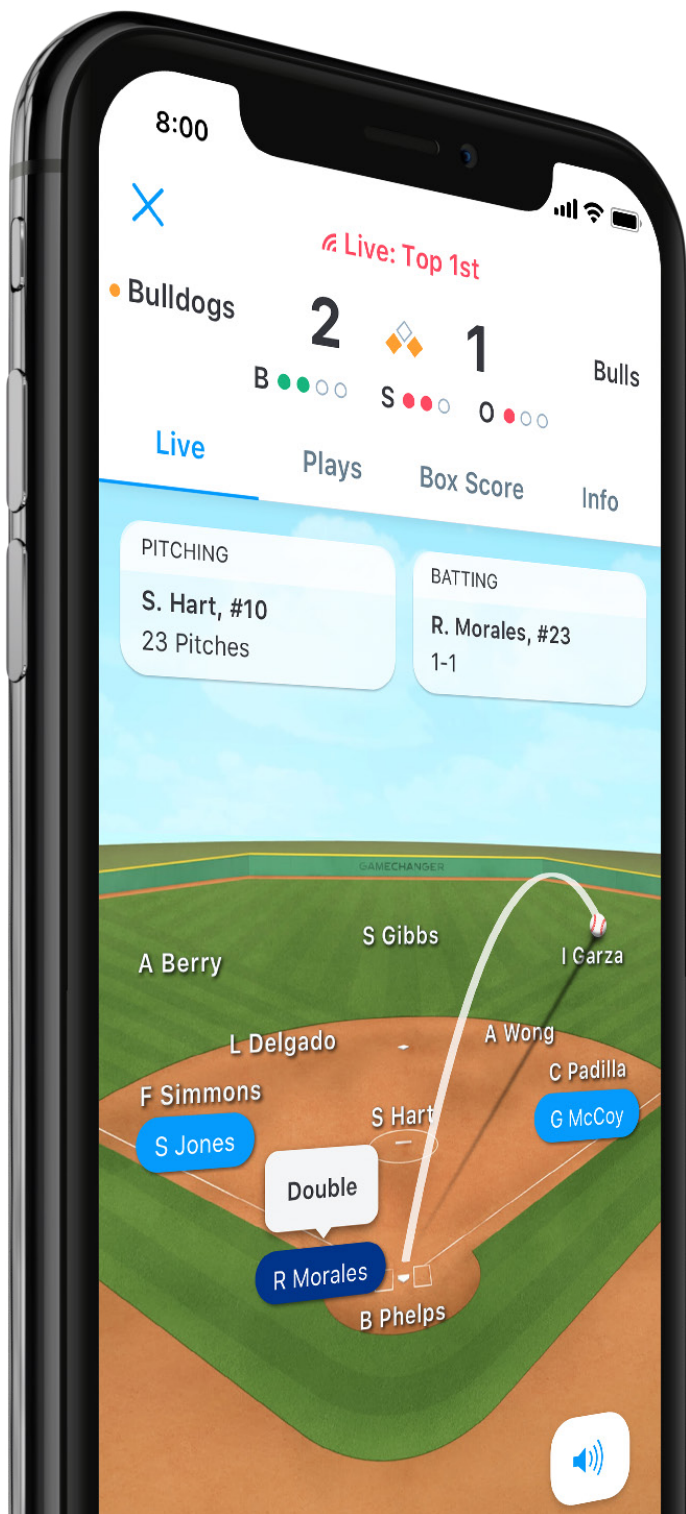
“Robert came to me back in August about wanting to do something to recognize and support Childhood Cancer Awareness,” said Walker Clark. “I instantly said we would be willing to help in any way that we could, because that’s what we do.”

“Using the sport of softball to support something like Childhood Cancer is huge for us,” Holly Clark added. “It’s more than profits, though. It’s about using our sport to benefit others. Softball is special and I think it can be used for more than just a game.”

USA Softball of Arkansas hopes to continue their support of the Children’s Hospital by making the “Hitting for Cancer” tournament an annual event with the hospital becoming more involved in future years.

“We chose the Arkansas Children’s Hospital because we felt like it was a great way to keep including the kids that maybe can’t be on the field,” said Holly Clark. “Just letting them know that we are always thinking about and supporting them.”





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Florida Impact '06 Weston team member **MADISON SMITH** stops at nothing to be a part of the game

USA Softball of Florida Junior Olympic (JO) Commissioner, Dwayne Sealy, encountered an inspiring young lady named Madison Smith as he wandered between fields at the Southeast Junior Olympic (JO) Cup Qualifier held in Clearwater, Fla. Madison, a member of Florida Impact '06 -- Weston, was seen warming up with her teammates despite physical limitations that confined her to a wheelchair.

"I saw a player dressed in full uniform riding a motorized wheelchair with a bat bag attached to the back and instantly thought she was probably just bringing the wheelchair to someone inside the ballpark," said Sealy. "Then later on, I saw her still in the wheelchair while she was on the field warming up with her team. It was incredible."

Madison, a 14-year-old resident of Pembroke Pines, Fla., was born with a neuromuscular disease called spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) and has been in a wheelchair since she was two years old. However, that has never stopped her from being a part of the game of softball.

