IN THIS ISSUE

2 Letter from President Warren Jones
5 Champions crowned at Junior Olympic Cup
16 USA Softball and ESPN ink World Cup TV deal
26 Recap the inaugural All-American Games

RECAP the Junior Women’s National Team run at the WBSC World Championship | Page 9
RECAP the Women’s National Team performance at the World Cup | Page 13
RECAP the ninth-annual Border Battle | Page 21
RECAP the MNT sixth-place finish at the WBSC Men’s World Championship | Page 7
Hello and welcome to the summer issue 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 in your state and local area.

At the Hall of Fame Complex, the NCAA Women’s College World Series (WCWS) kicked off the month of June and featured the top-ranked teams in Division I softball, with Oklahoma taking home the NCAA WCWS trophy with their 5-4 Game 2 win over Florida. USA Softball continued our growing partnership with Major League Baseball (MLB), where we hosted a Play Ball event June 2 and then the Breakthrough Series June 11-15 at the HOF Complex, promoting softball as a viable collegiate option for youth from underrepresented and under-served communities. Despite the 10U, 12U, and 14U National Qualifiers being canceled, the 16U and 18U tournaments were held at the HOF Complex and featured great competition amongst all the teams.

The National Teams began their training and exhibition games as well both in Oklahoma City and across the country. The Junior Women’s National Team (JWNT) competed in the JWNT Friendlies before visiting Concord, Mass. and facing a local team of All-Stars, while the Women’s National Team (WNT) trained in Irvine, Calif. and played a local team of All-Stars and Team Mexico before traveling to Sendai, Japan for the Japan Cup. The Men’s National Team (MNT) entered the Father’s Day Memorial Tournament, held in Houston, Texas, in preparation for the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Men’s World Championship. The month of July saw our JWNT defend their 2015 Gold Medal and go back-to-back to claim the title of World Champion, while our MNT finished in sixth place at the Men’s World Championship. The World Cup of Softball welcomed our WNT and JWNT, where we were happy to have a select amount of games televised on ESPN, while Border Battle featured our Men’s National Slow Pitch and Futures Teams, as well as the first-of-its-kind Women’s Slow Pitch Team. Our WNT began August in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic where they qualified for the 2018 WBSC World Championship and 2019 Pan American Games, before ending the summer at the Japan Cup competing against world-ranked No. 1 Japan, No. 3 Canada and No. 4 Australia.

August featured the inaugural All-American Games which brought 360 athletes from across the 10 Regions together to compete at the Softball Capital of the World®. For many, it was their first time to Oklahoma City and quite a few took time in between games to take in the Hall of Fame Museum and Gift Shop. I look forward to watching the event continue to develop as a high-class tournament USA Softball can be proud of.

Throughout competitions both here in the U.S. and abroad, we also have a very special group to recognize - our umpires. Congratulations again to those that were selected to represent USA Softball at National Championships as well as the World Championships, the World Cup of Softball XII, and Pan American Championships.
A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF USA SOFTBALL

Warren Jones

Around the country, we have begun and look to continue USA Softball Championship season! The best of the best play and umpire USA Softball, and I look forward to watching and/or hearing about the great championship play happening at all levels, both Fast Pitch and Slow Pitch. Keep inspiring those in your community to get out and get active on the diamond – softball is the sport for everyone, from competitive to recreational. Wherever you are – travel safe, play hard and most of all, have fun!

Warren Jones  USA Softball President

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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 at kwillis@usasoftball.com by the 15th of the month.
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USA Softball crowned a pair of champions at the 2017 Junior Olympic (JO) Cup following two close championship games July 29. The Louisville Lady Sluggers (USA Softball of St. Louis) captured the 18-under title defeating the Williamsburg Starz (USA Softball of Central Virginia), 3-0, while Michigan Finesse (USA Softball of Metro Detroit) took home the 16-under title in walk-off fashion, 3-2, against the Gametime Stars (USA Softball of Oklahoma).

The championship games served as the conclusion to the week-long invitational featuring 61 of the top 16 and 18-under teams from across the country. Teams participated in two days of pool play before kicking off play in a double elimination bracket, culminating in the championship games.

**18-Under: Louisville Lady Sluggers (St. Louis) 3, Williamsburg Starz (Central Virginia) 0**

In a pitcher’s duel, the Louisville Lady Sluggers were helped by the outstanding performance of Taylor Roby who pitched seven shutout innings and issued six strikeouts. The Williamsburg Starz kept it close in a tight game with a strong pitching performance of their own from Jordan Dail. Dail struck out 10 in six innings pitched, allowing three runs on six hits and one walk.

