Three-time Olympic Gold Medalist Lisa Fernandez and the 2004 U.S. Olympic Softball Team will be inducted into the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame’s Class of 2012 as announced by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC). Fernandez is one of six individuals who has been selected in the individual category while the 2004 U.S. Olympic Softball Team will be the only team honored.

“I am completely overwhelmed by this honor,” said three-time Olympic Gold Medalist Lisa Fernandez. “Never did I ever think that playing the game of softball that I love so much would allow me to reach this level of accomplishment. This is bigger than anything I have dreamed of. What we have been able to accomplish as a sport is incredible. There is no greater honor than being inducted into the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame.”

Recognizing the ongoing support that fans give U.S. Olympians, Paralympians and hopefuls in their training and competition, the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame presented by Allstate was one of the first major sports halls of fame to incorporate fan voting into the selection process. The induction ceremony will take place Wednesday, July 12 in Chicago at the Hilton Palmer House. More details will be announced at a later date including television and broadcasting information. Fernandez and the 2004 team are the first softball athletes to be inducted into the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame.

Dubbed the “Real Dream Team” on the cover of Sports Illustrated magazine, the 2004 U.S. Olympic Team went 9-0 in Athens, a record that included eight consecutive shutouts and four run-rule wins. In total, the Americans outscored opponents 51-1, not allowing an opponent to score until 55 2/3 innings into the tournament when Australia scored in the sixth inning of the
A note from The Inside Pitch editor Codi Warren

Welcome to the May 2012 edition of The Inside Pitch, the official newsletter of the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America.

Today, thousands of fans will arrive at the ASA Hall of Fame Stadium to watch their favorite college athletes compete for the title of NCAA Women’s College World Series (WCWS) Champions. If you can’t make it out to the Hall of Fame Stadium, don’t worry, you can catch the action live on ESPN. Seventeen games, including the “if necessary” games, will be aired throughout the week-long event.

What’s great about the WCWS is that three of the eight squads have current members of the U.S. Women’s National Team, and we have 17 participating-athletes competing for the final five spots on the Women’s National Team in June. With the possibility of an NCAA Championship and an opportunity to represent the Red, White and Blue, the post-season will definitely be exciting.

Remember, if you would like to have a news item or photo included in The Inside Pitch, please send me an electronic copy by the 15th of every month at cwarren@softball.org.

Thank you all for everything you do!

FOR LOVE OF THE GAME...

Stephanie Lee and her fiancé Steve of Oklahoma, two softball enthusiasts, came out to the ASA Hall of Fame Stadium to take engagement photos.

The Inside Pitch
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Fernandez is a three-time Olympic Gold Medalist.

Gold Medal Game.

Members of the 2004 U.S. Olympic Softball Team are Laura Berg (Santa Fe Springs, Calif./Fresno State), Crystl Bustos (Canyon Country, Calif./Palm Beach Community College), Fernandez (Long Beach, Calif./UCLA), Jennie Finch (La Mirada, Calif./Arizona), Amanda Freed (Cypress, Calif./UCLA), Lori Harrigan (Las Vegas, Nev./UNLV), Lovieanne Jung (Fountain Valley, Calif./Arizona), Kelly Kretschman (Indian Harbour Beach, Fla./Alabama), Jessica Mendoza (Camarillo, Calif./Stanford), Tairia Mims Flowers (Tucson, Ariz./UCLA), Stacey Nuveman (La Verne, Calif./UCLA), Leah O’Brien-Amico (Chino Hills, Calif./Arizona), Cat Osterman (Houston, Texas/Texas), Jenny Topping (Whittier, Calif./Cal State Fullerton) and Natasha Watley (Irvine, Calif./UCLA). The three alternate members were Jaime Clark (Tustin, Calif./Washington), Nicole Giordano (Saugus, Calif./Arizona) and Lauren Lappin (Anaheim, Calif./Stanford). The team was coached by Mike Candrea (Tucson, Ariz./Arizona Head Coach) with assistant coaches Ken Eriksen (Tampa, Fla./South Florida Head Coach) and John Rittman (Palo Alto, Calif./Stanford Head Coach).

"First of all, what a great honor for the 2004 Olympic team and Lisa to be inducted into the Olympic Hall of Fame," said 2004 and 2008 Olympic head coach Mike Candrea. "This team set the standard for our sport as they performed flawlessly in Athens and dominated the world. They put together a great performance by great athletes and truly committed to the process of being the very best ever. I am so proud to have been a part of this great group of athletes, coaches, and the USA Softball family."

A rare pitcher/hitter, Fernandez has the distinction of holding four Olympic records in Athens. No U.S. Olympic Team has ever given a more dominant performance with as many team and individual Olympic records broken en route to the Gold Medal. Among the teams records set were the most hits (73), highest team batting average (.343) and highest slugging percentage (.559). Fernandez set the individual record for batting average with .545 while Crystal Bustos’ 10 RBI and five home runs were also records.

The U.S. pitching staff, led by Fernandez, had the lowest combined earned run average (.12) in Olympic history. One run is also the fewest allowed by a team in Olympic history. And dominant pitching was no fluke in Athens as the team also had a .22 ERA during the "Aiming for Athens" Olympic preparation tour, in which they went 53-0 in 30 cities.

