USA SOFTBALL JO CUP HEADS WEST TO CALIFORNIA AS 64 TEAMS REPRESENT 16U AND 18U DIVISIONS

USA Softball has announced the full lineup of competing teams for the 2017 USA Softball Junior Olympic (JO) Cup. Set to take place in Southern California from July 23-29, a total of 64 teams representing the 16-Under and 18-Under divisions of USA Softball will travel to the West Coast to compete. Each age group will be represented by 32 of the top teams in their respective divisions of play, with teams battling for the coveted title of USA Softball JO Cup champions.

“The EC Bullets 18U Gold team always looks forward to the national competition provided at the USA Softball JO Cup each summer,” said East Cobb Bullets 18U Gold Team Manager, Greg Schnute. “We were fortunate to have won the 2016 championship after finishing second in the inaugural event in 2015. The opportunity for our young ladies to play against the best teams in the country, and to do so in front of the USA coaching staff is a thrill for all of us! We look forward again to the competition this summer in California!”

Click here to view the 2017 USA Softball Junior Olympic preview, including a list of teams participating and additional tournament information.

For the 2017 tournament schedule, the 18-under division will be played at the Big League Dreams facility in Perris, Calif., while the 16-under division will split their time with pool play at the Lake Elsinore Softball Complex and bracket play at the Big League Dreams facility.

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 6
Hello and welcome to the April 2017 edition of the Inside Pitch, the official newsletter of USA Softball. I hope you enjoy the news and find the information inside the newsletter helpful and inspiring as you continue to plan and organize tournaments and events in your state or local area.

The USA Softball Board of Directors held its Spring Meeting during April. A number of things were discussed and took place during the meeting so please check the portal for the minutes of this meeting as they become available. Should you have any questions or simply wish to have more information on any items that are contained in the minutes, please contact your Regional Vice President. They are your representatives on the Board of Directors, and each was present at the Board Meeting. You should be proud of the many hours and hard work that each member of the Board of Directors devotes to their duty of representing you.

A number of our National Teams will be competing this summer from June through August. Let's get out and support our National Teams as they represent us and the USA at world events such as the World Cup of Softball XII, the Pan American Championships in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, the Men's World Championship in Whitehorse, Canada, the Junior Women's World Championship in Clearwater, Fla., the Border Battle in Oklahoma City, Okla. as well as tour stops which could be scheduled near you. These world class athletes deserve our support, plus it is a lot of fun to watch them play our game. Please visit our website at www.usasoftball.com for complete schedules of our national teams.

Lastly, our sponsors, both locally as well as nationally, are very important to our success. Let's show our gratitude for their support by displaying and using their products whenever possible.

Great job and best of luck to all of you as you continue to plan and organize another great season of softball!

USA Softball President
Longtime USA Softball of Georgia Umpire, W. Lee Gray, is known simply as Lee to friends and cohorts, and is richly deserving of recognition as the April 2017 USA Softball Umpire of the Month.

A Gold member of the USA Softball Umpire Medals Program as well as a member of the National Indicator Fraternity, Lee attained his USA Softball Elite Umpire status in Slow Pitch in 2008 and has made the most of every opportunity since. Active in both the Slow and Fast Pitch game, Lee has gained distinction by umpiring both the 18 GOLD (2010) and multiple Armed Forces Slow Pitch Tournaments. Most recently, Lee traveled to Oklahoma City to umpire both the USA Softball Men’s Supers Slow Pitch and USA Softball Championship Series Tournaments in 2015. Lee also successfully completed his certification by the WBSC-SD (formerly ISF) in November of 2015 while officiating the WBSC Coed World Cup in Plant City, Fla.

**CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL STORY >>**
USA SOFTBALL MOBILE APP

- All the latest in breaking news, results, announcements, and stories
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- Find photo galleries and athlete profiles for members of USA Softball national teams
- Discover the membership benefits of playing USA Softball and learn how to register
- Locate a USA Softball event near you
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- Links to social media accounts
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For more information and to download the app, please visit usasoftball.com
USA Softball has announced the selection of over 160 umpires who will get the chance to call at a 2017 USA Softball National Championship and the 2017 USA Softball Junior Olympic (JO) Cup. These umpires were nominated through their respective USA Softball Regional Umpire-in-Chief (UIC) based on their performance and history as a USA Softball umpire within their Local Associations and evaluations at previous USA Softball assignments. These at-large assignments are for the following National Championships: Men’s Major Fast Pitch, Men’s Super Slow Pitch, Men’s Class A, Class B and Class C Slow Pitch, Men’s Class D Slow Pitch Championship Series, Women’s Open Slow Pitch and the Men’s and Women’s Armed Forces Championship.