The Lady Sluggers scored the first run of the game after a pair of singles in the second inning. Both sides were held scoreless through the next four innings until the Sluggers secured their win with a two-run homerun by Mallory Peyton in the bottom of the sixth. Peyton was the only batter from either team with a multi-hit game going 2-of-3 with two RBI and two runs scored.

**16-Under: Michigan Finesse (Metro Detroit) 3, Gametime Stars (Oklahoma) 2**

Back-to-back singles to open the seventh inning set up a walk-off homerun that allowed Michigan Finesse to capture the 16-under title. Kathryn Rex capitalized on two baserunners by hitting her only homerun of the tournament. Despite a combined 12 hits, the championship game had remained scoreless through the fifth inning. Gametime Stars broke open the game with a double to center field by Malee Bainos, scoring Zadie Lavalley and Chelsea Spain who had reached base on back-to-back singles.

Finesse opened the seventh inning with back-to-back singles by Carley Barjaktarovich and Aleah Marra before Rex came to the plate and hit a three-run shot to claim the win.

As the USA Softball National Teams look towards the return to the 2020 Olympics, the third annual JO Cup served as a National Team identification opportunity, allowing athletes to compete in front of members of the Women’s National Team Selection Committee (WNTSC). The top 12 finishers in each division received a cash donation award back to their participating 501c3 program.
RECAP THE MEN’S NATIONAL TEAM’S RUN AT THE WBSC WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

PHOTO CREDIT: MADDY FLANAGAN

Earlier in the week

Matt Ratliff    Kevin Castillo    Tyler Dudley

Tyler Dudley    Derrick Zechman    Matt Ratliff
The USA Softball Men’s National Team finished the 2017 WBSC Men’s World Championship in sixth place with a .300 team batting average, 15 home runs, 64 RBI and a 6-3 record. The pitching staff of Mancha, Manley and Weiler combined for 74 strikeouts and allowed 26 earned runs through 49 complete innings. Despite outhitting their opponents, the USA Softball Men’s National Team (MNT) could not recover from an early deficit in the second game of the championship round, losing to Australia 11-7. Earlier in the week the Men’s National Team upset world-ranked No. 5 Australia 2-1 after Nick Mullins recorded a two-out two RBI single.

The USA Softball MNT will have a break before regrouping for the Pan American Championship, which will be held September 15-24 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The top five finishing countries will qualify for the 2019 Pan American Games in Lima, Peru.
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In a record-setting performance, the USA Softball Junior Women’s National Team (JWNT) became back-to-back World Champions after defeating Japan 13-4 to take home the Gold Medal at the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Junior Women’s World Championship. The JWNT blasted three home runs in the win, showing a relentless attitude at the plate after trailing by one run until a five-run fifth inning gave the U.S. all the ammunition they would need.

“For them to start here in January (Junior Women’s National Team tryouts) and end here in July, it’s great to come full circle,” said Head Coach Laura Berg. “I am proud of how they came together. Although the team was chosen in January, we didn’t start practicing together until June. Two months isn’t a lot of time but it was like they knew each other and knew what they were capable of doing. They all knew there was one goal and that was winning gold.”

Hannah Adams (Hoschton, Ga.) was issued a walk to lead off the top of the first inning, while a single from Sis Bates (Ceres, Calif.) would put two runners on for the U.S. Bubba Nickles (Merced, Calif.) then stepped up to the plate and went deep with a three-run home run to put the Red, White and Blue up, 3-0. With the blast, Nickles broke the WBSC Junior Women’s World Championship record for home runs with her sixth. Japan would answer back with three runs of their own off a two RBI double by Eri Shimoyama and RBI single by Hiroyo Hattori to tie the ballgame.

Singles from Alissa Dalton (Cypress, Texas) and Elissa Brown (Eclectic, Ala.) came in the top of the second but both would be stranded after the U.S. was unable to score. Japan would jump ahead in the bottom half of the frame after a single from Reina Matsumoto brought home Miyu Miyamoto, while Fujimoto was caught at home on a bullet throw by Adams in center field to Dejah Mulipola (Garden Grove, Calif.) to keep the score, 4-3.

Natalie Lugo (West Covina, Calif.) would enter in relief for Holly Azevedo (San Jose, Calif.) in the bottom of the third inning. Despite Japan loading the bases after a lead-off single from Shimoyama, Ayaka Kono was hit-by-pitch and a two-out single from Shiho Suto, the Red, White and Blue stayed committed and worked out of the jam after a line out to Brown ended Japan’s chances of scoring additional runs.

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 11
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Trailing 4-3 after four innings, the U.S. would regain the lead with a huge five-run inning in the fifth. Adams led off with a single to center field before a two-out home run by Baylee Klingler (Houston, Texas) made it 5-4. Lou Allan (Hesperia, Calif.) and Jessica Harper (Stevenson Ranch, Calif.) followed with a pair of singles before coming home off a three-run shot by Dalton, extending the U.S. lead to 8-4. Japan would be retired in order in the bottom of the fifth after a strikeout and a pair of lineouts to Bates at second and Lugo in the circle.