While the team relished in on-the-field triumphs, the 2004 U.S. Olympic Softball Team battled off-the-field tragedy. The team wore "SC" on their helmets to honor Sue Candrea, coach Candrea’s wife, who passed away from a brain aneurysm 10 days before the team left for Greece. Sue was traveling with the team in central Wisconsin on the "Aiming for Athens" tour.

"It is an incredible honor for all of us to be inducted, together, into the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame;" said three-time medal winner Stacey Nuveman. "Our Gold-Medal performance in Athens was truly a team effort, which makes this team honor very fitting. We had a special group and overcame very difficult circumstances to win in such a dominant fashion in 2004. I could not be more proud of our team and our accomplishments. Thanks to you the fans who voted for us, and I cannot wait until the induction ceremony in July!"

Other honors garnered by the 2004 U.S. Olympic Softball Team were the 2004 USOC Team of the Year award and the 2004 ESPY for Best Female Olympic Performance. Candrea was named the 2004 USOC Coach of the Year and for her individual performance in Athens, Fernandez was a finalist for the 2004 USOC SportsWoman of the Year award.

Fernandez is part of a rare class of U.S. Olympians who hold three Olympic Gold Medals from three Olympic Games. In 1996, 2000 and 2004, Fernandez led the Americans to the Gold Medal, the only pitcher to appear in three Olympic finales. Most notably, she entered the final game of the 1996 Olympic Games in the sixth inning and earned the save as Team USA defeated China 3-1 for the inaugural softball Olympic Gold Medal. Overall, she achieved a 7-2 record in the circle throughout her Olympic career, allowing only 20 hits, seven walks and six runs (four earned) while striking out 93 over 74.2 innings of Olympic play.

"When I heard I was a finalist for this opportunity, it meant so much to my family, especially my mom and dad," added Fernandez. "With my dad being born in Cuba and my mom born in Puerto Rico and for me being synonymous with representing the United States, this truly is the most amazing honor. I literally yelled when I got the call and when I called my parents we were all very emotional. Honestly, I am speechless and so thankful for my teammates, coaches, and so many who guided me during my career. Especially to the USOC as the support they provided with strength training, nutrition, psychology, the training center in Chula Vista, the list goes on and on. It really assisted our team to put on the amazing performance that we did."

While Fernandez is most renowned for her work in the circle, she also recorded 76 at-bats over three Games. Fernandez hit .333 (23-for-76) overall in Atlanta, Sydney and Athens with three doubles, three home runs and 15 runs batted in (RBI) and 13 runs scored.

"Being an Olympic athlete, well there is no greater level," added Fernandez. "That every four-year cycle is something so precious as there literally is just one moment in time. It is like an addiction that comes with it because it is the ultimate test of greatness and you have just a small window of opportunity to be your absolute best. It is most special because you represent, literally your entire country. When you go into that arena, you have millions of people cheering you on and that sense of pride is incredible. I still remember those people who would say thank you….and to know you did something for them in your own element of sport is breathtaking. And to think that the sport of softball provided me all these opportunities and experiences is never what I expected when I first picked up the ball as a child."

A rare pitcher/hitter, Fernandez has the distinction of holding four individual Olympic records in addition to those she helped set as a team. In 2000, she struck out 25 Australian batters, a record. She holds the Olympic record for fewest runs allowed. In 2004, she achieved the highest batting average (.545) in Olympic play and hit three doubles, another record. Fernandez currently resides in the Los Angeles area and is an assistant coach for the UCLA softball program.
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Hurry this grant period is only open until midnight EST May 31st, 2011.

Please be assured that all email contact information will be used solely for your organization’s participation in the Responsible Sports Community Grant program. We do not keep your email addresses and we will not contact them.

Artifact of the Month!

Since softball has such a rich and vast history, we want to share with you some of the amazing artifacts we have deep within our collections. Stay tuned every month for a glimpse into our archives!

What better way to promote an ASA Softball tournament than putting your Championship trophy in a department store?! That’s exactly what this city did!
ASA holds umpire school in Holland, Mich.

Over 80 umpires attended a National Umpire School at West Ottawa High School in Holland, Mich. April 27-29. Julie Johnson, a 2011 ASA Hall of Fame inductee and umpire in the 1996 Olympic Games, helped lead the instructors at the school. Other Hall of Fame members in attendance were Bill Humphrey and 2012 inductee Chris Armijo. Umpires from several states attended the school to train in the proper mechanics and new rules.

Gary Kuck named Deputy Umpire-in-Chief for Spokane ASA

Gary Kuck, in his 33rd year as an Amateur Softball Association umpire, has been named a Deputy Umpire-in-Chief (UIC) by Spokane ASA Commissioner Fuzzy Buckenberger. Kuck, who retired from the military after a 22-year career and is a respiratory therapist, has been a member of the Spokane Softball Umpires Association (SSUA) since 1986. He has served many positions on the SSUA Board of Directors, including his current position as vice president for the adult phase, and also serves on the Spokane ASA Board of Directors.

He has umpired in 10 ASA National Tournaments – “literally from coast to coast; from Seattle to Miami,” he said – in modified pitch, fast pitch and slow pitch. He is an ASA Elite Umpire in modified pitch, a member of the National Indicator Fraternity since 1995 and is at the Gold level in the ASA Medals program. Kuck has also umpired in two Washington state high school championship tournaments.