“Congratulations to those umpires selected to a 2017 USA Softball National Championship and the JO Cup,” said USA Softball Director of Umpires Kevin Ryan. “Teams know that when they play at USA Softball events that they will be playing with the most knowledgeable and trained umpires. USA Softball umpires take great pride in their knowledge of the rules and mechanics, and to receive an assignment at a USA Softball National Championship is a true testament to their skills and dedication to the USA Softball program.”

Each year, over 80,000 teams, 1.3 million players and 300,000 coaches participate in USA Softball Championship Play with the culmination of the season occurring the last two weeks of July through the first week of October. Kicking off the 2017 USA Softball Junior Olympic (JO) Championship season is the 16-Under and 18-Under GOLD National Championships, which will be held July 17-22 in Clearwater, Fla. Closing out the 2017 National Championship season is the USA Softball Slow Pitch Championship Series September 28-October 1 at the Softball Capital of the World® in Oklahoma City.

To find out how you can become a USA Softball umpire, please visit USASoftball.com.

CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE LIST OF UMPIRE SELECTED >>
JO CUP HEADS WEST TO CALIFORNIA; 64 TEAMS TO COMPETE

...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Kicking off the tournament will be a coaches meeting, including check-in and bat testing, on July 23. Pool play is set to take place July 24-25, before teams move onto bracket play July 26-29. New this year, each age group will have two 16-team double elimination brackets, where the winners will play a one game championship game for the title of JO Cup Champions. FloSoftball will once again serve as the source for live-streaming for the USA Softball JO Cup, and viewing and live stat links will be available on USASoftball.com.

In 2016, the Atlanta Vipers captured the inaugural 16-under championship with a 7-0 win over Victory USA, while a late-inning rally helped the East Cobb Bullets – Schnute nab a 6-2 win over the Gold Coast Hurricanes for the 18-under title. Links for live stats and streaming for the 2016 USA Softball JO Cup can be found on the event page at USASoftball.com.

The USA Softball JO Cup serves as a National Team identification opportunity for athletes wishing to compete in front of members of the Women’s National Team Selection Committee (WNTSC).
Thirty athletes selected to Slow Pitch National Team and Futures Team

USA Softball has announced the 2017 rosters for both the USA Softball Men’s Slow Pitch National Team and USA Softball Slow Pitch Futures Team. With a roster of 11 National Team veterans and five rookies, the Men’s Slow Pitch National Team will look to defend their Border Battle title, while 10 Futures Team veterans and four rookies comprise the USA Softball Slow Pitch Futures Team. Both teams will take part in a series of exhibition games at the USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex – OGE Energy Field – INTEGRIS Field in Oklahoma City and the Slow Pitch Showdown.

“There is no bigger honor than being able to represent the greatest country in the world in the sport that he or she loves to play,” said first time Team USA member Jason Branch (Brooksville, Fla./Swings: Worth). “Any diehard softball player like myself knows that being on Team USA means you are part of the best of the best. I look forward to representing this great team.”

Click here to see the 2017 USA Softball Men’s Slow Pitch National Team Roster

Highlighting this year’s Slow Pitch National Team are first-time National Team members Bubba Mack (Milton, Fla./Swings: Easton), Kyle Pearson (Stonewall, La./Swings: Miken), Andy Vitcak (Oakdale, Minn./Swings: Louisville Slugger) and Jeremy Yates (Lake City, Fla./Swings: Louisville Slugger), who each have previous international experience as a member of the Futures National Team. Also returning to the roster is nine-time Men’s Slow Pitch National Team member Brian Wegman (Hamilton, Ohio), who has been named to the Slow Pitch National Team since the inaugural roster in 2009. Joining the National Team for the first time as a member of Team USA is Branch.

The team will be coached by Steve Shortland (Converse, Texas), who is making his ninth-consecutive appearance as the Head Coach of Team USA.