Nickles went on to break another JWWC record in the top of the sixth inning after picking up her 29th RBI of the WBSC Junior Women’s World Championship after bringing home Adams and Bates on a two RBI double to center field to make it 10-4. Japan was retired in order for the third straight inning after Lugo issued a pair of strikeouts and a groundout went Klingler’s way to catch the runner at first.

Holding a 10-4 lead, the U.S. would not let up and kept the momentum to push another three runs across the plate. After a single by Dalton, Brown was hit by a pitch but stayed in the game before both advanced on a walk to Adams. The next three U.S. batters would make the most of their at-bat, with Bates drilling a line drive to shortstop Matsumoto to plate Dalton before a RBI single from Nickles (her 30th) plated Brown and to finish it off, a RBI single by Klingler brought home Adams, giving the Red, White and Blue a sizeable 13-4 lead over Japan. That proved to be enough for the USA Softball JWNT as Japan grounded into a fielder’s choice, struck out and ended their at-bat on a groundout to Nickles, handing the Red, White and Blue a 13-4 victory.

Lugo earned the win in the circle for the U.S., pitching five innings with five strikeouts and allowing no runs on four hits, while Azevedo tossed two innings and recorded one strikeout with five hits and four runs allowed. In addition to Nickles home run and RBI record, she also set a batting average (.690), going 20-for-29. As a team, the USA Softball JWNT broke the JWWC home runs record with 15.

“It’s not just about coming out and staying strong, but adjusting to whatever good teams, like Japan, bring our way,” said Nickles. “To play a sport since I’ve played since I was little was really awesome and shows that the love of the game is all across the world. (Having softball back in the Olympics) is a huge milestone and I really feel like this is going to motivate so many more girls in the U.S. to play international, in the 2020 Olympics and beyond.”

“I think we adjusted really well,” said Klingler. “When we would get knocked down, we got right back up and kept going defensively and offensively. Japan is a very good team but it’s the game of softball. We all put in long hours all for this moment right here and we pulled through.”
THE WORLD CUP OF SOFTBALL IN PHOTOS

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Janie Takeda
Valerie Arioto

Delaney Spaulding
Ally Carda
Michelle Moultrie
Despite outhitting their opponents in the Championship finale at the World Cup of Softball XII, the USA Softball Women’s National Team (WNT) dropped a 2-1 decision to Japan to finish as runner-up. USA’s Aubree Munro (Brea, Calif.) recorded Team USA’s lone RBI of the game after singling in the bottom of the fourth to plate Valerie Arioto (Pleasanton, Calif.)

“I’m happy with where we’re at right now,” said Head Coach Ken Eriksen. “We’ve got some players who now have five or six years of experience under their belt. Our approaches at the plate are pretty darn good, it was just one of those days where their bloop fell in today and ours didn’t. The way we’re playing defensively and offensively is pretty flawless.”

It was a typical high-level, competitive match between the top two ranked teams in the world in the World Cup of Softball XII Championship Game, and despite outhitting Japan, the USA Softball WNT finished as runner-up after a 2-1 loss. The Eagles looked to create a seventh-inning rally, but ultimately fell one run short, finishing the annual event with a 7-1 record.

Japan struck first in the top of the third inning to take a 2-0 lead. Eri Yamada led off with a single but USA’s Kelsey Stewart (Wichita, Kan.) got Yamada out at second on a groundball from Mana Atsumi. A single to Michelle Moultrie in right field advanced Atsumi to third to put runners on the corners before a walk to Yu Yamamoto loaded the bases. With just one out, Minami Sato singled to centerfield to push across two Japan runs.

The U.S. struck back in the bottom of the fourth to cut the lead to just one run. A leadoff walk to Valerie Arioto (Pleasanton, Calif.) followed by a single to right field by Moultrie put two on quickly. A groundout put runners on the corners for Team USA to bring Munro to the plate, who on a 1-1 pitch drove a ball up the middle to bring Arioto home and make it a 2-1 ballgame. Janie Takeda (Placentia, Calif.) followed with another single to prompt a pitching change for Japan as Yukiko Ueno entered for Yamato Fugita. Ueno was able to retire the next two batters to prevent the U.S. from adding further damage.

Both sides would be kept silent through the next few innings of play to bring Team USA back to the plate for their final at-bat trailing by one. Ueno was able to get two quick outs, but the U.S. proved to be resilient as Stewart doubled on a hard hit ball to the left center gap. With a runner in scoring position, Team USA looked to keep the game going, but a strikeout ended the game with the U.S. falling to Japan 2-1.