Kuck joins Spokane ASA UIC Randy Harnasch’s staff that also includes Deputy Ken Mathia. Kuck will primarily be involved in the modified pitch and fast pitch programs and Mathia in slow pitch.
How Does Quality Lighting Generate Savings?

Lighting an outdoor sports facility is an important long-term investment. To ensure your organization receives the greatest lighting value for your dollars, always evaluate the critical performance factors that translate into real operational savings. Whether it’s installing lights for the first time or comparing the cost of upgrading to a new system versus a prior technology, it’s essential to pencil it out before making a final decision.

A key term used in the assessment of a sports-lighting system is life-cycle cost savings. This concept is used to comprehensively compare the sum of the recurring operational costs over the entire life of a system. While key issues that impact the operating cost of a lighting system include energy, maintenance, and operating expenses; the number of fixtures, the price of electricity, unexpected repairs, and management and staff time should not be overlooked. Additionally, there are recurring costs with potential to provide the most significant life-cycle costs savings. Those include the installation of new generation technology and controls that will significantly reduce energy usage, group relamps, and lamp maintenance.

Controlling Energy and Labor

Labor and energy savings can be further enhanced with automated system monitoring devices. Programmable controls that switch lights on/off even 20 minutes closer to actual usage time can result in a 10 percent energy savings.

The automated control systems, included in the base price of some manufacturer’s systems, are more reliable than timers and can more precisely accommodate last-minute scheduling changes for increased savings. College of DuPage P.E. Event Specialist Bonny Balfanz schedules events for the Illinois school’s 17 intercollegiate athletic teams and a host of local rental groups. Lighting control and monitoring technologies allow her to easily automate multiple on/off schedules and reduce staff expenses.

“As far as my costs, you’re looking to call someone in to turn the lights on or off each time of use. The reporting system can be generated at any time and it shows the cost for lights per group. This is a great accounting tool,” Balfanz said.

Reducing Energy Consumption

Luminaire design and how it’s applied will determine the number of fixtures needed to achieve desired light levels. Fewer fixtures means greater savings.

In North Carolina’s Robeson County School District, a life-cycle cost savings analysis compared the previous lighting technology to new energy-efficient systems for 14 different softball, baseball, and football fields that were not meeting required light levels. The evaluation convinced administrators that new technology efficiencies could generate savings to offset the initial purchase price. Meeting current North Carolina High School Athletic Association lighting standards, Robeson County used 40% fewer fixtures with the new technology.

Cutting Maintenance

One of the most time consuming and expensive aspects of lighting for a maintenance staff is spot maintenance – replacing lamps as they burnout – and group relamping at planned intervals. Considering the additional cost of maintenance equipment or contracting electricians to perform spot repairs and group relamps could run into the thousands. That’s why it’s important to look for warranty programs that include these maintenance issues. Ask for a long-term warranty that covers the life of a system from a reputable company that backs its products with staff and resources. A good warranty can keep your lighting system energy efficient, productive, and reliable.

A long-term warranty can be an attractive option when lacking access to equipment to perform replacements. “Our maintenance staff is overtaxed as it is, so they’re happy to no longer climb poles,” said Robeson County Athletic Director Ronnie Chavis.

At estimated usage and kilowatt rates, average energy consumption with the new lighting technology was projected to drop 42% for a savings of approximately $203,000 dollars. Combined with cost reductions in group relamps, maintenance, and energy reductions from the use of controls, total savings were projected to reach $405,000 over the 25-year life of the project.

Taking the time to pencil out a long-term investment in a quality sports-lighting system could be one of the best decisions your organization will ever make. By looking at the total life-cycle cost savings of a system, you can be assured that every critical performance factor and operational cost has been calculated. When you’re ready to evaluate systems, look to Musco Sports Lighting, a trusted source of energy-efficient outdoor sports-lighting systems and services for more than 30 years. Click here to find out more on how to get your project started.
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Featuring USA Softball Two-time Olympic head coach Mike Candrea, Two-Time Olympian Cat Osterman and 2008 Olympians Andrea Duran and Caitlin Lowe, and former National Team member Amy Hillenbrand.
Umpires announced for World Cup of Softball VII and Border Battle IV

Thirteen umpires from six countries will partake in the World Cup of Softball VII and Border Battle IV in Oklahoma City, the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America recently announced. The World Cup of Softball, an international women's fast pitch event that includes six countries, is June 27- July 2 at the ASA Hall of Fame Stadium while the men's slow pitch Border Battle IV is June 30.

“It is an honor to be selected as an umpire to represent your country in any international event,” said ASA Supervisor of Umpires Kevin Ryan. “These umpires have earned the right to do so. It is their umpiring ability that has allowed them this opportunity. I am sure they’re nervous and excited to be able umpire both the Border Battle and the World Cup.”

Umpires for the World Cup VII are Australia’s Ron Housion, Brazil’s Fernando Silva, Canada’s Peter Kluszczynski, Netherlands’ Bob Gieskens, Puerto Rico’s Reynaldo Mora and the United States’ Diane Carden (Newark, Del.), Mike Latona (Winter Haven, Fla.) and Sue Sawyer (Orange, Calif.). The umpires will work 18 international softball games that feature Australia, Brazil, Canada, Netherlands, Puerto Rico and the 2012 USA Softball Women’s National Team.

