TWENTY ATHLETES SELECTED FOR WOMEN’S NATIONAL TEAM

Following a four-day selection process, 20 athletes have been selected to represent the United States as a member of the 2017 USA Softball Women’s National Team (WNT). Selected by members of the Women’s National Team Selection Committee (WNTSC), these athletes will compete at the World Cup of Softball XII this July in Oklahoma City, Okla. and at a Pan American Games/World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) World Championship Qualifier.

“It is very obvious that the future talent pool of USA Softball players is very deep,” said Head Coach Ken Eriksen (Tampa, Fla./Head Coach at South Florida). “The high level of play and skill assessment displayed at the 2017 National Team trials, not only by the former players but also by the first time trial attendees, was fantastic.”

Click here to see the athletes selected to the 2017 USA Softball Women’s National Team >>

“After coming off the 2016 WBSC World Championship Gold Medal success, it is important for our program to keep moving forward,” Eriksen continued. “The ‘prize fight’ mentality of all the players came out in the competition with the roster spots filled by those that excelled through the trials with their skill sets, their productive play at this event, their productive play through past history, and lastly by character assessment. These factors make up a winning unit. We will continue to assess those that were here that did not make the team. For those who made the roster...

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3
Hello and welcome to the December 2016 edition of the Inside Pitch, the official newsletter of USA Softball.

As 2016 comes to a close, I want to wish all of you a healthy and happy New Year ahead! We’ve had an outstanding year in all areas – from the great things our Local Associations are doing nationwide to our National Teams who competed and fought hard in representing USA Softball on the international stage. As we head into 2017, I have confidence that we not only will continue to work hard but strive for better in growing this great game we all love and enjoy. With the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) 2016 decision to add softball back into the Olympic Games, I know we all feel and recognize our roles to educate and promote USA Softball across the board because USA Softball is where Olympic journeys begin.

At the conclusion of 2016 in November, the USA Softball Council Members gathered together in Shreveport, La. for the 85th Annual Meeting where we officially kicked off 2017 with approved rule and code changes. Members also voted on a restructuring of the Board of Directors to a Regional representation format following the realignment of the regions from 15 to 10. As of January 1, the USA Softball Board of Directors is now comprised of one Board representative from each region, the current President, past-President, and President-elect, an At-Large Representative, and four Elite Athlete Representatives. You can visit USASoftball.com to view the entire Board of Directors list with their corresponding positions. In Championship Play news, we voted and approved the creation of a new division of Championship Play with the Girls’ Class C Fast Pitch National Championship Finals. This new division created a Girls’ Class C Fast Pitch National Championship for 10-Under, 12-Under and 14-Under in each region. Also added to the 2017 USA Softball Code was the creation of a Girls’ Regional Championship Finals for 8-Under fast pitch.

Ringing in the New Year was the Women’s and Junior Women’s National Team Selection Camps, which began on Dec. 30 with an open tryout for the JWNT and concluded on Jan. 5. With over 150 participants registered for the open tryout, it was amazing to see so many young athletes giving it their all with aspirations to play with our National Team program. Ten athletes moved on and joined 36 others to compete for a spot on the 2017 USA Softball JWNT. The Women’s National Team Selection Committee (WNTSC) selected 24 to a Junior Women’s National training team, where they will travel to Oklahoma City for training camp, exhibition games and the World Cup of Softball XII prior to the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Junior Women’s World Championship. During the Women’s National Team Selection Camp, 20 athletes were named to the roster and will wear the Red, White, and Blue this summer. The Men’s National Team Selection Camp will be held Jan. 20-22 in San Diego, Calif. and those that are selected will compete at the WBSC Men’s World Championship this July.

Wishing you and your Local Association all the best as you continue to strive for greatness in 2017 and beyond!

USA Softball President

Have a question for President Jones? Send it to president@usasoftball.com
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

...the evidence of how close it was should be a motivating factor to continue to strive to be better physically and mentally as we race towards the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.”

Representing the U.S. this summer will be 16 returning veterans from the 2016 roster which reclaimed the Gold Medal at the WBSC Women’s World Championship in Surrey, B.C., Canada after defeating Japan 7-3 in the Gold Medal Game. Four rookies also join the squad, with three of those rookies having previously worn the Red, White and Blue either as a member of the USA Softball Junior Women’s National Team (JWNT) or USA Softball Women’s Elite Team.

