USA TAKES GOLD AT WBSC WOMEN’S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

After earning their right to play in the Gold Medal game of the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Women’s World Championship, the USA Softball Women’s National Team (WNT) hoisted the World Championship trophy in the air after defeating the two-time defending champions Japan 7-3. This marked the first time since 2010 that the U.S. has won the WBSC Women’s World Championship and marks the program’s 10th overall title.

“The team bought into what we’re trying to do,” said Head Coach Ken Eriksen (Tampa, Fla.). “We haven’t won a World Championship since Venezuela in 2010. To be able to do this after battling in 2012 with a brand new team, in 2014 with a brand new team and this time with a staff that has had a few World Championships under their belt speaks volumes. They earned the right to play in this game. I told them before the game ‘You earned the right, and that’s what our goal has been. Now that you earned the right, do something about it.’ I watched them play today, and you look at those 18 athletes and it’s a maturing moment. With this group, the Elite Team and the coaches we have in the program, it’s going to be an exciting future for USA Softball.”

The U.S. struck big in the top of the first inning, scoring four runs on a two-out rally. Jazmyn Jackson (San Jose, Calif.) led things off with a double to right field and a walk to Valerie Arioto (Pleasanton, Calif.) put two runners on base. Ali Aguilar (Orangevale, Calif.) then stepped up to the plate, singling with a hard ground ball up the middle to bring the speedy Jackson home from second. A batter later, Michelle Moultrie (Jacksonville, Fla.) stepped up big with a three-run shot over the right field fence to make it a 4-0 USA lead.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4
Hello and welcome to the July 2016 edition of the Inside Pitch, the official newsletter of ASA/USA Softball – soon to be USA Softball as of September 1st of this year!

To say this month has been filled with excitement would be an understatement. Amongst the many tournaments that our local associations have been putting on throughout the country, our USA Softball National Teams were well represented and showcased their skills at some top-notch world class events. The month of July started with the World Cup of Softball XI, which returned to Oklahoma City, and featured 12 nations from around the world competing at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex. Both our Women’s National and Elite Teams were present and fought hard up until the end – our Elite Team taking fourth and our National Team falling to Japan in the Gold Medal game, 4-3. The Men’s National Slow Pitch Team efforts were recognized as they walked away with the Border Battle trophy for the seventh time since 2009 after defeating Canada, 27-8. From there, our Women’s Elite Team traveled to the USA Softball Junior Olympic (JO) Cup in Marietta, Ga. and played against the JO All-Star squad. The JO Cup was a great opportunity to see some of the nation’s best who have aspirations to one day compete at the National Team level for the United States. I was proud to witness some great youth softball and I know members from our Women’s National Team Selection Committee and Women’s National Team coaching staff enjoyed the chance to watch some future National Team athletes at work. The greatness continued as our Women’s National Team headed to Surrey, B.C., Canada for the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) World Championship, where they earned their right to play in the Gold Medal game against you guessed it – Japan. This time, our Women’s National Team came out big in the first inning, scoring four runs on a two-out rally and eventually took the Gold in a 7-3 win over Japan. What an atmosphere it was to watch them compete, and then finish out the goal they have been working so hard for this entire summer. Along with our Women, our Junior Men, who for most were playing softball for the first time this summer, came out and gave it their all at the WBSC Junior Men’s Softball World Championship in Midland, Mich. Finishing in fifth-place out of 12 countries, it was a great experience for them and for all to witness the ever still popularity of Men’s Fast Pitch – both at Currie Stadium and online via the live streaming where hundreds from around the globe tuned in to watch. If you have yet to watch our National Teams compete, I encourage you to get out there and attend a game or World Championship to witness our game played at the international level.

In addition to the athletes that have worked hard to achieve success, our umpires have also earned the right to be recognized for the job they have done in officiating throughout this entire summer – from beginning youth events to internationally, I hope you in blue know how greatly we appreciate you! To those that have already finished and for the many still with Nationals to come, I extend my gratitude to you for the things you have done to further ASA/USA Softball’s reach at the local level and involving so many in our sport from a young age. From the ones I have visited or heard about, I am proud to say that ASA/USA Softball is continuing our legacy of offering solid and fair competition across the nation.

