A note from ASA/USA Softball
President E.T. Colvin

For the past two years I have had the honor and privilege to serve as President of ASA/USA Softball. As my second term comes to a close, I want to thank the ASA Council for giving me this great opportunity. There are too many people to thank for all the help and support I’ve had while serving as President. I will do my best to try to see all these people at the upcoming council meeting.

ASA/USA Softball is a great organization and being able to travel all over the country meeting people and promoting the sport of softball and telling the ASA story is an experience I’ll never forget. This Council Meeting is one of change. A new President, Phil Gutierrez and a new Executive Director, Craig Cress will take over the leadership of ASA and move the organization forward. Ron Radigonda is retiring after leading the ASA as Executive Director for the past 14 years and led ASA into the age of technology and brought the association to a level of financial stability.

As we move forward the success of ASA does not depend on Phil and Craig alone. All of us must step up; we must all do a better job to make our local associations more successful. That effort must come from the Commissioners. Both Phil and Craig have done everything possible to be prepared to take over the leadership of ASA. They are dedicated and committed to the success of ASA/USA softball. I appreciate their desire to lead this organization and pledge my support to do anything I can to help them. Again, thank you for the opportunity to serve as President. I look forward to seeing all of you at the council meeting. Be safe in your travels and may God Bless each and everyone of us.

The Inside Pitch
Official Newsletter of ASA/USA Softball

Dale McMann elected ISF President
Don Porter retires after 26 years

The International Softball Federation (ISF) recently announced that Canada’s Dale McMann has been elected President of the ISF at the 26th ISF Congress in Cartagena, Colombia. McMann replaces long-time President Don Porter, who announced his retirement following 26 years as the head of the international federation.

“Dale is a highly qualified, professional softball administrator and has the full support of ASA/USA Softball in his new role of ISF President,” said ASA/USA Softball Executive Director Ron Radigonda. “Dale has worked diligently for the development of softball worldwide for many years. He brings a wealth of talent and experience as a player and administrator to our game.”

Don Porter joined the ISF in 1965 as the Secretary General before being elected President in 1987. During his time at the helm of the ISF, Porter worked diligently to promote softball across the globe and provide softball players the opportunity to play on softball’s biggest stage: the Olympic Games. Under his leadership, softball appeared in four Olympic Games before it was shockingly voted out by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 2005. Since that time, Porter has overseen two attempts for softball’s Olympic reinstatement, including their most recent attempt at the IOC.

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A note from The Inside Pitch editor

Codi Warren

Welcome to the October 2013 edition of the Inside Pitch, the official newsletter of the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) and USA Softball.

We’ve got a lot of changes that are about to occur for ASA/USA Softball! Not only will we have a new President, but we also will have a new Executive Director by our next issue of the Inside Pitch in December! Following the conclusion of the Annual Council Meeting in Oklahoma City next week, Phil Gutierrez and Craig Cress will begin their new roles as the President and Executive Director for ASA/USA Softball, respectively. A lot of other changes will be decided at the Council Meeting, whether they are new playing rules, code/legislation or position appointments within our organization.

In between meetings, I hope you all have a chance to attend the Hall of Fame Banquet, the Wilson Sporting Goods Awards Luncheon and the Trade Show. These provide a good break from rule/legislation discussions and are a great opportunity to honor and award those who have helped keep our organization at the top of softball in the U.S.

I also hope you have time to stop by the ASA National Office to touch base with our Marketing/Communications staff. Julie, Steven and I are always interested in hearing your thoughts and opinions, and have some great tools to help you better your association in 2014!

If you have a news item you’d like to submit for the Inside Pitch, please email me at cwarren@softball.org.

Just as a reminder, next month will not have an issue of the Inside Pitch. The next issue is slated for the end of December. Talk to you soon!

Follow ASA/USA Softball on Instagram!

For behind the scenes photos and videos, “like” the ASA/USA Softball Instagram page at Instagram.com/usasoftball!

Joey Rich reaches umpire milestone

Missouri ASA Commissioner Joey Rich (in blue ASA umpire attire) umpired his 2,500th game on October 1! He is pictured above with both teams in an ASA Men’s League in Rolla, Mo. Joey has been a registered ASA umpire for 41 seasons (1973-2013). Congratulations Joey Rich!

Remember these dates!