"Madison's natural athletic ability just can't be denied," said Madison's mom, Jennifer Smith. "There's so many things in her life that she is unable to do because of her physical disability, but she refuses to let softball be one of those things."

Madison was introduced to the sport of softball at an early age by her parents, Jennifer and Aaron Smith,



who both played sports throughout college and participated in coed softball during Madison's childhood. Madison would join her parents at the softball fields during their coed games and quickly began developing a love for the game. Her parents always tossed whiffle balls at her and played catch with her, which only strengthened Madison's passion for the game and led to a determination to live out her dreams.

"I've loved the game of softball for so long," said Madison. "Ever since I started playing, I've wanted to do everything I can to be better and always be a part of the game."

At the age of nine, Madison joined the Plantation Pressure 10-Under team after tagging along with her neighbor for the team tryout. The coach, Pete Bilinski, immediately recognized Madison's passion for the game and said, "I'd love to have her be a part of the team."

Due to her physical limitations, Madison's participation was limited but coaches and umpires always worked to find a way to include her on the field as much as possible, which often resulted in games being extended an extra inning to give Madison the opportunity to pinch run and sometimes even score the final run of the game.

"Those were all moments that we will remember forever," said Jennifer. "Seeing her join her first team and even be able to participate in the game at certain points was a dream come true for her."

At the age of 12, the Plantation Pressure dissolved and Madison began searching for a new team to join when she came across the Florida Impact '06 -- Weston. Madison tried out for the Florida Impact in the fall of 2018 and has been a member of the team ever since.

"It was honestly terrifying having to go through the tryout process," said Jennifer. "Being a mom and knowing that my daughter really physically can't play is just so nerve-racking because it's easy for coaches to say that this isn't the sport or

league for her, but we feel so blessed that the softball community has embraced her the way that they have."

Due to the competitive competition at the 14-Under level, Madison's ability to be a part of the on-field action is minimal, however, her dedication to the game remains constant. She attends every practice -- and with the help of her teammates -- is able to participate in batting rotations, fielding fly balls, playing catch, and baserunning. On her Christmas wish list? Private hitting lessons.

"There's so many things in her life that she is unable to do because of her physical disability, but she refuses to let softball be one of those things."

"Madison wants to be a part of everything that her teammates are a part of," said Jennifer. "She does just about everything they do, just with certain accommodations, which her coaches and teammates are always so helpful with."

In addition to being a part of the Florida Impact team, Madison has also attended various softball camps including the Lightning Camp held at Cypress Bay High School. The camp now awards the "Most Valuable Player" each week with the "Madison Smith" award due to Madison's admirable involvement in the camp throughout previous years.

"Madison is such a great example and role model for athletes in our sport," said Florida Impact team manager, Brad Bond. "She is always excited to be on the field and never complains about anything. In fact, sometimes she tells the coaches to go harder on her at practice because she wants to get better, and that's what we do. We hold her accountable and treat her just like our other athletes, because that's what Madison is -- an athlete."



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FROM THE VAULT

USA SOFTBALL WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM AT THE 2000 SYDNEY OLYMPIC GAMES

Twenty years ago, the USA Softball Women's National Team made history, bouncing back from their first three-game losing streak to claim their second-straight Olympic gold medal at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games!



GAME 1

TEAM USA 6 CANADA 0

Lori Harrigan became the first pitcher to throw a no-hitter in Olympic competition.

GAME 2

TEAM USA 3 CUBA 0

Crystl Bustos led the U.S. offense, going 2-for-3 at the plate with 2 RBI.



GAME 3

TEAM USA 1 JAPAN 2

The U.S. outhit Japan 11-7 in the 11-inning thriller but were unable to seal the win.

GAME 4

TEAM USA 0 CHINA 2

The U.S. dropped a 2-0 decision to China despite Michele Smith throwing a two-hitter and recording 19 strikeouts.



CONTINUED NEXT PAGE...



GAME 5

TEAM USA 1 AUSTRALIA 2
 Lisa Fernandez set an Olympic record with 25 strikeouts but a homerun from Australia in the bottom of the 13th inning earned them the win.

GAME 6

TEAM USA 2 NEW ZEALAND 0
 The U.S. snapped its three-game losing streak.



GAME 7

TEAM USA 6 ITALY 0
 The U.S. secured the final spot in the Sydney 2000 medal round.

GAME 8

TEAM USA 3 CHINA 0
 The U.S. advanced to the bronze medal game after Stacy Nuveman's game-winning walk-off home run in the bottom of the 10th inning.



GAME 9

TEAM USA 1 AUSTRALIA 0
 Lisa Fernandez retired 13 batters at the plate to advance the U.S. to the gold medal game.

GAME 10

TEAM USA 2 JAPAN 1
 The U.S. makes history, earning back-to-back Olympic gold medals.

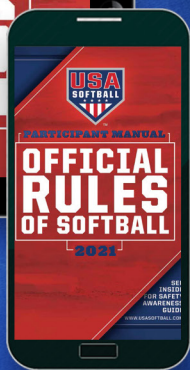


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