The JWNT earned a fifth place finish in a shutout 7-0 (five innings) run rule over Puerto Rico, just three days after dropping their opening-game 3-1. Azevedo earned the win for the JWNT, going the full five innings with four strikeouts and three hits allowed. At the plate, Nickles drove in four of the U.S. runs while Bates picked up two RBI and Allan collected one RBI.

“The team is starting to get used to each other and starting to know each other’s abilities,” said Head Coach Laura Berg. “Today is showed. They were flawless on defense. I’m so proud of this team. They played against teams who have ten-plus years of international experience and they did not back down. They went toe-to-toe with them and they’re just going to continue to get better.”
June Umpire of the Month: Shannon Kamp
Shannon has been a USA Softball umpire for the past 11 years within the USA Softball of St. Louis association. Shannon has attended two National Umpire Schools and plans to attend this year’s Advanced Fast Pitch Camp. Having umpired a combined total of nine Territorial and USA Softball National Championships, Shannon has also been an assistant umpire coordinator at a Territorial Championship.

July Umpire of the Month: Dawn Youngs
Dawn began her umpiring journey in the mid 1980’s by working Baseball games for many associations in East Phoenix. In 2003, Dawn moved to Softball. Dawn began working 16U and 18U games by the middle of her second season. She has also worked NJCAA games for multiple seasons. Dawn worked her first National Tournament in 2007, a 10U-A Western National in Arizona.

August Umpire of the Month: Tim Slama
Tim is an eighth-year USA Softball Umpire. He started umpiring after a 20-year career in the Air Force. Tim has umpired in six USA Softball National Championships, including two trips to the Men’s A and Women’s Open Slow Pitch in Oklahoma City. Tim is a member of the National Indicator Fraternity, a gold member of the Medals Program and is applying for Elite status this year in Slow Pitch. Tim also scours the USA Softball website to find more opportunities for training or tournaments to work. He has umpired five times at the McQuade Charity Softball Tournament in Bismarck/Mandan, N.D., with 650+ teams per year.

CLICK HERE TO READ ABOUT PAST UMPIRE OF THE MONTH HONORees
After nearly being eliminated from the Pan American Championship, the USA Softball Women’s National Team (WNT) proved why they are the reigning World Champions after dominating the final day in a pair of run-rule victories to earn the Gold. Almost 14 years ago to the day on the very same field, future Olympic Gold Medalist Cat Osterman threw a perfect game as the United States defeated Canada at the 2003 Pan American Games and on August 13, Kelly Barnhill (Marietta, Ga.) nearly accomplished the same feat with a complete game, no-hitter over Mexico in the Gold Medal Game.

The U.S. defeated Canada 11-3 (five innings) to advance to the Gold Medal Game for a rematch with Mexico, who’s extra-inning win over the U.S. in the first round of playoffs sent the Americans to the loser’s bracket to battle their way back. Team USA did just that, and in commanding fashion, shutting out Mexico 9-0 (five innings) to hold the Pan American Championship trophy in the air. With their backs against the wall, the United States accomplished what no other team has been able to do in the history of the event.

“Unbelievable,” said Head Coach Ken Eriksen. “I think it’s the first time in a double-page system that a team has lost the first game and then won four-in-a-row to win the tournament. We needed a wakeup call. I don’t know if nayone realized that we were on the brink of elimination over the course of the next four years because of the way the system is setup. This team took it upon themselves and they got in a groove. We had really good pitching and defense yesterday to carry through and it made the hitters more comfortable. Michelle Moultrie, Amanda Chidester, Valerie Arioto and Jess Moore did an incredible job in leadership. I was here the last time Team USA won a Gold Medal on this field when Cat Osterman pitched a perfect game and kelly Barnhill almost matched her today. History repeats itself here in Santo Domingo.”

As a team, the U.S. hit an astounding .436 with 19 home runs and 102 RBI in 12 games played. Haylie McCleney (Morris, Ala.) paced the offense, hitting .613 (19-for-31) as the leadoff batter with one home run, five RBI and 17 runs scored. Arioto picked up 18 RBI while hitting .357 (10-for-28) and amassing a .857 slugging percentage. From the circle, the U.S. staff combined for a 1.40 ERA. Moore was a perfect 4-0 with 16 strikeouts and a 0.68 ERA in 20.2 innings in the circle. Barnhill went 3-0 while fanning 40 batters with a 0.35 ERA in 20 innings pitched.
In June, USA Softball announced that it reached a multi-year agreement with ESPN that establishing the ESPN networks as the home of select World Cup of Softball games through 2020. Starting with the 2017 World Cup, ESPN will have the production and distribution rights for four USA Softball games and the Championship Game for each World Cup of Softball with all telecasts also available for live streaming via the ESPN app.