“This has been a 16-year goal of mine to be able to work such a high level of international softball,” said Sue Sawyer. “You put in so much effort and spend so much time away from home and when you get the call that you’ve been selected for an event like this it’s truly an honor.”

Five umpires have been selected for the Border Battle IV, including Ben Clements of Canada. The U.S. umpires are Tom Borucki (Seaville, N.J.), Roger Garcia (Anchorage, Alaska), Chris McGee (Hattiesburg, Miss.) and Tim Watts (Lincoln, Neb.). In addition to the Border Battle IV, a game that will be internationally televised on ESPN, the umpires will also work the Slow Pitch Slowdown scheduled for Wednesday, June 27 at 7 p.m. in a matchup between the USA Softball Men’s Slow Pitch Team and the new USA Softball Men's Futures Slow Pitch Team.

“Because this sport is not in the Olympics, to be invited to work this game is the highest honor that a slow pitch umpire can receive,” said Chris McGee. “The fact that only four Americans and one Canadian are selected just adds to the honor of being selected.”

Tickets for the World Cup VII and Border Battle IV are now on sale. Tickets to the Border Battle and all other slow pitch games games are included in all-session ticket packages for the World Cup, which are $275 for the Ultimate Fan Zone premium seating in the first three rows of the stadium, $80 for other reserved seating and $45 for general admission seating, and can be purchased online now at SoftballOutlet.com or by calling 800-654-8337. Single session general admission tickets are also available.

The World Cup and Border Battle are events sanctioned by the International Softball Federation.
Former Colorado ASA Commissioner passes away

Charles “Chuck” W. Rice of Aurora, Colo., made his journey with his family by his side on April 30, 2012. Born in 1930 in Boston, Mass., to Frank and Nevada Rice, Chuck was the eighth of nine children. Chuck is survived by his wife of 61 years, Sarah “Sally” Rice; six children, Sheryl Pitts (Norman), Connie Rice (Tressa), Dale Rice (Virgina), Craig Rice (Lynnnda), Paula Gallegos (Bryan), and Alan Rice (Lynette); 22 grandchildren; and 18 great-grandchildren. Chuck was a 31-year U.S. Air Force veteran and spent another 20 years driving school buses for Aurora Public Schools. He was heavily involved in softball as an umpire and later as the Colorado State Commissioner for the Amateur Softball Association. Chuck was a Mason for more than 50 years and his passion for volunteering and helping others, especially children, was more than apparent as a Shriner. Chuck will be interred at Fort Logan National Cemetery. A Celebration of Life will be held at the El Jebel Shrine Temple, 4625 W. 50th Ave., Denver, for all his family and friends on May 8, 2012.

ASA says goodbye to Hall of Fame member and former Central Virginia ASA Commissioner/President

H. Franklin “Frank” Taylor III, who died May 15, was long regarded as the godfather of Richmond-area softball. Mr. Taylor served as commissioner of the Central Virginia branch of the Amateur Softball Association during 1969-2004. He was best known for a Memorial Day Weekend tournament he launched in 1970. Thirty-two teams participated. The Richmond Round Robin developed into “The World’s Largest Softball Tournament,” drawing 424 slow-pitch teams from 16 states at its peak in 1995.

“There were 19 or 20 teams that came from Connecticut one year,” Ann Taylor, Frank Taylor’s wife for 49 years, recalled. “It was unreal.” Teams played on fields all over the area, and Mr. Taylor, who was 71 and a local attorney, once estimated the tournament annually brought $2 million to the region.

“He loved softball. He liked all sports,” said Ann Taylor, who helped organize tournaments. “And Frank felt like he could make a difference. We’ve always felt that in softball, we were giving back to the community which had always been so good to us.”

Mr. Taylor experienced declining health before his death. A native of Richmond, Mr. Taylor was a 1957 graduate of Hermitage High, a 1961 graduate of Randolph-Macon College, and a 1965 graduate of the University of Richmond’s T.C. Williams School of Law.

He twice served as National president of the Amateur Softball Association and is a member of the Amateur Softball Hall of Fame.
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Schutt Sports unveils new USA Softball Women’s National Team Aqua Tech helmet for 2012

Schutt Sports, the official helmet supplier of the USA Softball National Team program, unveiled the new Team USA Aqua Tech helmet for the Women's National Team (WNT) 2012 season. With a full schedule of events including the World Cup of Softball VII and the International Softball Federation (ISF) Women's World Championships, the Red, White and Blue will perform wearing this new style and look of the USA helmet.

“Our Aqua Tech graphics system is an exciting new way to enhance a team's batting helmets,” said Robert Erb, President and CEO, Schutt Sports. “They look amazing. We worked with Team USA to challenge our designers and painters to create a custom design that was truly unique and worthy of Team USA, and they’ve done it. Teams across the country are going to be talking about the new helmets for Team USA. Plus, for the first time, Team USA’s helmets include our TPU Cushioning - which means the protection and performance has never been better.”

The Aqua Tech design is a new style developed by Schutt Sports with assistance from the USA Softball National office.