For those who were fortunate enough to attend the 18U GOLD and 16U GOLD National Championships, we saw some outstanding softball played after a season’s worth of preparation. A total of 34 teams competed at the 16U level, while 18U featured 53 teams who came to play at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex. From the fun and laughs that started the week to a week filled with softball, I hope each and every one that attended walked away with an experience to last a lifetime. Thank you all for a job well done in the work in effort you have put in in making this summer a success for your coaches, athletes, administrators and fans!

Warren Jones

ASA/USA Softball President
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Japan would respond in the bottom of the first with a run. After a leadoff walk from USA’s starting pitcher Ally Carda (Elk Grove, Calif.), a single from Eri Yamada brought home Natsuko Sugama to cut Team USA’s lead to 4-1.

After the U.S. was retired in order in the top of the second, Japan looked to score in the bottom of the frame. After a one out single put a runner on base, Jessica Moore (Sutter, Calif.) entered the circle for the U.S. and issued a strikeout for the second out of the inning.

A hit batter put two on for Japan, and a single from Sugama almost cut the U.S. lead in half, but a throw in from Haylie McCleney (Morris, Ala.) in center field threw out the runner at home to keep it a 4-1, U.S. lead.

Team USA would add three insurance runs in the top of the fourth inning. Delaney Spaulding (Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.) led off the at-bat with a single and advanced to second on a single from Aubree Munro (Brea, Calif.). This prompted a pitching change for Japan, as Yamata Fujita entered in relief for Yukari Hamamura. On a 2-0 pitch, McCleney blasted the ball for a three-run shot, giving the U.S. a 7-1 edge over Japan. Japan would respond in the bottom of the fourth off a solo shot by Yuka Ichiguchi.

Jaclyn Traina (Naples, Fla.) entered in relief in the bottom of the fifth and issued a popup to Spaulding at short before Misato Kawano picked up a solo home run. Traina was able to work out of a jam, keeping the U.S. up 7-3.

Both sides would be retired without crossing the plate through the top of the seventh, bringing Japan to their final at-bat. With Delanie Gourley (Lakeside, Calif.) in the circle for the U.S., a fly out to Jackson in right field, a groundout to Carda at first and a strikeout ended the game with the Red, White and Blue earning the 7-3 win.

Moore earned the win in the circle for the U.S., pitching two and two-third innings with one run, two strikeouts and four hits allowed. Carda finished the game with one strikeout, two runs and two hits in her two innings of work, while Traina issued one hit and one run in one inning. Gourley closed out the game with one strikeout and one hit in one and a third innings in relief. Hamamura suffered the loss for Japan, lasting just three and a third innings with seven runs and seven hits allowed.

“I’m so proud of this team,” said Arioto. “It was so exciting getting to that Championship Game, and everyone contributed in some way. Throughout the week, we’ve all played for each other. This team is a family. We sacrifice for each other and get things done. It was great to get the result we wanted, and all our hard work has paid off.”

With the win, the U.S. claims its 10th world championship, its first since 2010. As a team, the U.S. finished the 2016 WBSC Women’s World Championship with a .436 team batting average, 19 home runs, 80 RBI and outscored opponents 83-10. The pitching staff was lights out, allowing just eight earned runs for a 1.19 ERA.

Team USA will have some time off before returning to Japan for the Japan Cup, which will be held September 2-4 in Takasaki, Japan. Follow along with Team USA all year long at ASAUSASoftball.com.
JUNIOR MEN’S NATIONAL TEAM SNAPSHOTs
FROM WBSC WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Michael Douds

Brogan Potter

Pitcher Derek Martin, Catcher Devin Martin

Steven Nessler
“Chris Gall is living proof that while heroes don’t wear capes, they may wear a military uniform, a pacemaker, stripes and a whistle, or even a face mask and black padded clothing.”

Click here to read more in RiverScene Magazine’s Citizen Spotlight on Arizona ASA Umpire, Chris Gall >>

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- ARIZONA ASA UMPIRE CHRIS GALL

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@softball.org by the 15th of the month.
Let our team help you insure your teams!