Led by Head Coach Ken Eriksen, a full list of National Team events, including exhibition games, will be released at a later date.

Follow along all summer with the USA Softball National Teams at USASoftball.com >>

ENJOY THIS MONTH’S INSIDE PITCH?

If your local association has news to share and would like to be featured in next month’s newsletter, email me at kwillis@usasoftball.com by the 15th of the month.

Stay up-to-date by reading this month’s Plays and Clarifications >>
Following a two-day selection process, 24 athletes have been selected to continue their training for a spot on the 2017 USA Softball Junior Women’s National Team (JWNT). Selected by members of the Women’s National Team Selection Committee (WNTSC), these athletes will compete in a training camp and exhibition games in Oklahoma City and at the World Cup of Softball XII. Following the conclusion of the World Cup of Softball XII, the final 17-player roster for the 2017 USA Softball JWNT will be determined. That roster will be competing at the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Junior Women’s World Championship, which will be held July 24-30 in Clearwater, Fla.

“I’m looking forward to seeing this team and how they develop,” said Head Coach Laura Berg (Corvallis, Ore./Head Coach at Oregon State). “It’s going to be a fun and long process, but I am expecting great things to come out of this group. We’re here to defend a Gold Medal, and anything less than that is not good enough.”

Click here to see the athletes selected to continue their training for a spot on the 2017 USA Softball JWNT >>

In all, ten athletes will be competing with their NCAA Division I universities while 14 athletes will still be a part of their respective high schools prior to the 2017 season. Also joining the roster are five athletes who participated at the USA Softball Junior Women’s Open Tryout held on December 30.

Led by Head Coach Laura Berg (Corvallis, Ore./Head Coach at Oregon State), Assistant Coaches for the 2017 USA Softball JWNT are Trisha Ford (Fremont, Calif./Head Coach at Arizona State), Kristie Fox (San Diego, Calif./Head Coach at UT- Arlington), and John Rittman (Valencia, Calif./Associate Head Coach at Kansas).

The 2017 USA Softball JWNT will look to defend the Gold after a record-breaking performance at the 2015 WBSC Junior Women’s World Championship in Oklahoma City, Okla. In Oklahoma City, the JWNT went undefeated, finishing the tournament as the leaders in batting average (.425 team batting average) and runs scored (119) while limiting opponents to just six runs in a 10-0 performance.
USA Softball announced the creation of the USA Softball All-American Games, a prestigious tournament to be held at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex – OGE Energy Field – INTEGRIS Field August 18-20, 2017. Held at the “Softball Capital of the World”™ in Oklahoma City, Okla., the USA Softball All-American Games provide national exposure to elite athletes in the 12-under Junior Olympic (JO) fast pitch division and will highlight the top competitors from across the country.

“The USA Softball JO Commissioners are very excited to host an event that showcases 360 of the best 12-under players from around the country,” said USA Softball of Southern California JO Commissioner Kristi Allen. “We are excited to give these athletes the opportunity to play at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex representing USA Softball.”

With teams selected from the 10 USA Softball Regions, a total of 24 teams from across the U.S. will compete in the USA Softball All-American games. Each region can select up to two teams to represent their region at the USA Softball All-American Games and each team will consist of 15 athletes and two coaches. Athletes must be on a USA Softball registered team for the 2017 season and must be age eligible for the 12-under JO division. Each region is responsible for the selection process for their teams, and players must commit and be registered no later than July 1.

Teams competing in the USA Softball All-American Games will be invited to participate in an exposure camp to highlight their skills. The USA Softball All-American Games will also have an Opening Ceremony, free live streaming and live stats through USASoftball.com and a tournament “swag” bag, which will include their USA Softball All-American jerseys and other official USA Softball and sponsor merchandise.

“What a great opportunity for 12-under female athletes across the country to be identified by members of USA Softball’s local associations,” said Director of Championships Chris Sebren. “To have the opportunity to come together as individuals and compete as regional teams in this inaugural All-American Games will be such a great experience for them. These select individuals will join some of the best athletes across the world who will be competing in Oklahoma City this year as we host the NCAA Women’s College World Series (WCWS) and the World Cup of Softball. What a great way for USA Softball to finish off our fast pitch season in Oklahoma City with the inaugural All-American Games.”