“We are thrilled with the new helmet and design for the 2012 season,” said ASA/USA Softball Executive Director Ron Radigonda. “Our partnership with Schutt has been tremendous over the years and with the events and exposure of the women’s team this summer from the Title IX Game to the World Championships our athletes will be proud to represent USA with this unique style.”

The 2012 USA Softball WNT will participate in exhibition doubleheaders June 14 in Summersville, W.Va., and June 18 in Ashland, Ohio, before beginning international play in Oklahoma City and continuing on to Canada. Oklahoma City will host the team June 23 for a special exhibition Title IX 40th Anniversary Celebration Game against Canada and June 27-July 2 for the World Cup of Softball VII presented by Lumber Liquidators.

Click here for ticket links to all events!

From July 4-9, Team USA will compete at the Canadian Open Fast Pitch International Championship in Surrey, B.C., Canada, and July 13-22 at the ISF Women's World Championship in Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada. The 2012 USA Softball Women's Elite National Team was also scheduled to compete at the World University Softball Championship, Aug. 4-10, in Colorado Springs, Colo., but the tournament was canceled due to lack of participation.

2012 USA Softball Women's National Team Schedule

June 10-12, 2012
WNT Selection Camp - Ashland, Ohio
June 14, 2012

Exhibition doubleheader at 6 p.m. - WNT vs. Women's Elite National Team - Summersville, W.Va.
June 18, 2012
Exhibition doubleheader at 6:30 p.m. - WNT vs. Women's Elite National Team - Ashland, Ohio
June 23, 2012
Title IX 40th Anniversary Celebration Game - WNT vs. Canada - Oklahoma City
June 27-July 2, 2012
World Cup of Softball - Oklahoma City
July 4-9, 2012
Canadian Open Fast Pitch Championship - Surrey, B.C., Canada
July 13-22, 2012
ISF Women's World Championship - Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada

Schedule subject to change.

In January, 12 athletes were named to the 17-member USA Softball Women's National Team roster by the USA Softball Women's National Team Selection Committee (WNTSC). Athletes already on the team are Valerie Arioto (Pleasanton, Calif./Cal senior), Kaitlin Cochran (Yorba Linda, Calif./Arizona State 2009), Lauren Gibson (Pasadena, Md./Tennessee junior), Ashley Holcombe (Fayetteville, Ga./Alabama 2009), Molly Johnson (Tucson, Ariz./Kentucky 2010), Stacy May-Johnson (Reno, Nev./Iowa 2006), Jenae Leles (Sacramento, Calif./Arizona 2009), Michelle Moultrie (Jacksonville, Fla./Florida senior), Keilani Ricketts (San Jose, Calif./Oklahoma junior), Jordan Taylor (Valencia, Calif./Michigan 2011), Rhea Taylor (Buford, Ga./Missouri 2011) and Chelsea Thomas (Pleasantville, Iowa/Missouri junior).

All were members of the 2011 USA Softball Women's National Team.

Additional athletes will be named to the World Championship roster as well as an elite team roster on June 13 following selection camp in Ashland, Ohio.
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DETERMINATION RINGS WITH EVERY HIT
ASA Hall of Fame and Museum and gift shop reopens after renovations

The National Softball Hall of Fame and Museum and gift shop are now open to the public after nearly five months of renovations the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America announced today. Housed at the ASA National headquarters in Oklahoma City, the museum and gift shop, which have been closed since December, 2011, reopened with a new look and display of artifacts that are available for public viewing for the first time.

Since its grand opening in 1973 at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex, the National Softball Hall of Fame and Museum has served as the national institution for the study, interpretation and appreciation of the impact of softball on society as well as honoring those individuals who have made contributions to the sport. With 360 inductees, the National Softball Hall of Fame is among the most difficult sport halls in the nation in which to gain membership. Two initial renovations added additional square footage at the museum and gift shop, and in 2010, the museum received a face lift which included new carpeting and additional exhibit space in the bottom floor of the building.

Athletes and guests were offered a sneak peak last weekend to the gift shop and museum’s improved design and layout. Key features of the renovation include: a brand new entrance for the museum and gift shop, a newly installed elevator in the museum and an expansion to the gift shop which will display umpire clothing and accessories from OfficialGear.com. The remodel will also feature additional Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations with new bathrooms and front doors to allow easier access for visitors. Guests will also be able to visit the redesigned “Softball in the Olympic Games” room, which now features video footage from the 1996-2008 Olympic Games, revamped exhibit cases and text panels that summarize all four Olympic Games.

The public can view images of the renovation process by visiting the ASASoftball.com.

MEDIA NOTE: Journalists are allowed to tour and photograph/video the newly renovated National Softball Hall of Fame and Museum and gift shop. Tours can be scheduled by contacting Codi Warren calling (405) 425-3431.
Single session tickets on sale now for World Cup of Softball VII

Single session reserved and general admission tickets for the upcoming World Cup of Softball VII in Oklahoma City are on sale now. For as little as $10, fans can watch softball’s premiere international event live June 27-July 2 at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex.

Reserved single session tickets are $25 and general admission are $10 for each of the six days of the World Cup and Border Battle. The Saturday session includes admission to the Border Battle IV, a men’s slow pitch game between Canada and the 2012 USA Softball Men’s Slow Pitch National Team.