“I’m extremely honored to once again be part of this event,” said Shortland. “I’ve had the great privilege to coach Team USA since the inception of the Border Battle in 2009 and I can’t thank USA Softball and our partners enough for their confidence in me to lead. As I tell our players each year, representing our country on the field of play is an enormous responsibility and representation is just as important as winning. Each group fully embraces it and appreciates the opportunity and I have no doubt our 2017 roster will as well. We’re loaded with tremendous talent and we have a great mix of veterans and new faces. I’m excited and eager to put this team on the field and watch them compete.

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 9
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THIRTY ATHLETES SELECTED TO SLOW PITCH NATIONAL TEAM AND FUTURES TEAM

...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Created in conjunction with the inaugural Border Battle slow pitch competition against Canada in 2009, the Men’s Slow Pitch National Team program is now in its ninth season. Last year, Team USA captured their seventh Border Battle title with a 27-8 win over Canada. The Americans won the inaugural Border Battle 30-23 but Canada evened the series in 2010 with a 30-29 win. The USA men have captured the past six-consecutive Border Battle titles: a dominating 25-3 performance in 2011, a 32-21 victory in 2012, a 25-10 win in 2013, an 18-9 win over Canada in 2014 and a 22-7 win over Canada in 2015 in addition to the 2016 win.

Click here to see the 2017 USA Softball Men’s Slow Pitch Futures National Team Roster

Highlighting this year’s Slow Pitch Futures Team are four-time Futures Team members Faron Miller (Goshen, Ind./Swings: DeMarini) and Mike Umscheid (Kenosha, Wis./Swings: Easton), while Jeff Flood (Sandy, Ore./Swings: DeMarini) and Ryan Harvey (Clearwater, Fla./Swings: Worth) are three-time members of the Futures Team. Four athletes also join the roster for the first time as a member of Team USA.

“I am excited about coming back to play for the Futures Team again,” said two-time Futures member Shannon Smith (Norman, Okla./Swings: Miken). “There’s a lot of great players associated with this event, both past and present. It’s an incredible honor to be recognized alongside them.”

The team will be coached by Rob Humphrey (Burlington, Iowa), who is making his fourth-consecutive appearance on the coaching staff of Team USA.

In addition to participating in Border Battle IX, the Slow Pitch National Team will take on the Futures Team in the Slow Pitch Showdown, while both teams will also compete against Canada and local slow pitch teams in a series of exhibition games June 30-July 2. Both squads will join the inaugural Women’s Slow Pitch National Team, who will also be competing against Canada’s Women’s Slow Pitch National Team in the Women’s Border Battle. A complete schedule for the Slow Pitch National Teams and Border Battle IX will be released at a later date.

Tickets are now on sale for Border Battle IX and can be purchased by phone at 800-654-8337 or online at USASoftball.com. Fans can follow along with the USA Softball National Team Program all season long at USASoftball.com.
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USA Softball announced the complete coaching staff for the USA Softball Junior Men’s National Team (JMNT), who will spearhead five select exposure camp opportunities for athletes who wish to be a member of the 2018 USA Softball JMNT. Selected from the USA Softball Men’s National Team (MNT) Coaching Pool, the coaches selected will join Head Coach Tyron McKinney (Ashland, Ohio) as the team builds towards to the 2018 World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Junior Men’s World Championship.

On the coaching staff are Tony Aresco (Stoneham, Mass.), Mike Armitage (Normal, Ill.) and Bob Piddock (Castro Valley, Calif.). Aresco, who was a member of the 1998 USA Softball MNT athlete pool, has over 30 years of experience coaching men’s fast pitch and has led his teams to four USA Softball National Championship titles. Armitage played for over 18 years at the highest level of men’s fast pitch, earning First Team All-American honors as a player in USA Softball National Championship play before transitioning into a coaching role at the conclusion of his playing career. Piddock has coached fast pitch softball in a variety of capacities for the last 25 years, where he has led teams to eight USA Softball National Championships.

In addition to the complete coaching staff, USA Softball also announced five exposure events for the 2018 JMNT that will provide athletes the opportunity to showcase their skills in front of members of the JMNT coaching staff. The five exposure events are open to any male U.S. citizen born in 1999, 2000, 2001 or 2002 who can commit to future team events. There is a $15, non-refundable registration fee for athletes who are not registered through their respective USA Softball association. Participants are responsible for their own equipment and expenses to the tryouts, and applications must be submitted one week prior to the start date of each event. With events spread throughout the United States, athletes will participate in a series of softball-related skills for each position, hitting and bunting.