Information on regional tryout and selection processes will be available the first week of February.

For more information on the USA Softball All-American Games, please visit www.usasoftballallamericangames.com or send an email to AllAmericanGames@usasoftball.com.

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On Saturday, Dec. 10, softball fans from all over had the unique opportunity to see their favorite USA Softball Olympians from the past take the field in a slow-pitch exhibition game against the Louisville Slugger Warriors Team. Held in conjunction with the National Fast Pitch Coaches Association (NFCA) Convention, the game was the first of its kind and commemorated the 20th anniversary of Olympic softball while celebrating softball’s return to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.


The game also welcomed the Louisville Slugger Wounded Warriors, a team composed of injured veterans and active duty military personnel. Protectors of the Red, White and Blue, the Warriors Team was comprised of soldiers with physical wounds and are aided by modern prosthetic technology, while others have invisible wounds, including PTSD. The team included Carlo Adame (US Army), Leonard Anderson (US Air Force), Richard Burley (US Air Force), Brett Cleveland (US Air Force), Christopher Ferrell (US Air Force), Lonnie Gaudet (US Army), Matthew Kinsey (US Army), Ryan McIntosh (US Army), John Mitchell (US Army), Todd Reed (US Army), Tucker Rutherford (US Army), and Derrick Victor (US Air Force), while their staff included Gary LaFon (US Air Force), Joshua Wiggs (US Air Force), Chad Agustin (US Army), David Van Sleet (US Army), Kate Abney, and Dennis Turner.

Girls from the New Orleans Urban Youth Academy were named the honorary bat girls for the game.
The colors on October Saturdays in Auburn, Ala. are usually orange and blue supporting the Auburn Tigers, but on Saturday October 8 the Auburn Softball Complex went Pink! USA Softball of Alabama held its first “Think Pink” Invitational for Junior Olympic Girls. Teams competed in several age divisions with the winning team in each division receiving championship t-shirts. Pink t-shirts were also on sale for players and fans alike. The umpires got into the act as well supporting the cause with pink shirts of their own. By day’s end the Auburn complex was totally Pink. USA Softball of Alabama staffers Terry Vest and Tracy Morgan organized the event with the hopes of not only bringing Breast Cancer Awareness to all the young ladies competing and their families, but also with an opportunity to raise some funds for cancer patients in the USA Softball of Alabama family. The event was successful on both fronts and that pleased first year Alabama Commissioner Natalie Norman.

“I am so pleased and proud that USA Softball of Alabama was able to provide a quality and fun event for the girls as well as promote Breast Cancer Awareness,” Norman said. “Our USA Softball of Alabama family has been touched with not only Breast Cancer but other types of cancer and we are proud to be able to bring awareness and raise funds to fight this disease.”

With the success of this event USA Softball of Alabama will be looking to tie future invitational events with themes of other worthwhile charities.
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With a combined crowd of over 450 in attendance, USA Softball of Connecticut inducted its newest Hall of Fame members at its annual awards dinner. The Fast Pitch and Modified dinner was held on October 1, while the Slow Pitch was held October 2, both at Costa Azzurra in Milford. District Commissioner Carl Pignone served as host for both affairs. The Fast Pitch Wing inductees were Patti Fernandes, Kevin LaMay, Scott Lund, Scott Phelps, George Perlotto, Ludger Bedard, Rick Diniz and Bill Baer.

The Slow Pitch Wing honorees were John Cologgi, Barbara Iversen, Don Oskins and Barry Schueler. David T. Reno earned induction as an umpire. Tony Catapano was honored with the Bernie Iassogna Award for his contributions to the game of softball. To see a biography for each of the inducted members, visit: connecticutasa.com and click on Connecticut Hall of Fame. USA Softball of Connecticut was also proud to announce the opening of a State Hall of Fame facility at Erin’s Gym in Stratford.
Norm Fredrickson, a USA Softball umpire for 29 years, has never met a ballplayer he couldn’t tolerate.

“In all the years I’ve umpired,” the soft-spoken Fredrickson revealed while accepting the Spokane Softball Umpires Association’s (SSUA) prestigious Campbell-Stewart Award, “I’ve never ejected anyone.”

That’s quite a distinction for someone who has done exclusively slow pitch. There’s something else Fredrickson hasn’t done - that’s umpire in a USA Softball championship event. He’s politely declined, content doing local leagues and their tournaments, he’s said.