All tickets can be purchased by calling 1-800-654-8337 or by visiting SoftballOutlet.com.

ASA, DeMarini unveil 2012 ASA/USA Junior Olympic National Champion t-shirts

The Amateur Softball Association of America and DeMarini unveiled the NEW champion t-shirts that will be awarded to the winners of the 2012 ASA/USA Girls’ National Championships. These shirts will be awarded exclusively to the winners of the ASA/USA Girls’ 10-Under, 12-Under, 14-Under, 16-Under, 18-Under and GOLD 18-Under National Champions.

“DeMarini is proud to be a partner of ASA and the millions of players that share our insane dedication to the sport of fast pitch softball,” said Sara Bandauski of Wilson/DeMarini. “We look forward to every member of these ASA National Championship teams wearing their t-shirt as a symbol of their inclusion in a very small and elite group of players.”

Often termed “The Big Six”, the ASA/USA National Championships will get underway in late July. The 10-Under Girls’ Class A Championship will be held in Bloomington, Ind. and the 12-Under Class A Championship in Moline, Ill. Sioux Falls, S.D. will host the 14-Under Class A Championship and the 16-Under Championship will be held in Montgomery, Ala. Johnson City, Tenn. is slated to host the 18-Under Class A Championship while the ASA/USA Girls’ GOLD 18-Under will return to the ASA Hall of Fame Complex in Oklahoma City.

“The ASA/USA National Championships represent the highest level of ASA competition in each of the respective age groups,” said ASA Executive Director Ron Radigonda. “We are very thankful for the partnerships that we have with companies like DeMarini. It’s those partnerships that allow the ASA to provide additional incentives to our National Champions like this exclusive champions t-shirt. The shirt will represent the many hours of travel, hard work and dedication the culminate to that one thrilling moment this summer.”

The shirts will be distributed following the championship game of each of the above mentioned championships. In addition, a Wilson ball bucket will also accompany the shirts for 2012 championship teams.
Berg joins USA Softball Women’s National Team staff for summer

The most decorated USA Softball Olympic athlete will be back with the Red, White and Blue this summer as an assistant coach for the Women’s National Team. With three Olympic Gold Medals and one Olympic Silver, former center fielder Laura Berg (Santa Fe Springs, Calif.) will join head coach Ken Eriksen (Tampa, Fla./ head coach of Univ. of South Florida) and assistants Mike White (Eugene, Ore/ head coach Univ. of Oregon.) and Tairia Flowers (Tucson, Ariz./ head coach at Cal State Northridge) as an assistant for the 2012 season.

“It was such an honor to wear the Red, White and Blue as a player for many years,” said current Oregon State assistant coach Berg. “And now it’s even more of an honor and privilege to be a part of this coaching staff for the 2012 season and the International Softball Federation (ISF) World Championships. I am really excited for my new role and looking forward to this opportunity.”

Joining the national team in 1994 as a center fielder, Berg is a four-time Olympic medalist and has won 11 total medals, 10 Gold, while competing for the U.S. in the Olympic Games, the ISF Women’s World Championship and the Pan American Games. Berg previously had two stints as an assistant coach at her alma mater, Fresno State, from 2000-03 and 2005-06, stepping down to train with the National Team in the interim.

“I am very excited to have one of the world’s best outfielders join our National Team staff,” said head coach Eriksen. “Laura Berg’s tenacity and knowledge of fast pitch softball at the international level can only enhance our program’s climb towards the ISF World Championship this summer. Along with former Olympic Gold Medalist Tairia Flowers and former USA Men’s pitcher Michael White on staff, Berg rounds out a staff that I can count on to cover all facets of our team. Needless to say I can’t wait to get going again.”

Eriksen, White and Flowers return to the staff after leading the 2011 USA Women’s National Team to a fifth World Cup of Softball title as well as the program’s eighth Pan American Games Gold Medal.

All of the coaches mentioned above will assist at the team selection camp and then lead the two teams through the four exhibition games.

Click here for ticket information to all 2012 Summer events.
The Amateur Softball Association of America announced that Oklahoma pitcher Keilani Ricketts (San Jose, Calif.) was selected as the 2012 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year. Ricketts, also the 2012 Big 12 Player of the Year, helped lead the Oklahoma Sooners to their second straight NCAA Women’s College World Series (WCWS) appearance.

In the circle, Ricketts ranks third in the NCAA with a .99 ERA, fifth with 33 wins and her 393 strikeouts, including 21 in last weekend’s Super Regionals versus Arizona, rank third nationally. Ricketts is currently second in the nation only giving up 3.71 hits for every seven innings pitched. In 43 outings this season, Ricketts has recorded 23 double-digit strikeout games. The southpaw has recorded 1,190 career strikeouts, putting her third on the Big 12 career list.

“This is an honor and a dream come true,” said Ricketts. “I couldn’t have won without my team, they’re my backbone and my family. They give me tons of support and I wouldn’t be where I am without them.”

From the plate, the Oklahoma junior currently ranks eighth in the country with an on-base percentage of .563 and twelfth with an .853 slugging percentage. Ricketts is ninth nationally with 49 walks.