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game Recap</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Game 1 Recap &gt;&gt;</td>
<td>Team USA falls 6-5 to Argentina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game 2 Recap &gt;&gt;</td>
<td>Team USA backed by Chason's 13 strike-outs en route to 14-0 win over Botswana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game 3 + 4 Recap &gt;&gt;</td>
<td>Team USA records two wins over Denmark and Czech Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game 5 Recap &gt;&gt;</td>
<td>Team USA defeats Australia 4-3 after late game RBI single by Broadbear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game 6 Recap &gt;&gt;</td>
<td>Team USA falls 5-2 after Japan's second-inning outburst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game 7 Recap &gt;&gt;</td>
<td>Team USA finishes fifth at WBSC JMWC after 6-2 loss to Canada</td>
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The Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team (WWAST) played in three events over the last month. On June 24-26 the WWAST travelled to Bismarck, N.D. for the Sam McQuade Sr./Budweiser Charity Softball Tournament. On June 24, the WWAST participated in an exhibition game doubleheader. In the first game the WWAST faced an All-Star First Responder Team and in game two played in a split squad game with All-Air Force Alumni. Hundreds of fans showed up for this event and it was a great time. From June 25-26, the WWAST played in the tournament, making a run for the championship but falling short in an extra-inning thriller. On July 1-3 the WWAST headed to Sherwood, Ark. for the 37th Annual Busch Classic. On July 1, the WWAST played in an exhibition game and then participated in the tournament on Saturday and Sunday. The bats really never clicked for this tournament, but everyone had a great time. While there, Snell Prosthetics helped out the players for the weekend. Back in the 1930’s they sponsored a baseball team made up of all amputees.

On July 15-17 the WWAST ventured to Elmira, N.Y. to Dunn Field, the Home of the Elmira Pioneers. On Friday July 15, the team attended a concert honoring the WWAST. On Saturday night the team played in an exhibition game against the Elmira Pioneers. The game was followed by postgame fireworks.
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Edward Robert Sharp was born on September 13, 1930, in Atchison, Kans. to Edward and Velma (Cohoon) Sharp. He received his education in Atchison, Kans. and after high school he had a full ride scholarship to Washburn University for football and track. After college Ed served his country honorably in the United States Navy from March 1949 until 1952 and then he was recruited for the track team to throw the Javelin on the Atchison, Kans. police force for 2 years. On November 29, 1952, Ed was united in marriage to Betty Parsley in Atchison, Kans.; he later married Sally (Zimmerman) Rowley on November 23, 1981. He worked for Swift and Company from 1955, to 1966, and then transferred to Marshalltown. He retired from Swift and Company in 1992, and then worked for the City of Marshalltown from 1992, until 2014. He had umpired for 36 years for the Amateur Softball Association, was Deputy Umpire in Chief for Iowa ASA from 1980 to 1985 and Umpire Chief for Iowa ASA from 1985 to 2006, and was well known in Central Iowa for refereeing and umpiring football, basketball, baseball, and softball. He also played fast pitch softball for Swift and Company and the Marshalltown Traveling Team. He received the Elite Umpire status with the Amateur Softball Association of American in 2003, was inducted into the Iowa Amateur Softball Association Men’s Fast Pitch Hall of Fame in 2004, was inducted into the Iowa Amateur Softball Association Men’s 16” Hall of Fame in 1986, was a Charter Member of the Amateur Softball Association Indicator Fraternity in 1986, and became a member of the Amateur Softball Association Medals program in 2000.

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IN CASE YOU MISSED IT!

RETURN OF SOFTBALL AT TOKYO 2020 GAMES SUPPORTED BY IOC EXECUTIVE BOARD

The World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) and the Amateur Softball Association (ASA)/USA Softball welcomed an announcement by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Executive Board to support the inclusion of softball and baseball among a new sports package for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

“What great news to receive for the international softball and baseball communities,” said ASA/USA Softball Executive Director Craig Cress. “To receive support from the IOC Executive Board for softball and baseball’s return to the Tokyo 2020 Games is an honor and a great endorsement for us to receive.