“We’re excited to bring top-level international softball to fans through the ESPN networks for the next four years,” said USA Softball Executive Director Craig Cress. “As the momentum continues to build towards Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, we are thrilled to be showcasing the best softball in the world and our sport on the ESPN networks.”

As the popularity and coverage of the sport continues to grow as fans around the world anticipate softball’s return to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, the 2017 telecasted provided fans the opportunity to watch the world’s best softball live from Oklahoma City. The ESPN networks aired over 10 hours of live coverage on ESPN and ESPN2, which was highlighted by multiple prime time windows and concluded with coverage of the Championship Game.

“ESPN is extremely pleased to reach an agreement with USA Softball to showcase the World Cup of Softball in the wake of the sport’s return to the Summer Olympics,” said ESPN Vice President of Women’s Sports Programming Carol Stiff. “The premier annual event adds to our deep softball portfolio that now includes more than 600 college softball regular season games annually across our platforms prior to comprehensive coverage of the NCAA Division 1 Softball Championship and the Women’s College World Series. Throughout our entire history, women’s sports have been a vital part of ESPN’s programming content offerings and will continue to be into the future.”

This announcement came on the heels of the most-watched and streamed NCAA Women’s College World Series (WCWS) finals in finals history. Averaging a total live-audience (TV + streaming) of 1.72 million viewers, viewership of the event was up 33% from the first two games of the NCAA WCWS finals in 2016.
The ACE Coach Education Program is designed to provide softball coaches of all levels, from beginning coaches to experienced veterans, an opportunity to further their education as a coach with the National Governing Body of Softball. For the sixth-straight year, USA Softball has teamed up with Pocket Radar™ to provide coaches with a prize pack. At every 5,000th milestone, USA Softball will award that coach with a brand new Ball Coach Training Tool, courtesy of Pocket Radar™ ($300 value).

The 10,000 milestone went to Brian Wise (Heath, Ohio) who began his coaching career with his oldest daughter on an 8U team. Wise currently coaches for the Harvest of Memories 8-Under team in the Hebron Lakewood Youth Softball League. Lawrence Michels (Lakeville, Minn.) was the 15,000th coach to complete the program in 2017. Michels began coaching on his daughters 10U team, and currently coaches a 12U team.

The 20,000th milestone went to William Mesher (Portland, Ore.) who began coaching t-ball and has coached at every level from Little League to 18-Under. Mesher currently is in his second year with the Portland Aspire, who played in the 14-Under division this past season.

It is highly recommended that all coaches wishing to coach at the Championship Play level or those coaches wanting to receive full ACE Coach program benefits become an ACE coach. Coaches can do so online using the ACE Online System on RegisterUSASoftball.com. There are four levels to the ACE program and upon successful completion of each level, benefits include RPS Bollinger insurance coverage, a background check clearance and ID card. For more information on the ACE Coach Program, please contact your local USA Softball Association Commissioner or visit the ACE Coach Program section of USASoftball.com.
The Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team (WWAST) was busy during the month of June. The WWAST hosted its fifth annual Kids Camp on the campus of George Mason University in Fairfax, Va. from June 12-18. This year’s Kids Camp brought together 20 children with an amputation or who are missing a limb with all expenses paid, including travel, meals, and lodging, for the child and an adult. The event kicked off with a welcome dinner at the American Legion Post 177 where the players got a chance to meet all the kids and parents. From June 13-16, the kids honed their softball skills while being mentored by the players of the WWAST. In addition, everyone got the chance to do some additional fun things in the area including a tour of Washington D.C. and a visit to the National Air and Space Museum Udvar-Hazy Center. The week culminated on June 17 with the “big game” where 10 kids from the “Red Dragons” played against 10 kids from the “Blue Strikers”. Both sides were evenly matched with the game ending in a 14-14 tie! Afterwards, the WWAST showed their talent against a team of local celebrities from the Washington Redskins as well as local newscasters, first responders, and veterans such as Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient, Flo Groberg. The WWAST came out victorious by a score of 15-10 capping the night with a bang. The WWAST would like to thank George Mason University, all our sponsors and donors, everyone who volunteered countless hours, and most importantly all the parents who let us work with their incredible children for the week!

In addition to the Kids Camp, the WWAST participated in two other softball events. On June 2-4, the WWAST traveled to Cranston, R.I. for a game on Friday against local celebrities and a doubleheader on Saturday against the Rhode Island National Guard and a local team of veterans.

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 19
With this event, Rhode Island became the 41st state that the WWAST has visited. On June 23-25, the WWAST visited Bismarck, N.D. to play in the 42nd Annual Sam McQuade Sr/Budweiser Charity Tournament. Before the tournament, the WWAST played a team of local first responders in an exhibition game and defeated them in walk-off fashion. The WWAST played in the tournament and went 4-1 earning a third-place finish in their division in a field of 48 teams.