“This is the biggest individual honor that we’ve ever had in our program,” said Oklahoma Head Coach Patty Gasso. “She was up against some tough competition and it could have gone to any of them because they’re all phenomenal. Keilani has continued to get better every year and this is a tribute to her hard work. We are very proud of her.”

The other two finalists for the 2012 award were Pac-12 Player of the Year Valerie Arioto (Pleasanton, Calif.) of California and Pac-12 First-Team honoree Katelyn Boyd (Phoenix, Ariz.) of Arizona State.

The USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year award is voted on by coaching representatives from 11 Division I Conferences in the 15 ASA Regions as well as members of the media who consistently cover Division I Softball across the country, and previous Player of the Year recipients. Past winners of this award include UCLA’s Stacey Nuveman, Florida State’s Jessica Van der Linden, three-time winner from Texas Cat Osterman, Tennessee’s Monica Abbott, Virginia Tech’s Angela Tinch, two-time winner Washington pitcher/hitter Danielle Lawrie and 2011 winner Ashley Hansen from Stanford.
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—Ron Radigonda, Executive Director of ASA
Finch and Fernandez nab spots on Sports Illustrated Top 40 Female Athletes of the Title IX Era

Jennie Finch and Lisa Fernandez took two of the 40 spots on Sports Illustrated “Top 40 Female Athletes of the Title IX Era” list. To help recognize the 40th anniversary of the signing of Title IX, the “Top 40” is composed of female athletes who have taken advantage of the numerous opportunities that Title IX has given them.

Coming in at number 38 is Jennie Finch. Finch was part of a powerful U.S. pitching staff, who helped lead the 2004 U.S. National team to a 9-0 performance in the 2004 Olympic Games. With eight consecutive shutouts and a runs scored ratio of 51-1, the U.S. took the Gold in Athens to become what Sports Illustrated called on its August 30, 2004 cover, “The Real Dream Team.” Over her career, she piloted the national team to seven consecutive world championships before retiring in 2010. At the University of Arizona, Finch won 60 straight decisions and helped the Wildcats to the 2001 national crown.

Lisa Fernandez earned the number 11 spot atop the “Top 40” list. Fernandez, born the year before Title IX was passed, led the UCLA softball team to four straight NCAA championship appearances, beginning in 1990, and helped it to the national title in ’92 and ’90. She also led the U.S. softball team to three straight Olympic gold medals, in 1996, 2000 and 2004.

Both Fernandez and Finch are part of an elite group of athletes who will be inducted into the U.S. Olympic Hall of Fame this year. Fernandez will be inducted in the individual category while the 2004 U.S. Olympic Softball Team are the only team to be inducted.

ASA awards more ACE coaches

The Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America, Pocket Radar™ and Powerchalk™ continue to award prize packs to coaches who achieve an ACE Certification. Every time the ACE Program reaches a 1,000th milestone, ASA will award that coach with a Pocket Radar ($200 value) and the next coach with a custom Powerchalk account ($100 value).

The following coaches are the latest recipients:
- Beverly Gallegos (Caldwell, Idaho) - Pocket Radar
- Jamie Swanson (Reno, Nev.) - Power Chalk account
- Michael Scott (Clermont, Fla.) - Pocket Radar
- Cynthia Miller (Grants, N.M.) - Power Chalk account
The four umpires for the Title IX 40th Anniversary celebration game in Oklahoma City between the USA Women’s National Softball Team and the Canadian National Team have been named. The game is part of ESPN’s three-month companywide initiative, The Power of IX, recognizing the 40th anniversary of Title IX, signed June 23, 1972.

Umpires for the International contest are Chris Drumm (Oceanside, Calif.), Steve McCown (Wylie, Texas), Bonnie Heldman (Mansfield, Texas) and Cody Little (Mustang, Okla.).

“I’m honored to have the opportunity to work this game,” said Heldman. “I actually got my first job out of college because of Title IX.”

ESPN will offer a weekend of events and studio shows June 22-24 featuring women in sports across its networks – ABC, ESPN, ESPN2, ESPNU, ESPN3 and ESPN Classic – highlighted by a full day of programming Saturday, June 23. The multi-network programming will be tied together, beginning at 11 a.m. ET, through studio coverage from ESPN’s Bristol, Conn., headquarters. ESPN soccer analyst Julie Foudy will host from a Title IX-themed set and welcome special guests throughout the day who have impacted or been affected by the law.

All Tickets for the Title IX 40th Anniversary celebration game are general admission and can be purchased online for $7 at SoftballOutlet.com or by calling 800-654-8337. An autograph session with Team USA will be held following the game.

Ashland, Ohio will play host to the USA Softball Women’s National Team when they take on the USA Softball Women’s Elite National Team in an exhibition doubleheader, June 18, at Brookside Park. General admission tickets to the event can be ordered for $15 each by mailing the ticket order form to Ohio ASA Commissioner Warren Jones at the address provided.

“This is a wonderful opportunity for the City of Ashland,” said Jones. “Hosting the USA Women’s National Team gives the members of this community a chance to see, in person, some of the greatest softball in the world.”