“I would like to congratulate Mike, Bob and Tony on being named to the coaching staff for the Junior Men’s National Team Program,” said McKinney. “They are a valuable key to the program’s success. I am looking forward to getting the ball rolling with these exposure camps and preparing our 2018 athletes for the Gold!”

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE LIST OF EXPOSURE EVENTS >>]
Five members of the Red, White and Blue will have the opportunity to compete as a professional athlete this summer after being selected in the 2017 National Pro Fastpitch (NPF) draft. USA Softball Women’s National Team members Ali Aguilar (Orangevale, Calif.), Hannah Flippen (Bonita, Calif.), Delanie Gourley (Lakeside, Calif.) and Morgan Zerkle (Milton, W.Va.) were each drafted by the Scrap Yard Dawgs while Danielle O’Toole (Upland, Calif.) was drafted by the Chicago Bandits. Gourley was later traded to the Texas Charge.

“We are excited for the athletes on Team USA and want to extend our congratulations to all the athletes who were drafted last night to continue their softball careers,” said USA Softball Director of National Teams Chris Sebren. “The NPF provides an opportunity to continue to play at the highest level of women’s fast pitch softball. We look forward to a competitive and exciting 2017 NPF season.”

Aguilar, who was selected 13th overall, has had a standout senior season at Washington where she has compiled a .373 batting average with nine home runs, 30 RBI and currently leads the team with a .695 slugging percentage. Aguilar, who was a member of the 2016 U.S. roster that earned the Gold Medal at the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Women’s World Championship, has been named First Team All-Pac-12 Conference twice in her career as a Husky and was named Second Team All-American in 2016.

First-time Women’s National Team athlete Flippen, who was the No.17 overall pick in the draft, was also selected by the Scrap Yard Dawgs. The reigning Pac-12 Conference Player of the Year, Flippen leads the conference with a .445 batting average and a .525 on-base percentage. In her career at Utah, Flippen has twice been named First Team All-Pac 12 Conference and was a First Team All-American in 2016. A member of the 2016 USA Softball Women’s Elite Team, Flippen hit .500 at the World Cup of Softball XI in her international debut, collecting four RBI with two home runs and four runs scored.

Joining Aguilar and Flippen with the Scrap Yard Dawgs is Marshall’s Zerkle, who will also be a first-time Women’s National Team member this summer. Zerkle, who was drafted 26th overall, has been named First Team All-Conference USA twice in her career with the Thundering Herd and leads the team with a .476 batting average. In her senior season, Zerkle has collected 59 hits and 35 RBI and became Marshall’s all-time leader in stolen bases this season. A member of the 2016 USA Softball Women’s Elite Team, Zerkle hit .667 at the World Cup of Softball XI, scoring five runs while picking up three RBI in her first international contest.

…CONTINUED ON PAGE 16
### Week Eight

**With 2017 Record**

1. Oregon (33-0)  
2. Florida State (35-1-1)  
3. Arizona (37-1)  
4. Florida (33-2)  
5. Texas A&M (31-3)  
6. Auburn (31-5)  
7. Minnesota (30-3)  
8. LSU (31-7)  
9. Oklahoma (31-7)  
10. Washington (27-8)  
11. Alabama (32-6)  
12. UCLA (26-9)  
13. James Madison (30-5)  
14. Baylor (32-6)  
15. Utah (24-7)  
16. Michigan (26-7-1)  
17. Tennessee (31-5)  
18. Georgia (27-10)  
19. Louisiana (26-5)  
20. Kentucky (24-8)  
T21. California (21-11)  
T21. Ohio State (22-7)  
23. BYU (23-10)  
24. Arizona State (23-12)  
25. Missouri (20-14)  

**RV:** Ole Miss, Oklahoma State, Arkansas, North Carolina, Tulsa, Illinois, USC Upstate, Wisconsin, Cal Poly, and Mississippi State.

### Week Nine

**With 2017 Record**

1. Arizona (40-1)  
2. Florida State (38-1-1)  
3. Florida (36-2)  
4. Oregon (36-2)  
5. Texas A&M (35-3)  
6. Minnesota (35-3)  
7. Auburn (33-6)  
8. Oklahoma (35-7)  
9. UCLA (28-10)  
10. Alabama (35-7)  
11. LSU (32-9)  
12. Baylor (35-6)  
13. Washington (29-9)  
14. Tennessee (35-5)  
15. James Madison (34-6)  
16. Utah (26-7)  
17. Michigan (28-8-1)  
18. Louisiana (29-5)  
19. Georgia (27-13)  
20. BYU (27-10)  
21. Ohio State (23-9)  
22. Kentucky (24-11)  
23. California (22-13)  
24. Arizona State (23-12)  
25. Ole Miss (26-13)  

**RV:** Arkansas, Illinois, Missouri, North Carolina, USC Upstate, Cal Poly, Marshall, Texas State, Tulsa, and Mississippi State.