In July, the WWAST then headed to Brainerd, Minn. to visit the Brainerd Miracle League game where WWAST players and staff cheered on the participants. The Brainerd community came out in full force for the exhibition game with over 2,000 people in attendance. From there, the team played in the “Hopper” softball tournament. The WWAST then travelled to Akron, Ohio on July 14-16, where a reception was held on July 14 before they visited the MAPS Air Museum. On July 15, the WWAST played in a doubleheader against a local celebrity team and against Team Red, White, and Blue, a non-profit organization whose mission is to enrich the lives of America’s veterans by connecting them to their community through physical and social activity.
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The team then went to South Bend, Ind. on August 4-6 where they participated in a mini-Kids Camp as part of the USA Softball Men’s Major Fastpitch National Championship. From there, the WWAST travelled to Topeka, Ind. where they played in three exhibition games against All-Star teams from the USA Softball Boys Slowpitch National Championships before a very large crowd packed the stands. Finally, the WWAST returned to Utica, N.Y. for the third time on August 25-27. On Aug. 25, the team hosted a mini-Kids Camp attended by 14 children followed by a dinner with them. On Aug. 26, the team played a triple-header against Adirondack Bank, local first responders, and the Oneida County Sheriff’s Department.
Both of Canada’s Men’s and Women’s Slow Pitch National Teams took home the Border Battle titles on July 1. The Canadian Men’s Slow Pitch National Team took the title for just the second time in the Border Battle Series defeating the USA Softball Men’s Slow Pitch National Team, 31-28. In the inaugural Women’s Border Battle, the Canadian Women’s National Team came out on top with a 12-8 victory over the USA Softball Women’s National Slow Pitch Team.

**Border Battle IX: Canada 31, USA 28**

Canada grabbed an early 5-0 lead after the first inning before a seven-run inning gave Team USA a narrow 11-9 lead in the fourth. Canada stormed back in the fifth inning with 14 runs to take the lead for the final time. USA cut Canada’s lead to five by plating seven runs in the bottom of the fifth, however Canada continued to dominate the plate leading the USA, 31-22, heading into the bottom of the seventh.

The USA attempted to mount a comeback in the seventh inning with back-to-back singles. With one out, BJ Fulk (King, N.C.) hit a three-run homerun which was followed by two more hits to bring USA within six. Greg Connell (Moultrie, Ga.) extended the inning with a two-run home run.

USA tallied 37 hits, including seven home runs. Connell, Fulk, Kyle Pearson (Stonewall, La.), and Bubba Mack (Milton, Fla.) each tallied one while Brian Wegman (Hamilton, Ohio) had three total for the game.

**Women’s Border Battle: Canada 12, USA 8**

In the first-ever Women’s Border Battle, the USA Softball Women’s Slow Pitch National Team was

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 23
unable to outlast the Canadian Women’s Slow Pitch National Team. The U.S. Women took a 1-0 lead in the bottom of the first and carried that lead through the next two innings before Canada answered back, scoring all 12 of their runs between the fourth and fifth innings.

The USA Women’s solo home run of the game came off Christian Dowling (Rochester, N.Y.) in the bottom of the first inning. After going down 12-3 in the sixth, USA grabbed three runs on doubles by Leigh Campbell (Venice, Calif.) and Melissa Perez (Rowland Heights, Calif.). Despite adding another two runs in the seventh, Team USA’s rally came up short.

Kait Anseeuw and Jackie Bates nabbed Canada’s two home runs of the evening while racking up two and three RBI, respectively. Paige Smith tied USA Women’s pitcher Tara Salcedo for a game high three-hits.
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In front of over 10,600 fans, the USA Softball Women’s National Team took the field to face Japan at Yokohama Stadium, home of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, and fell 5-3 after a walk-off grand slam in the seventh inning by the No. 1 world-ranked team. After Team USA evened the series following a 5-4 victory in Game 2 at Shellcom Sendai, fans were treated to a glimpse of what could be the Gold Medal game come the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

“Sometimes the toughest three outs to get in a game are the last three,” said Head Coach Ken Eriksen. “Our team played well coming from behind and the pitching staff battled all day in an unfamiliar environment.”

The 2017 season for the USA Softball Women’s National Team came to a disappointing end as the U.S. suffered a walk-off, 5-4 loss to Japan in the Gold Medal finale at the 2017 Japan Cup. The U.S. vs Japan rivalry lived up to the hype as both sides scored in the first inning.