- All proxy requests for the Council Meeting in Oklahoma City are due by November 1. The form to submit can be found on the portal under “Annual Meeting”.
- The deadline to submit all 2013 Local Association Champions is November 15. These will be included in the 2014 ASA Official Guide and Rule Book, so those received after November 15 will not be included. The form for this can also be found on the portal under “Tournaments”. Please contact Stephanie Brown for more information.

The Inside Pitch

Official newsletter of ASA/USA Softball
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Editor Codi Warren • E-mail cwarren@softball.org
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McMann elected ISF President

session in Buenos Aries, Argentina in September.

“I felt having served the ISF 48 years was enough and it was time for international softball to have new leadership,” said Porter. “I will continue to serve as the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) co-president until the election of a new president in March 2014. As a member of the ISF Board of Directors, I will continue to assist and help President McMann in the interim in special and ongoing projects. We have not given up our efforts to see softball and baseball returned to the Olympic Program. There are still millions of young girls and boys that would like to participate in our sports and we want to give them that opportunity.”

Dale McMann served as President of Softball British Columbia from 1986-1990 before serving as President of Softball Canada from 1990-2001. He acted as North American Vice-President of the ISF from 1993-2009 before being elected First Vice-President in 2009.

“I am honored with the great trust the membership of the ISF has offered me” said McMann. “I want to acknowledge the many decades of service Mr. Don Porter has given to our sport and I look forward to his continued guidance and efforts. I would also like to thank my family for their ongoing support and I share this honor with them. It is a daunting challenge for me to follow Don Porter’s long list of accomplishments.”

The ISF also elected the following Board of Directors, which carries a four year term:

**President:** Dale McMann (CAN)

**Secretary General:** Beng Choo Low (MAS)

**1st Vice President:** Darryl Clout (AUS)

**2nd Vice President:** Jesus Suniaga (VEN)

**Vice Presidents - Africa:** Fridah Shiroya (KEN); Tirelo Mukokomani (BOT)

**Vice Presidents - Latin America:** Antonio Morales (COL); Tommy Velazquez (PUR)

**Vice President - North America:** E.T. Colvin (USA)

**Vice President - English Speaking Caribbean:** Endy Croes (ARU)

**Vice Presidents - Asia:** Tan Yin (CHN); Taeko Utsugi (JPN)

**Vice Presidents - Europe:** Francesca Fabretto (AUT); André van Overbeek (NED)

**Vice Presidents - Oceania:** Rex Capil (NZL); Bob Steffy (GUM)

**Athlete Representatives:** Maria Soto (VEN), term ends 2014; Robert Rosthenhausler (USA), term ends 2016

**Members:** Beatrice Allen (IOC Member - GAM); Meliton Sanchez (IOC Member - PAN)

**Immediate Past President:** Don Porter (USA)

The locations for the next three world championships were also chosen following the 2009 decision to hold world championships every two years for each respective division:

- **16th ISF Women’s World Championship (2016)** - Surrey, BC, Canada
- **11th ISF Jr. Men’s World Championship (2016)** - Midland, MI, USA
- **16th ISF Men’s World Championship (2017)** - Whitehorse, YK, Canada

The ISF Hall of Fame Commission also elected 18 people from nine countries in five different categories to join the ISF Hall of Fame.

**PLAYER:** Exiquio Jesus Echarte Leiva (CUB), Oria Wood Knowles (BAH), Luisa Maria Medina Gonzalez (CUB), Mike Piechnik (CAN), Michael White (NZL), Hayley Petrie (AUS) and Brooke Wilkins (AUS)

**COACH:** Bob Crudgington (AUS), Carlos Caro (PUR), and Eduardo Ramon Sabate (ARG)

**umpire:** Santos Vazquez Ortiz (PUR)

**ADministrator:** Miguel Acosta Serrano (CUB), Enrique O. Alcarez (ARG), Joseph Chejne Janna (COL), Romell Knowles (BAH), Antonio Morales Arrieta (COL), and R.B. Thomas (USA)

**Meritorious:** Javier Anaya Lorduy (COL)

Members: Beatrice Allen (IOC Member - GAM); Meliton Sanchez (IOC Member - PAN)

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Meritorious: Javier Anaya Lorduy (COL)
Have you booked your Holiday travel? Why not stay where Team USA stays? Save up to 15% by staying at any hotel in the Hilton Honors portfolio of brands! Click here to access your savings!
New York State ASA inducts seven into Hall of Fame

New York State held its 2013 Francis Mott NY State Hall of Fame on Saturday, October 08 at the Holiday Inn in Utica, NY. Over 200 people attended the ceremony to honor the new inductees.