### Week Ten

**With 2017 Record**

1. Florida (40-3)  
2. Arizona (41-3)  
3. Florida State (39-3-1)  
4. Texas A&M (37-4)  
5. Minnesota (38-3)  
6. Oregon (37-4)  
7. Auburn (36-7)  
8. Oklahoma (38-7)  
9. Tennessee (39-5)  
10. Washington (31-10)  
11. Utah (28-8)  
12. Alabama (36-9)  
13. Baylor (35-7)  
14. UCLA (29-12)  
15. James Madison (37-6)  
16. LSU (32-12)  
17. Michigan (31-9-1)  
18. Louisiana (32-6)  
19. BYU (31-10)  
20. Ole Miss (30-13)  
21. Kentucky (26-13)  
22. California (25-13)  
23. Georgia (29-15)  
24. Arizona State (26-12)  
25. Ohio State (26-11)  

**RV:** Illinois, Arkansas, Missouri, North Carolina, Texas State, USC Upstate, Mississippi State, NC State, Tulsa, South Carolina, and Marshall.
CONTINUED: 2017 COLLEGE CORNER
USA SOFTBALL PLAYER OF THE WEEK RECIPIENTS

WEEK ELEVEN
WITH 2017 RECORD

1. Florida (44-3)
2. Arizona (45-4)
3. Florida State (43-3-1)
4. Texas A&M (40-5)
5. Minnesota (43-3)
6. Oregon (38-6)
7. Oklahoma (41-8)
8. Tennessee (41-6)
9. Washington (34-10)
10. Auburn (39-8)
11. Utah (30-9)
12. UCLA (33-12)
13. Baylor (36-9)
15. James Madison (39-6)
16. Louisiana (36-6)
17. Michigan (34-10-1)
18. LSU (34-14)
19. Kentucky (30-13)
20. BYU (32-10)
21. Ole Miss (31-16)
22. Illinois (34-11)
23. Arizona State (27-14)
24. California (26-16)
25. Georgia (30-18)

RV: Tulsa, Mississippi State, Arkansas, Ohio State, Marshall, South Carolina, North Carolina, Texas State, USC Upstate, and Oklahoma State.

USA SOFTBALL COLLEGIATE NATIONAL PLAYER OF THE WEEK HONOREES

Week 8 - Kaylan Jablonski
Week 9 - Rachel Garcia
Co-Week 10 - Kelly Barnhill
Co-Week 10 - Carolina Seitz
Week 11 - DJ Sanders
Week 12 - Sara Hingsberger

TO VIEW THE 2017 USA SOFTBALL COLLEGE CORNER, CLICK HERE >>
...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

Gourley was drafted 12th overall by the Scrap Yard Dawgs before being traded to the Texas Charge. A 2016 First Team All-American, Gourley also has a 2016 First Team All-SEC selection in her career at Florida and earned an NCAA National Championship in 2014. A Gold Medalist at the 2016 WBSC Women’s World Championship, Gourley has compiled a 0.94 ERA in her senior season, issuing 160 strikeouts in 111 and one-third innings pitched.

First-time Team USA member O’Toole was selected eighth overall by the Chicago Bandits. The senior southpaw is 24-3 in 2017 and leads the Pac-12 Conference with a 0.93 ERA in 172 and one-third innings pitched. A First Team All-Pac 12 performer in 2016, O’Toole spent her first two seasons at San Diego State where she was a two-time All-Mountain West honoree.

Aguilar, Flippen, Gourley and Zerkle are all 2017 Senior CLASS Award Finalists, an award that focuses on the total student-athlete and encourages students to use their athletic platforms to make a positive impact as leaders in their communities. Flippen, Gourley, O’Toole and Zerkle are also Finalists for the 2017 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year, which is considered the most prestigious honor in Division I women’s college softball. The USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year award recognizes outstanding athletic achievement by Division I female student-athletes and is entering its 16th year.