The Japan Cup marked the end of the 2017 season for the Women’s National Team, who finished the summer with a 22-5 record while claiming the Gold at the Pan American Championship. As a team, the U.S. finished the summer with a .366 batting average while outscoring opponents 193-49. McCleney led the offense for the U.S., amassing a .500 (30-for-60) batting average while Ali Aguilar (Orangevale, Calif.) and Arioto each hit six home runs and Chidester led with 27 RBI. For the pitching staff, Barnhill issued 63 strikeouts while finishing the season with a 0.91 ERA through 38.2 innings in the circle. Moore led the staff with an 7-1 record while fanning 22 batters in 36.1 innings pitched.
After kicking off the inaugural USA Softball All-American Games with an Opening Ceremony that featured three-time USA Softball Olympian Crystl Bustos, legendary Hall of Famer Sue Enquist, and current USA Softball Women’s National Team members Valerie Arioto, Jessica Moore, Michelle Moultrie, Kelsey Stewart, and Janie Takeda, a total of 24 teams representing 10 regions and 42 states took to the field August 19-20 to compete with the best of the best in the 12-Under Junior Olympic (JO) Fast Pitch division. On Championship Sunday, it was Region 5 Red who claimed the first-ever All-American Games title with a 5-0 shutout victory over Region 5 Blue at the USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex in Oklahoma City, Okla.

Each of USA Softball’s 10 regions were represented by at least one team, while additional at-large selections were given to regions with higher player registration. All participants had the opportunity to attend a camp hosted by Softball Factory on Aug. 18, where players received instruction and went through a series of stations to improve their skills, while parents and families in attendance were treated to a college recruiting Q&A and given detailed information on the recruiting process. Participants were also given a tournament “swag bag”, which included official USA Softball All-American jerseys and other USA Softball and sponsor merchandise.
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Over 40 JO National Championships took place from July 16 to August 6. Teams earned their right to compete in National Championships by earning a berth through a network of qualifying tournaments conducted throughout the season.

National Championship action kicked off in Clearwater, Fla. the week of July 16 with the 16U and 18U GOLD National Championships. Thirty-five teams competed for the 16-Under title while there were 41 teams vying for the 18-Under championship.

The 18-Under GOLD National Championship was initially halted by weather in Clearwater, Fla. forcing several games to be cancelled and the championship game matchup between Virginia Unity 18U - Johnson and MS Elite Gold. Virginia Unity finished the tournament undefeated to take the 18U GOLD National title, defeating MS Elite Gold 1-0.

The 16-Under GOLD National title went to Florida Impact Feldman after a 5-0 victory over the Atlanta Vipers - Jiles. The Vipers outlasted a tough Santa Fe Inferno - Lovett team earlier in the day, narrowly winning 2-1 to advance to the championship matchup.

In a thrilling 10-Under championship matchup in Findlay, Ohio, the Lasers Silver 10A team took home the National title. After rolling through bracket play, the Lasers were tested in a 10-inning matchup against the Bandits. The Bandits, whose first loss came against the Lasers, 14-0, came out on top with a 5-4 finish forcing an if-necessary game. However, they were unable to outlast the Lasers, who eventually took home the title with a 4-2 victory.

The Illinois Force 12U successfully made their way out of the losers bracket to take home the 12-Under National title over Texas Glory Adkins in Dallas, Texas. Texas Glory Adkins sent Illinois Force to the losers bracket, defeating them 3-0 before the two teams once again met in the Championship round. The Illinois Force narrowly defeated Texas Glory Adkins, 6-5, to force a rematch, leading them to ultimately take home the title after a decisive 11-3 victory.

Despite dropping their first pool play game of the tournament, Tennessee Mojo 2021 fought back and made it to the Championship Game...
...continued from page 28

...where they ultimately took home the 14-Under National title in Chattanooga, Tenn. After an 11-7 pool-play loss to Carolina Elite 14 Gold-Fisher, a rematch between the two came in their first game of bracket play where Tennessee Mojo responded with a 5-3 victory to advance and go on to eventually defeat Michigan Finesse – Skapyak, 8-6, and claim the National title.

In a thrilling 16-Under Championship matchup, the Firecrackers AL-Ingram won the National title in Normal, Ill. Despite going 1-1 in pool play, the Firecrackers outscored their opponents 50-15 in bracket play prior to the championship round. The Frost Falcons 00 made it out of the losers bracket by defeating the Ohio Emeralds 01, 9-8, in the third place matchup. The Falcons claimed a 9-7 win in Game 1 against the Firecrackers, before the Firecrackers rebounded with a 11-10 victory to take home the crown.

The Carolina Cardinals - Chandler rolled through the 18A Fast Pitch National Championship in Salem, Ore. and finished the tournament undefeated. The Cardinals defeated All American Mizuno - Walker, 13-5, in the Championship round to clinch the National title.