Inducted this year were: Bill Butler, Gary Gladding, Mark Lazzaro, Rocky Marucci, Jim Spohr and Dennis Williams in the Player Category. Also inducted was Wayne Remond in the Meritorious Service Category.

The seven new inductees bring the total of individuals honored to a total of 107.

Among the 200-plus people attending were 25 former inductees including Vince Caserto, a member of the ASA National Softball Hall of Fame.

The New York State Hall of Fame holds its’ Inductee Dinner every two years and is always on the look out for new inductees. Inductees in the Player Category must have competed in New York State Softball for a minimum of ten years and maintained a high level of ability to be considered.

In addition to the Hall of Fame induction, Dwight Lashley and Marty Brefka were inducted into the New York State Indicator Fraternity (NIF). Four other officials, Frank Anderson, Daniel Herman, Norman Howard and Lynn Nemeth, were unable to attend for their induction into New York State Indicator Fraternity.

Dwight Lashley, Tom Terry and Jim Gavin also received the NIF Award. Lynn Nemeth and Steve Kattell were also scheduled to receive the NIF Award but were unable to attend.

Wisconsin ASA Umpire of the Year

By the Portage Daily Register

Portage native Josh Brandsma recently received one of the highest honors an amateur umpire can obtain, when he was named the Wisconsin Amateur Softball Association Umpire of the Year at the Wisconsin ASA Hall of Fame Ceremony in Fond Du Lac in August.

Brandsma began his umpiring career by working men’s and co-ed softball games three nights a week while attending UW-La Crosse back in 1996.

That same year he attended an ASA umpire clinic, and quickly realized umpiring was more than just a hobby, but a start of a career in officiating.

In 1996, Brandsma was assigned to the Men’s D State Championship in Stevens Point. Since then, Brandsma has worked 17 state championships at all levels of slow pitch.

Brandsma credits his success at the state level to being mentored by John Eckendorf, Roger Korger, Jon Gallager and Jim and Chad Mitchell.


What he learned at these schools helped him excel at the 2011 Men’s Class C Slowpitch National Tournament in Columbus, Ohio and the 2012 Men’s Class B National Tournament at the ASA Hall of Fame Stadium in Oklahoma City, where he worked the championship games of each event.

Brandsma also represented Wisconsin at the Men’s Class A National Championship Tournament, played in Ridgeland, Miss.
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Midland, Mich. selected to host 2016 ISF Jr. Men’s World Championship

The International Softball Federation (ISF) announced that Midland, Michigan will host the 2016 ISF Junior Men’s World Championship following approval by the world governing body’s Board of Directors and ISF Congress Members. It will mark the second time a World Championship has been held in Midland.

“We are excited to welcome national teams from around the world to Midland in 2016,” said tournament host committee co-chairman Jeff Servinski. “Midland has a storied history in hosting fastpitch softball events. It is our intent to build upon this legacy as we host these young, international athletes for the junior men’s world championship.”

The United States has not played host to an ISF world championship since Midland was the site of the 1996 ISF Men’s World Championship. The only other Junior Men’s World Championship in the United States took place in Fargo, N.D. in 1985. Team USA finished second falling to New Zealand 2-1 in the Championship game that year.

“We very excited to have the 2016 ISF Junior Men’s World Championships right here in our backyard,” said USA Softball Junior Men’s National Team Head Coach Tim Lyon. “Midland is a great city for men’s Fastpitch and they will do a tremendous job hosting that event.”

Surrey, British Columbia, Canada, was also awarded with the 2016 Women’s World Championship. Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada won the bid to host the 2017 Men’s World Championship on Friday.

Michele Smith joins PHIT America

By WorldGolf.com

PHIT America, a non-profit education and advocacy organization designed to combat the nation’s inactivity and obesity crisis, announced LPGA star Ryann O’Toole, USA Water Polo four-time Olympic medalist Heather Petri and USA Softball two-time Olympic gold medalist Michele Smith as celebrity ambassadors.

Rising from their shared passions for being active, each athlete lives in a manner that aligns with the PHIT America mantra of creating “A Movement for a Fit and Healthy America.” Founded in January 2013, the organization focuses on overcoming the inactivity pandemic affecting 192 million people across the country.