“I’ve just wanted to have fun and hope the players have fun,” he explained. Fredrickson was the 41st recipient of the award named for two former longtime USA Softball of Spokane Umpires-in-Chief, Bruce Campbell and Chuck Stewart. It recognizes an umpire for “longevity, dedication, excellence and service to softball umpiring in the Spokane area.”

Another veteran USA Softball umpire, Jim Wyer, who has been in sports officiating in Spokane for more than 40 years, received the Presidential Pride award from President Steve Quaid at the association’s annual banquet. Wyer, who has the endearing nickname “Turtle” for his diminutive size and gait around the field, revealed that health issues will force him to curtail a career that has also included baseball and basketball officiating.

“Know anybody who could use my stuff?” he asked before saying he’d donate his uniforms and equipment to SSUA’s rookie program.

Other awards went to: Craig Adams, Umpire of the Year - Adult; Marty Boles, Umpire of the Year - Youth; Joe Geach, Most Improved - Adult; Andy Dalziel, Most Improved - Youth; and Sean Harrington, Rookie of the Year. Stewart received the Home Run Award for his work behind the scenes. Steve Quaid was re-elected to a two-year term as president of the Spokane Softball Umpires Association. Other officers for 2017: Vice President Chuck DeBruin, Members-At-Large Gary Kuck, Carl Durr and Karen Nelli, Secretary Brian Hall, and Past President Ron Snyder.
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If your local association has news to share and would like to be featured in next month’s newsletter, email Katie Willis at kwillis@usasoftball.com by the 15th of this month.

USA Softball of Alabama held a Think Pink Tournament >>
Flip to Page 8 to read more!
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USA SOFTBALL OF GEORGIA SPONSORS CHARITY EVENT

USA Softball of Georgia sponsored a charity event for the Scottish Rite Children’s Hospital of Atlanta. They collected more than 200 stuffed animals from travel ball teams in Georgia and hand delivered them. The teams that contributed to this event were Georgia Academy Power, Georgia Impact, Georgia Firecrackers, Force Elite Champions, Georgia Classics, Georgia Hornets, and East Cobb Edge. The teams featured in the photos below are the Georgia Firecrackers and the Force Elite Champions.

WALKER CLARK BECOMES NEW USA SOFTBALL OF ARKANSAS COMMISSIONER

“My wife, Holly, and I are excited about this opportunity and want to thank the McGee family for all of their years of service to USA Softball,” Clark said.

With the desire to continue his work promoting USA Softball from Arkansas’ recreational leagues to the competitive travel teams, and increasing the participation of adult attendance, Clark begins his role as Commissioner with an array of USA Softball experience. Clark began umpiring at the age of 16 and continued his work on the field by coaching at the local community ballpark while he was in high school. After graduating, he started playing competitive Men’s Class B Slow Pitch and continued through 1996, where he switched roles to take over as District Commissioner of Districts 3 and 9 in Arkansas.

READ MORE HERE >>
USA Softball announced that 34 athletes have accepted invitations to attend the 2017 USA Softball Men’s National Team (MNT) Selection Camp to be held January 20-22, 2017 in San Diego, Calif. These athletes will vie for 17 spots on the 2017 USA Softball MNT roster that will compete at the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Men’s World Championship in Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada.

During the selection process, athletes will participate in position drills as well as simulated games and be evaluated by the USA Softball Men’s National Team Selection Committee (MNTSC). Currently ranked No. 6 in the WBSC softball world rankings, the MNT will compete in the WBSC Men’s World Championship in Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada, July 7-16, 2017. The Red, White and Blue will look to improve upon a ninth-place finish at the 2015 WBSC World Championship in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, where the team finished with a 7-3 record and placed first in the Playoff Rounds. The U.S. will be led by National Softball Hall of Fame coach Denny Bruckert (Gillespie, Ill.). The complete 2017 schedule for the MNT, including exhibition games, will be announced at a later date.

Click here to see the list of invited athletes for the 2017 USA Softball MNT Selection Camp >>

TEAM USA MOVES TO NO. 6 IN WBSC MEN’S SOFTBALL WORLD RANKINGS

Following a reformatting of the rankings methodology to weigh additional events, Team USA is now ranked No. 6 in the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Men’s Softball World Rankings. The USA Softball Junior Men's National Team (JMNT) who are coming off a fifth-place finish at the 2016 WBSC Junior Men’s World Championship accumulated 2,120 points.