For more information on the USA Softball National Team Program, please visit www.USASoftball.com.
USA Softball of Colorado held its 33rd Annual Awards Banquet on Friday, March 31 at West View Center in Westminster, Co. Along with dinner and an opening presentation by Commissioner Nik Mead, USA Softball Managing Director of Communications Codi Warren was the keynote speaker. The event highlighted and recognized Junior Olympic scholarship recipients, as well as those that received service and lifetime achievement honors. The USA Softball of Colorado (USAC) Junior Olympic Scholarship Fund was established to award scholarships to Junior Olympic male and female athletes, who are members of the USAC and desire to further their education. The scholarship recipients were Kailyn McVay, Hannah Langer, Jessica Elliott and Mara Simon, while Pete Sprinkle and Dick Hormann were awarded the lifetime achievement and 20-year service awards, respectively.

Meeting in conjunction with the winter meeting of USA Softball of North Dakota, the Hall of Fame Selection Committee selected five veterans of the game to the state Hall of Fame. The new members cover the entire spectrum of the game from sponsoring to managing and of course, players. This year’s class includes Leland “Lee” Ekren of Rugby who played, managed and has sponsored teams for over 30 years and George Harrington of Lincoln who enjoyed a long playing career and has also sponsored teams ranging from AA classification through Class E. The committee also recognized the 20-year commitment to the McQuade Charity tournament by longtime director of the tournament, Marlow Lindblom, and Jay Vagts, who played for 23 years with some of the best teams to come out of North Dakota, including Chuck’s Off Sale. Lastly, recognized for his 40-year career and one of the best power hitters in Slow Pitch, Alvin “Gooch” Weigel.
USA Softball of Connecticut held an Official Opening of their new Hall of Fame display at Erin’s Gym in Stratford, Connecticut on March 25. Over 100 persons, including several Hall of Fame members, attended the event. The association started honoring Hall of Famers in 1971 and has inducted 461 players, sponsors, umpires and other friends of USA Softball of Connecticut into the Hall of Fame. After requests to have a physical Hall of Fame for many years, it has now become a reality.

It is truly fitting that the USA Softball Connecticut Hall of Fame be located in Stratford, CT. Stratford has been one of the centers for USA Softball not just for Connecticut, but also for our country with many Championship teams and tournaments. Stratford reportedly had five USA Softball National Champions in the same year including the Raybestos Cardinals and Brakettes in fast pitch and Sikorsky, Avco and a church team in slow pitch.

The display includes the names, home towns and year of induction of all 461 past inductees. Logos on the display include USA Softball of Connecticut and USA Softball. It is officially called the Connecticut ASA/USA Hall of Fame. This is to honor the fact that ASA has recently rebranded to USA Softball, but all the present inductees played ASA softball. A replica of the “play at home” statue that is at the National Hall of Fame Complex in Oklahoma City is also on the display.

Speakers at the official opening included Laura Hoydick, who is the Stratford State Representative and Executive Director of the Stratford Chamber of Commerce, Hank Koritkoski, USA Softball of Connecticut Commissioner, and Jeff and Donna Babineau, proprietors of Erin’s Gym. The Master of Ceremonies was Patricia Patusky, Superintendent of Recreation for the Town of Stratford and President of Stratford Softball Tournaments, Inc. Hoydick played softball for Bunnell High School in Stratford and also in the town’s recreational women’s league. Erin’s Gym is a state of the art indoor softball facility named to honor the memory and legacy of Babineau’s daughter, who was a promising fast pitch softball player but tragically lost her life way too early.

USA Softball of Connecticut will add 19 more inductees into its Hall of Fame in October 2017. USA Softball of Connecticut thanks the Babineau Family for providing the space for the Hall of Fame and The Reflective Image for the design and installation of the Display.

The plan now is to move forward. There is already a call to add new memorabilia to the display, and additional funding will be needed for any improvements. Foundation donations will be gratefully accepted. On March 26, friends of USA Softball in Connecticut celebrated a new Hall of Fame.
USA Softball announced the Junior Women’s National Team (JWNT) schedule for the 2017 season, highlighted by events in four major cities, including the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Junior Women’s World Championship (JWWC) and the World Cup of Softball. As the team prepares to defend and strive for a back-to-back Gold Medal finishes at the WBSC JWWC in Clearwater, Fla., a mixture of exhibition games and training in multi-cities, along with competing against some of the top international teams at the World Cup of Softball, will headline the summer for the 24 athletes who make up the training team roster.