Smith, a softball gold medalist at the 1996 and 2000 Olympics, is committed to engaging kids on and off the playing field. She shares her passion for the game and an athletic lifestyle with the next generation of girls through a variety of camps and clinics.

“The percentage of Americans who are completely sedentary has steadily increased over the past five years with inactivity remaining the prime contributor to escalating healthcare costs,” says Jim Baugh, Founder of PHIT America, former President of Wilson Sporting Goods and a 2011 inductee into the Sporting Goods Industry Hall of Fame. “Celebrity athletes like Ryann, Heather and Michele are all helping to spread the message of PHIT America.”
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THE USA SOFTBALL LEGACY CLUB PROVIDES FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO USA SOFTBALL NATIONAL TEAM PROGRAMS AND ATHLETES THROUGH ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP GIVING. THESE CONTRIBUTIONS ASSIST IN SUPPORTING COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH TRAINING TEAMS FOR INTERNATIONAL PLAY AND TRAVEL FOR COMPETITION. LEGACY CLUB MEMBERS ARE FRIENDS, ALUMNI AND ADVOCATES OF USA SOFTBALL WHO RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF CONTINUING THE LEGACY ESTABLISHED BY THOSE IN THE PAST WHO HAVE WORN THE RED, WHITE AND BLUE.

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There will be four inductees, including Ann Teague Park of Graham, going into the North Carolina ASA Hall of Fame.

Park played as an outfielder for slowpitch teams in Burlington and Graham.

She competed in nine ASA National Tournaments, including on the winning team of an ASA Church National Championship in 1980 where she was the Most Valuable Player of that event. She also was part of a national runner-up squad while earning All-American honors in 1981 and 1982.

Others dubbed for induction are Mac Richardson, a slowpitch infielder from Mt. Holly; Harvey Groner, a slowpitch infielder from Gastonia; and Barry Black, a slowpitch infielder from Walnut Cove.

Umpires Al Collins of New Bern and Sam Hancock will go into the Hall of Honor.

The N.C. Amateur Softball Hall of Fame is housed in Burlington City Park.

Nearly 40 years ago, Barry Black fractured his skull playing basketball for Guilford College. A short time later, his fledgling baseball career ended after one year in the Pittsburgh Pirates organization, because he couldn’t risk another head injury.

But the turn of events ultimately led Black, now living in Walnut Cove, to a Hall of Fame softball career. For that, he’ll be enshrined in the North Carolina ASA Hall of Fame in Burlington, recognition for a career in which he was named an ASA tournament MVP 39 times.

Black, a Parkland High graduate, said he first heard of the Hall of Fame about 15 years ago and that he was nominated only recently, adding: “It was a great surprise.

He played for the Piedmont Sheet Metal team that won the Men’s Class A Slowpitch National Championship in 1974 and also played five seasons for Poindexter Lumber

In addition to the MVP awards, Black won 17 Golden Gloves and was named to the All-World team three times.

Commissioner Tony Laws of the North Carolina ASA chapter said that it was Black’s demeanor, not the awards, that made him memorable.

“One of the things, he was the type of player that smiled all the time,” Laws said. “You don’t see that all the time, but that was one of the things I noticed about him…. he always had a smile on his face.”

Black eventually gave up softball to focus on his job as a researcher at R.J. Reynolds but said he is still approached by people who remember him from as a player.

“It’s a really great honor, I think,” he said. “I really enjoyed it and met so many great players and great sponsors.”

Every year ASA/USA Softball donates money to the Susan G. Komen foundation for breast cancer research! Each Fall, ASA/USA conducts an online auction of pink items signed by our national teams and give the proceeds to help find a cure! Not only is this done on a National level, local ASA/USA Association umpires, staff and volunteers participate in a variety of programs ranging from memorial tournaments to fundraisers to help benefit breast cancer research.
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Questions? Please contact Andy Dooley at (540) 587.6844 or piedmontasa@verizon.net.
Karen Johns inducted into the local Athletic Hall of Fame

By the Trussville Tribune

Trussville City Schools Athletics Director and former USA Softball National Team member and coach Karen Johns was recently inducted into the Hanover Park Regional High School District Athletic Hall of Fame in New Jersey.