Representing the Red, White and Blue at the most recent international competition was the JMNT who competed in Midland, Mich. at the 11th Junior Men’s World Championship alongside 11 other national teams from all five regions around the globe. The 2016 JMNT was composed of Kelly Fagan-Beam (Bakersfield, Calif.), Jonathan Broadbear (Bloomington, Ill.), Zane Chason (Alma, Ga.), Michael Douds (Erie, Pa.), Bryce DuCharme (Hudson, Wis.), Peyton Hall (Prairie du Chien, Wis.), Isaac Hormann (Young America, Minn.), Jeff Lewis (Amboy, Minn.), Derek Marin (Stevens, Pa.), Devin Martin (Stevens, Pa.), Matthew Martin (Myerstown, Pa.), Steven Nessler (Mankato, Minn.), Brady Parker (Midland, Tex.), Justin Perez (Northeast, Pa.), Brogan Potter (Prairie du Chien, Wis.), Chase Stratton (Clearfield, Utah), Martin Valencia (Perris, Calif.) in addition to alternates, Logan Amend (Vasser, Mich.), Sergio Balderrama (El Paso, Tex.), Craig Lewis (Winston, Mo.), Lane Kurtz (Ephrata, Pa.), and Taylor Weldin (Bakersfield, Calif.). The JMNT finished fifth after dropping a 6-2 decision to Canada, who later claimed the Bronze Medal and is ranked No. 4. As a team, the U.S. finished the JMWC with a .284 team batting average, 55 hits and 27 RBI, in addition to pitchers Zane Chason, Derek Martin and Jeff Lewis issuing a total of 57 strikeouts over the course of seven games played at Currie Stadium.

The WBSC Softball World Rankings reflect a 4-year cycle with points generated from recent competitions including the WBSC Men’s Softball World Championship (max 1,150 points), and Junior Men’s (U-19) Men’s Softball World Championship (max 920 points). The qualifiers for the softball world championships, multi-sport and continental games and championships, and all WBSC sanctioned events involving Softball National Teams will now be granted world points beginning this year.
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On October 21-23, the Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team (WWAST) traveled to Huntsville, Ala. to face a team of active-duty military and veterans from Redstone Arsenal and a team of local First Responders. WWAST Player, Sergeant Mike Brown is currently stationed at Redstone Arsenal and he participated in the games as well. The games were played at the Metro Kiwanis Sports Plex before a large crowd. After the games, the team was treated to a celebratory dinner with community leaders, event sponsors, and fans from the Huntsville/Madison/Redstone Arsenal Community at the Jackson Center.

In addition to our normal softball events, several WWAST Players and Board Members participated in the USA Softball Council Meeting in Shreveport, La. from November 12-18. While there, the WWAST representatives met with USA Softball Leadership and had a chance to speak to many influential people in the softball arena.

On December 1-4, the WWAST headed to the U.S. Virgin Islands for a first-ever event. This event was a homecoming event for WWAST Player, Ben Mitchell. A meet and greet with the Governor, Department of Tourism and several local Senators is scheduled at the Buccaneer Facility. During their visit, the WWAST scheduled a visit with local war veterans, played two exhibition games against the National Guard/First Responders and Virgin Islands Celebrities, and challenged local heavy hitters in a home run derby at the St. Croix, US VI D.C. Canegata Ballpark.

The WWAST would like to thank everyone - the event organizers, sponsors, and fans who made the events a great success.

Scheduling for the 2018 Season opens up on January 1, 2017. If your community is interested in hosting the WWAST for 2018 please contact our Executive Director, Dennis Wince at dennis@thewwast.org.

We are excited to kick-off our 2017 season with Spring Training at Tiger Town, home of the Detroit Tigers Spring Training, in Lakeland, Fla. January 26-29. The WWAST is always looking for new players. If you are or you know someone who is a veteran with an amputation who potentially wants to become part of our team please contact our Executive Director, Dennis Wince at dennis@thewwast.org. All travel, lodging and meals will be provided.
USA SOFTBALL KICKED OFF THE 2017 SEASON IN SHREVEPORT, LA. AT THE ANNUAL MEETING!
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