The action kicks off Monday at 6 p.m. Following the doubleheader, USA National Team and Elite Team members will hold an autograph session for ticket holders in attendance.
ASA Hall of Fame Complex to host over 50 hours of live action on ESPN Family of Networks

The Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America is proud to announce the ASA Hall of Fame Complex located in Oklahoma City’s Adventure District will play host to over 50 hours of live ESPN programming from May 31 to July 2, 2012. Home to the NCAA Women’s College World Series (WCWS), the Title IX Celebration Game and the World Cup of Softball presented by Lumber Liquidators, the ASA four-field complex will certainly be on national display during 33 days of softball action.

“ASA Hall of Fame Stadium will once again prove to be the focal point of softball worldwide by hosting three major events over a 33 day period,” said Ron Radigonda, ASA/USA Softball Executive Director. “Close to 100,000 softball fans are expected to turn the turnstiles to view the Women’s College World Series, the 40th year anniversary celebration game of Title IX and the seventh edition of the World Cup of Softball and the fourth Border Battle. ASA/USA Softball is excited to welcome two new foreign teams to the World Cup as Puerto Rico and Brazil will be making their first appearance at the event.”

The NCAA WCWS kicks off on May 31 at noon local time and will feature 17 games over the course of seven days, including the ‘if necessary’ games. With the potential for 34 hours of programming, softball fans across the country will play witness to the best display of women’s college softball in the country.

Just 17 days later, on June 23, the USA Softball Women’s National Team and the Canadian National Team will square off in a Title IX celebration game on ESPN at 6 p.m. CST. Held on the 40th Anniversary to the day of the signing of this monumental movement in the United States, this two-hour window is a piece of a larger ESPN “Power of IX” celebration day aired across its entire family of networks.

“I am extremely proud of ESPN for recognizing and focusing on the 40th anniversary of the Title IX legislation,” said Carol Stiff, vice president, programming & acquisitions at ESPN. “The hours of programming across multiple ESPN networks on June 23 reinforce the company’s commitment to women’s sports. USA Softball is a perfect fit for our weekend programming line-up since the Women’s National Team players have directly benefitted from the Power of IX.”

Fast forward four more days and the Slow Pitch Showdown will kick off on June 27 at the ASA Complex where the USA Softball Men’s National Team will compete against the new USA Softball Future Men’s Slow Pitch Team at 7 p.m. CST on ESPN2. A compliment to the June 30 Border Battle, the Slow Pitch Showdown will present USA’s top slow pitch players and continue to bring more awareness and knowledge to the game.

The World Cup of Softball VII presented by Lumber Liquidators, kicks off on Thursday, June 28 with a total of 18 games of women’s international fast pitch. Six of those games, which feature Team USA, will be shown on ESPN or ESPN2 throughout the duration of the tournament. In its seventh year, the World Cup continues to be the premier event in women’s international fast pitch with 12 hours of live ESPN programming as well as 24 hours of live streaming from the stadium. The 2012 event welcomes participating teams from Australia, Brazil, Canada, the Netherlands and Puerto Rico.

On June 30, the Border Battle returns to the ASA Complex for round four with the U.S. leading the way with a 2-1 record over the Canadian Men’s Slow Pitch Team. Scheduled for 2 p.m. CST, the game will air on ESPN2.
The 2012 season continued at the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) Hall of Fame Complex in Oklahoma City May 18-20 with the ASA 10-Under Hall of Fame National Qualifier. The action kicked off Saturday morning at 8:30 a.m. when eight squads faced off on all four fields. Play was suspended and later cancelled on Sunday due to inclement weather, resulting in a two-way tie for first place. The Birmingham Thunderbolts (Birmingham, Ala.) and the 2001 Texas Shock-Mansfield (Mansfield, Texas) were crowned co-champions of the tournament.

Click here for a bracket.

The order of finish is listed below:
1. Birmingham Thunderbolts-
   Birmingham, Ala.
1. 2001 Texas Shock-Mansfield-
   Mansfield, Texas
3. Texas Elite Easton 01- Arlington, Texas
3. Stingers 01 Gold-Pearland, Texas
7. Texas Force 10U-McKinney, Texas
9. Texas Glory 10U Naudin-McKinney,
   Texas
9. OK Exclusive 01-Okahoma City, Okla.
9. Texas Glory Blue-Ft. Worth, Texas

ASA crowns two champions in 10-Under Hall of Fame Qualifier

Idaho ASA holds luncheon

Idaho ASA honored the following teams and individuals at its' annual state meeting. Over 100 people attended the meeting and MUSCO Hall of Fame Luncheon held at The Grove Hotel in Boise.

The following recognition and awards were present during the annual Luncheon sponsored by MUSCO Lighting.

The Boise Blast 18 & Under A team was recognized for winning the ASA Western A Tournament in 2011. Sixteen girls and coaches were able to attend.

The Red Halpern Award was awarded to: Joe Boggs, long-time Boise Field maintenance supervisor.

The Larry Musgrove Umpire award was given to: Dave Lamb Nampa

The Bob Martin Umpire Award was given to: Dave Hartman Twin Falls

Being inducted in the Idaho ASA Hall of Fame was fast pitch player Gary Kollman Caldwell

And Former Lewiston Parks and Recreation Director and Idaho ASA administrator Lynn Moss.
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References

ASA Official Portable Fence; NCAA Women’s Fastpitch “World Series” Division I, II & III Championships Series; City of Woodland, City of Santa Maria, Salem VA, etc.

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