Click here to see the complete schedule for the 2017 USA Softball Junior Women’s National Team >>

“I’m really excited about the schedule we have for our Junior Women’s National Team,” said Head Coach Laura Berg (Corvallis, Ore.). “They’ll have lots of time to bond together at practice, during games and traveling to our tour stops. I believe playing against the older international players at the World Cup of Softball is key to preparing them for the Junior Women’s World Championship.”

All 24 members of the training team will meet at USA Softball headquarters June 11-19 in Oklahoma City, Okla. to train at the USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex to officially kick off their 2017 season. Highlighting the Oklahoma City tour stop will be exhibition games on June 16 (5 and 7 p.m. CT), June 17 (3 and 5 p.m. CT) and June 18 (9 a.m. CT). From there, Team USA will travel to Concord, Mass. to continue training on June 23.

The athletes will take a brief break before returning to Oklahoma City for the World Cup of Softball, which will be held July 5-9, and face powerhouse teams from across the globe. The team will continue on and hit the road for Clearwater, Fla. where they will train during the days leading up to the WBSC JWWC, set to take place July 24-31 at Eddie C. Moore Complex.

The JWNT will conclude their season in Ohio where they will participate in an exhibition game on August 9 before the Major League Baseball (MLB) Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) World Series on August 10 in Cincinnati, Ohio. The RBI program is the Major League Baseball youth initiative designed to provide young people from underserved and diverse communities with opportunities to play baseball and softball, while also encouraging academic achievement and success, and teaching the value of teamwork and other important life lessons.

Fans at home can follow along all summer long with the USA Softball National Teams at USASoftball.com.
USA Softball recently announced the USA Softball Men’s Fast Pitch Invitational Tournament which will once again be held June 9-11 in Ashland, Ohio. For the second year in a row, USA Softball will be providing an opportunity for Men’s Fast Pitch players to be evaluated by the USA Softball Men’s National Team Selection Committee (MNTSC) and USA Softball Men’s National Team (MNT) coaching staff in hopes of making it into an elite identified athlete pool.

“I would like to personally welcome all players, teams, and sponsors to participate in the second annual USA Softball Men’s Fast Pitch Invitational Tournament,” said MNT Head Coach, Denny Bruckert. “Last year’s tournament was a huge success as several athletes were identified and placed in the player pool to be considered for the final USA Softball Men’s National Team Selection Camp. This camp could be held in late 2018 or early 2019 for the next cycle for the 2019 World Baseball Softball Confederation and 2019 Pan American team. As a Coaching Staff and Selection Committee, we need to develop these players and continue to watch them throughout the 2018 season in the major tournaments and finally in the USA Softball Men’s Major and ISC World. If you feel you have ambition of playing for the USA Men’s National Team, this is your best option to be seen by the committee and the coaching staff.”

The weekend tournament officially starts Friday, June 9 with a technical meeting, where managers and sponsors will meet at the local Elks Club to decide the format of the tournament. Team representatives will be given time to provide their input and preferences for the weekend. However, all teams should prepare and be ready to take the field the morning of June 10 with the expected championship games to start Sunday afternoon. Games will be held at Brookside Park, 123 Parkside Dr. in Ashland, Ohio.

“We want to get back on that medal stand and it’s our job as a coaching staff to develop our players,” Bruckert added. “Nobody wants to see softball in the United States take a backseat to anybody. Currently sitting at No. 6 in the WBSC World Rankings, we hope to improve and move up by the performance we put on this season and in the future.”

“We look forward to hosting the tournament for the second year in row and watching the incredible talent of Men’s Fast Pitch teams from across the country,” said USA Softball President and USA Softball of Ohio Commissioner Warren Jones. “This tournament continues to bring in the best in the country, and will help build the future of USA Softball men’s fast pitch.” If teams or individual players wish to participate, they can visit the tournament website at TournamentUSASoftball.com.
Your team keeps score, we’ll do the math.

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General admission single-session tickets are now available for the World Cup of Softball XII and Border Battle IX, which will be held June 30-July 9 in Oklahoma City, Okla. Slated to be played at the USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex - OGE Energy Field - INTEGRIS Field, the World Cup, a World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) - Softball Division sanctioned event, and Border Battle return to the Softball Capital of the World®. The World Cup of Softball will be highlighted by the top four teams in the world while the Border Battle will pit the USA Softball Men’s Slow Pitch National Team and Women’s Slow Pitch National Team against Canada. General admission all-session and single-session tickets for both events are on sale by phone at 800-654-8337 or online at USASoftball.com. All-session tickets for Border Battle are $12 for both adult and youth tickets, while single-session, daily tickets can be purchased for $5. The World Cup of Softball has all-session ticket packages are $40 for adults and $20 for youth for fans wanting to watch every pitch of the World Cup of Softball XII. Adult single-session tickets are on sale for $10, while youth can attend for $5 per day.