READ MORE HERE >>

ASA/USA SOFTBALL TEAMED UP WITH MLB AND USA BASEBALL TO OFFER PLAY BALL PARK DURING ALL-STAR GAME WEEK

The Amateur Softball Association (ASA)/USA softball teamed up with MLB, USA Baseball, The Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation, The Positive Coaching Alliance, Boys & Girls Club of America, and other PLAY BALL partners to participate in PLAY BALL Park. Located in front of the Hilton San Diego Bayfront, PLAY BALL Park was an 80,000-square-foot outdoor space for various programming partners to provide fun, engaging and educational activities for youth baseball and softball players and their families -- all in the backdrop of the Midsummer Classic. PLAY BALL Park, which is generously supported by Chevrolet and Scotts, was open July 7-12 and admission was free of charge for all participants.

Volunteers from ASA/USA Softball were on site offering a variety of activities for participants to enjoy including “Around the World Softball”, instructional infield and hitting drills in addition to a competition component, where participants will learn the value of team work all while executing bunts, squeeze plays, hit and runs and much more.

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Dave Dickmeyer fielded a sharp ground ball and flipped it to Mike Larsen, who fired to first for a game-ending double play.

Moments later, players from each team lined up to shake hands, share a few laughs and forget what the luminescent orange numbers on the left field scoreboard displayed.

The scene that breezy June evening was a microcosm of Sioux Falls’ Men’s 50-and-over Slow Pitch softball league.

“The competition is still there, but the score doesn’t mean anything,” said Jack Kolbeck, who organized the league. “It’s just to come out and have fun.”

The league keeps scores and crowns a champion at the end of the season, but many players said wins aren’t what matter to them.

“I don’t think we’ve won a game yet,” said 71-year-old Paul Miersma. “But we are having fun.”

Kolbeck, 64, started the league in 2014. Kolbeck had learned that January that the Harmodon Park softball diamonds had a summer availability, so he began gauging the community’s interest in a 50-and-over men’s league.

Seven teams had signed up within six weeks. Shortly after, an eighth team joined. Now at 10 teams, Kolbeck said nearly 150 players have signed up ranging from age 50 to 72.

When Kolbeck and the other original seven managers drafted the league rules, they created two unique rules to increase safety.

First, they installed a second home plate to the right of the real plate for people to run to when trying to score. The rule has eliminated home plate collisions and also removed the need to slide.

Second, the managers decided to place a large net between pitcher and batter. The screen removes any chance of a pitcher being hit with a line drive.

“Several players said they only agreed to play in the league because of the safety precautions in place,” said Kolbeck. “Other leagues are beginning to use nets because they’ve been so well received.”

Eugene Bult said the relaxed atmosphere attracted him to the 50-and-over league. He plays in city and church leagues, which sometimes can lack sportsmanship.

“Here, it’s just for the love of the game,” said Bult. “That’s the way it should be.”

“There are no tantrums, no one cussing, no one throwing bats,” Larsen said.

The 50-and-over league plays Thursday nights from the first week of June to the first week of August with a short, bracket-style playoff held on the final week.

But with the energy and passion the players have, fans might not realize they’re watching a 50-and-over league.

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JO Cup All-Stars vs. USA Softball Women’s Elite Team

On Tuesday night of the USA Softball Junior Olympic (JO) Cup, fans were able to enjoy a feature game between the JO Cup All-Stars and the USA Softball Elite Team. The inaugural event gave teams a chance to sit back, relax and enjoy a night of USA Softball. Members of the JO Cup All-Star team came from teams that are participating in this year’s JO Cup.

“This was such an honor” said Maddie Spinks, JO Cup All-Star member. “It was fun meeting different girls from teams and clubs, and getting to know where they are going to college.”

The exhibition game also served as the last time the USA Softball Women’s Elite Team squad competed together this season. The Elite team placed fourth and finished with a 4-2 record at the World Cup of Softball XI, which took place July 5-10.

“This was a great experience for the JO Cup players to see the level of play that they are working towards,” Women’s Elite Team Head Coach Tairia Flowers said. “Our team this season came out and competed. For them to have confidence, get in the box and swing it the way they have been, I’m truly impressed.”
For the seventh-time since the inaugural Border Battle in 2009, the USA Softball Slow Pitch National Team held up the Border Battle trophy as the team glided to a 27-8 (five innings) win over Canada. Led by Dale Brungardt (Vancouver, Wash.), who went 3-for-3 with two home runs and five RBI, the U.S. plated runs in each inning en route to the win.