For a list of all 2017 USA Softball National Championships, including brackets, results and more, please visit TournamentUSASoftball.com.
In an effort to grow female participation in softball across the globe, Scrap Yard Dawgs General Manager Connie May conducted softball clinics in Malta as part of the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Development Commission “Softball in Schools” initiative. With the support of USA Softball, May brought Tatum Edwards, Madi O’Neal, and Kelcy Leach along for the trip where the group conducted training camps with the Ghajnsielem Redcoats, a softball club in Gonzo, Malta.

“Team USA asked me to do this trip to bring a piece of what we know in the USA to the athletes and teachers in Malta,” said May. “The people and athletes in Malta are so eager and hungry to learn the game and to grow within the sport, that they hold nothing back in their quest. When asked to go on this trip, I was excited and eager, however when I got there, Joseph and the Redcoats were beyond prepared and so excited to learn from our staff. They know how to work hard and I am excited to watch their progress.”

The Level 1 Softball Coaching Course was held at the National Sports School, Pembroke in Malta spanning over three days. May, along with her team, delivered three excellent sessions which covered the rules of the game, the fundamentals skills of softball and concluded with a game. Speaking about the staff who accompanied her, May stated: “My entire staff have dynamic personalities that draw each athlete and coach in and make the information exciting to learn. They were the perfect blend of coaching and mentoring.”

With the first phase of “Softball in Schools” successfully implemented, more work will be conducted starting in October and a follow-ups to the Level 1 Softball Coaching Clinics may be scheduled at a later date.

“USA Softball works tirelessly to grow the game around the world and are INCREDIBLE ambassadors to carry the torch for the United States of America,” said May.
INFORMATION ON THE 2017 USA SOFTBALL ANNUAL MEETING TRADESHOW:

This year’s USA Softball Trade Show is on Wednesday, October 25 from 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m., and will be held in Greensboro, North Carolina in the ‘Guilford Ballrooms D, E, F & G’ at the Sheraton Greensboro at Four Seasons. Exhibitor registration is now open.

Attendees at the Trade Show include USA Softball Council Members, local USA Softball association staff, Park and Rec professionals, guests and other meeting attendees. This is your chance to be in front of hundreds of decision makers from throughout the U. S.

*Please note that your trade show registration also covers your annual meeting registration.

Only 74 booth spaces are available for the Trade Show. You will select your booth during the online registration process. Master Card, Visa and Discover credit cards are acceptable for payment. The cost per booth for a non-profit organization is $500; the booth cost for commercial is $650. Receipts will be sent to you for your booth purchase. Each booth space measures 10 feet by 10 feet, and includes - 8’ high back wall drape, 3’ high side rail drape, (1) 6’ skirted tables, (2) chairs, (1) wastebasket and (1) Identification sign.

Click here to sign up and secure your space at this year’s USA Softball Trade Show >>

If you are interested in learning more about the annual meeting and the tradeshow, call Nick Dorety at 405-425-3422 or email ndorety@usasoftball.com.

We’ll see you in Greensboro soon!

Watch a video highlighting the 2016 USA Softball Annual Meeting Tradeshow >>
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The USA Softball Hall of Fame Complex hosted the second annual Softball Breakthrough Series from June 12-14. Hosted jointly by Major League Baseball and USA Softball, the Softball Breakthrough Series hosted a diverse group of 60 high school softball players from across the nation in a special development camp atmosphere that also served as a showcase for collegiate recruiters. They were coached by some of the nation’s top softball figures, including Olympic Gold medalists Jennie Finch and Sheila Douty. Also serving as instructor was Sue Enquist, a member of the National Softball Hall of Fame who served as the Head Coach for UCLA Softball for 27 years. Coaches at the event include U.S. Olympians, NCAA National Champions, and USA Softball and MLB Youth Academies Instructors.
Members of the 2017 USA Softball Junior Women’s National Team (JWNT) traveled to Cincinnati, Ohio where the team took part in various activities as part of Major League Baseball’s (MLB) RBI World Series. Coming off an impressive run at the World Baseball Softball Federation (WBSC) Junior Women’s World Championship where the team won Gold on July 30, the JWNT had the opportunity to share their experiences and knowledge with teams competing in the MLB RBI World Series this week.

Following a practice at the P&G Cincinnati MLB Urban Youth Academy, the JWNT participated in the MLB RBI World Series round table discussion with RBI teams and special guest MLB Commissioner, Rob Manfred. The JWNT shared a meal with RBI teams later that evening, while having a chance to hear from USA Softball Olympic Medalists, Lisa Fernandez, Lori Harrigan-Mack, and Natasha Watley on a panel. On Thursday, the JWNT took in a Cincinnati Reds game at Great American Ball Park as they played host to the San Diego Padres. The Red, White, and Blue then played an exhibition game at UC Health Stadium - Florence Freedom in front of several RBI World Series teams, with a special meet-and-greet postgame.
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