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As softball season is starting to take off around the nation, it is important to remember the importance of your brand in your community. It is very important to help build awareness of your association to your local audience. The USA Softball National Office has participated in several local community events recently. In February, USA Softball had a large space at the annual Bart and Nadia Sports Experience, where many organizations were present and promoting a healthy and active lifestyle for people of all ages. Each sporting group set up activities for children & promoted their upcoming events.

In April, we set up a booth at the Oklahoma City’s Open Streets festival north of Downtown Oklahoma City. Thousands came to walk, bike, or skate while they met local business owners in a block party setting. Over two miles are shut down and on a busy Sunday afternoon, vendors and activities are set up along both sides of the street. Our booth consisted of pitching, hitting and bag toss. Each of the kids who participated received a poster and a buy one, get one ticket to this summer’s World Cup of Softball & Border Battle. The most exciting part about Open Streets was that it was a free event to all vendors who had an activity for kids! Whether you are promoting your league or local association, consider large events like these. It is a very fun and engaging way to promote your brand and softball as a whole.

Here are a couple of suggestions for grassroots marketing.

1. Choose your event wisely. Find a family friendly event. Pick something where it won’t overwhelm your booth. Many of these events are free or do not cost a lot. Brainstorm with people of all ages to find out what works!

2. Make it interactive. Fill a jar up with candy & have people guess on how many pieces are inside. If space allows, have an activity for kids. It could be hitting softballs off tees, soft toss for older kids, or even a simple bag toss. This interaction allows for free flowing conversation that doesn’t seemed like a forced sales pitch. It’s as simple as “Wow, your kid was great at pitching! Have you ever thought about joining a USA Softball league?”

3. Be creative in your set up. Purchase several USA Softball feather flags, A-frames & stickers. Feel free to purchase these marketing items from USA Softball by contacting Nick Dorety at ndorety@usasoftball.com.

4. Be generous with your giveaways. Whether they are koozies, chapsticks or sunglasses, people always love and appreciate those fun & free items! We’ve made it easy for you to be stocked with USA Softball gear at your booth. Contact Nick Dorety at ndorety@usasoftball.com to purchase any giveaway item.

5. Ask your staff, friends and family to come out to help with your booth. The more excitement and help you have at your booth, the more welcoming it will appear.
Let our team help you to insure your teams!

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- Visit USASoftball.com to contact your Commissioner
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- Visit RPSBollinger.com, and select USA Softball, under Specialty Programs

To learn more contact:
RPS Bollinger, USA Softball Department
800.446.5311
ASA@RPSins.com
RPSBollinger.com
On April 14-16, the Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team (WWAST) ventured to Newport News, Va. for an event sponsored by Reach Orthotic and Prosthetic Services. The WWAST mingled with veterans at the American Legion Post 368 Welcome Reception on that Friday. On Saturday, April 15, the WWAST participated in a doubleheader against the Newport News Police Department in the first game and the Newport News Fire Department in the second game. The WWAST defeated the Newport News PD in the first game by a score of 13-4, but lost the second game against the Newport News FD, 8-7. The WWAST would like to thank everyone - the event organizers, sponsors, and fans who made these events such a great success.

The WWAST concluded the month of April with a trip to Chester, S.C. where the team participated in a doubleheader against local team on April 29 at Rodman Sports Complex. Hosted by the Progressive Association of Chester County Communities (PACCC), the family-friendly event finished with a meet-and-greet with WWAST team members.

The remainder of the WWAST 2017 schedule has been posted to their official website. Be sure to check it out here >>

The WWAST recently opened up the 2018 schedule. If your community is interested in hosting the WWAST for an event in 2018, please contact WWAST Executive Director, Dennis Wince, for details by emailing dennis@thewwast.org. There is very limited availability for the 2017 season.
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 players will be provided with a tournament “swag” bag, which will include their USA Softball All-American jerseys and other official USA Softball and sponsor merchandise.

For more information, visit USASoftballAllAmericanGames.com >>
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