“There’s no greater feeling,” said Team USA veteran Brett Helmer (Cicero, N.Y.) on winning the Border Battle matchup.

It was a close ball game through the first inning of play as Canada scored four runs and Team USA responded with five in the bottom of the frame. The U.S. defense put in work in the top of the second after a leadoff single by Canada. After a fly ball out to left field, a 6-4-3 double play ended the top of the second with no damage done. The U.S. offense came alive in the bottom of the second, scoring 14 runs to extend their lead to 19-4. Highlighting the rally were four home runs, two singles, a double and a bases-loaded walk.

Canada pushed across three runs in the top of the third to make it a 19-7 ball game but Team USA's offense could not be stopped as they tacked on another seven runs. Thanks in large to two home runs, two singles, a double and a triple, the U.S. headed to the fourth inning with a 26-7 lead.

Canada hit a solo home run in the top of the fourth and the U.S. would respond with a solo shot by Brungardt in the bottom of the fourth. Leading 27-8 in the top of the fifth, Team USA turned a double play for the first two outs of the inning and a fly out to right field gave the U.S. the 27-8, run-rule victory.
It was a typical USA vs Japan ballgame, as one run proved to be the difference in the Gold Medal finale at the World Cup of Softball XI as Team USA fell 2-1 to Japan.

“You take a look at what we did, and what the USA Elite did, and you can see the future is bright for USA Softball,” said Head Coach Ken Eriksen (Tampa, Fla.). “I was very proud of the fact that we had young kids step up this week, we didn’t panic and sometimes the difference between a Gold and Silver is a fingernail. I think when you take a look up and down our lineup, everybody can hit it well. We’ve got rookie pitchers out here that are moving in the right direction. I can’t wait for us to get to the Worlds and get started.”

Team USA struck first in the top of the first inning as Haylie McCleney (Morris, Ala.) reached on an error. On a 1-1 count, Kelsey Stewart (Wichita, Kan.) lined up on the ball for a standup double to allow McCleney to cross the plate. Japan responded in the bottom of the frame after a leadoff walk to Yu Yamamoto. USA’s starter Jaclyn Traina (Naples, Fla.) retired the next two with a pair of popups. Back-to-back singles brought Yamamoto home before a grounder to Kasey Cooper (Dothan, Ala.) at third ended the at-bat.

Both Team USA’s and Japan’s pitching staff’s kept the offenses off the base paths through the bottom of the third when Yamamoto reached on a fielding error. Retiring the next batter with a ground out, USA opted for a pitching change as Delanie Gourley (Lakeside, Calif.) entered the circle. After a walk put two runners on, McCleney made a beautiful diving catch in center field to pick off the runner at second for a double play.

The bats were silent for both sides until the bottom of the fifth when Japan plated a run after two singles and a hit batter loaded the bases. After McCleney made another diving catch in center, Hitomi Kawabata tagged up and scored to give Japan the 2-1 lead. After a hit batter loaded the bases, Ally Carda (Elk Grove, Calif.) entered the circle and issued a strikeout to end the rally.

The game stayed in a 2-1, Japan favor through the top of the seventh. Down to their final at-bat, Team USA looked to get a rally going as Valerie Arioto (Pleasanton, Calif.) singled with one out. The bases would become loaded with one out after Cooper was hit by a pitch and Delaney Spaulding (Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.) walked. The U.S. rally was halted, however, with a popup and a strikeout to give Japan the 2-1 win.

With the loss, Team USA finished the World Cup of Softball XI with the silver, compiling a 6-1 record. Spaulding led the U.S. offense, finishing the World Cup of Softball with a .529 (9-for-7) with three home runs, nine RBI and eight runs scored. Jessica Moore (Sutter, Calif.) led the U.S. pitching staff with a .636 ERA and 15 strikeouts in 11 innings in the circle.

“In the last couple of weeks that we’ve been together we’ve continued to grow upwards,” said Arioto. “We’ve gotten a lot of information on what we need to do the next time we face Japan, so even for the World Championships we’re that much more connected as a unit. It was a tough loss, but we’ll be better for it in the long run. I’m looking forward to the next few weeks with this time and to see what we can do.”
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