A 1984 graduate of Whippany Park High School in Whippany, N.J., Johns was an All-Conference, All-Morris County and All-State guard in basketball and shortstop in softball.

In college, Johns was a two-time NCAA Division I All-American First Team catcher at the University of South Carolina. She was a three-time International Softball Federation (ISF) World Champion Gold Medalist as a player on the USA Women’s National Team. After her retirement, she joined the USA National Team Coaching Staff, where she earned a Gold Medal at the 2006 ISF World Championship as an assistant coach.

At the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Johns was an assistant coach, earning a silver medal. In 2010, she was named the Head Coach for the Junior Women’s National Team and would go on to lead the Jr. Women to a Gold Medal at the ISF Junior Women’s World Championship in Cape-town, South Africa.

Johns has also been the head softball coach at the University of Virginia and the University of Florida.

Johns has been Trussville City Schools’ athletics director since July 2011.

Did you know...

ASA/USA Softball has taken great strides to protect the integrity of the sport. Each year, ASA/USA’s Equipment Testing and Certification committee examines the current rules and specifications governing various items of equipment. This committee makes recommendations to ASA/USA’s council comprised of ASA/USA commissioners, select youth and player representatives, umpire-in-chiefs, elite athletes and other affiliated members. The council is the ultimate decision maker of ASA/USA rules and regulations regarding equipment. ASA/USA uses certified labs that specialize in the dynamics of bat and ball collisions and these labs use all of the latest ASTM Standards when performing these tests. The results in the lab help ASA/USA better understand equipment performance through experimental testing and numeric model.
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ASA/USA Softball loses Commissioner Emeritus Tillman Ryser

C. Tillman Ryser, 80, of Tulsa died on Friday, October 11, 2013, in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was born on August 4, 1933 at home in Muskogee, OK, to Bessie Maude and Lester LeRoy Ryser. He received the Eagle Scout Award from First United Methodist Church in Muskogee, OK and entered the Navy in June 1951 serving for 4 years. On August 7, 1955 he married the love of his life, Mary Sue Crittenden and they were married 58 years. He was preceded in death by his parents, Lester and Bessie Ryser; brothers, Robert, Lee, Marvin, and Norman Ryser; sisters, Doris Bates and Carley Mae Elsky.

Tillman is survived by his wife, Mary Sue; daughters, Teresa Ryser and partner, Mindy Sallee, Deanna Ryser; grandchildren, Dahlia Cruz, Ashley Cruz and James Cypert and wife, Christina; great-grandchildren, Claire Weakley, Asher Morgan and Ethan Weakley; 18 nieces and nephews and 30 great-nieces and greatnephews.

He worked at McDonnell Douglas for four years and retired from American Airlines after 35 years of service. He was a past member of the Tulsa Rock and Mineral Society and the Tulsa Travel Trailer Club. He was a past volunteer coach and referee of the University United Methodist Church Boy’s High School team at the YMCA.

He was the founder of the Tulsa Girls Softball Federation and served as the Federation President for it’s first five years. He was the ASA Tulsa Metro Commissioner for 40 years, during which Tulsa Metro hosted international women’s softball teams from Mainland China, Japan, Taiwan, Puerto Rico, Netherlands, Australia, and the first U.S. Olympic Softball Team. He attended many International Softball Federation (ISF) World Championship Tournaments and attended the 1983 Pan American Games in Caracas, Venezuela and the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia. He also served as a volunteer State Coordinator for AARP for the past 10 years.

Tillman leaves behind many whose lives he touched through his work with the ASA/USA Softball.

Register for the 6th Annual Fun Walk!

Don’t forget to sign up for the 6th annual Fun Walk, presented by the Missouri ASA! On Thursday, November 14 at 6:45 a.m., get the chance to say you survived Oklahoma City’s underground! Walk a little, walk a lot the important factor is that you WALK! Receive a FREE t-shirt and 80th Anniversary flipping coin (while supplies last)! Meet in the Renaissance Hotel lobby at 6:30 a.m. for a group photo and to receive your FREE items!
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*Figure reflects average national savings for customers who switched to Liberty Mutual. Based on data collected between 1/1/12 and 6/30/12. Individual premiums and savings will vary.
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The competition to be the next ASA Softball team to earn a $2,500 grant from Liberty Mutual Insurance Responsible Sports wraps up on November 30th.

It’s a good thing that it’s easy to finish on top! Just go to Responsible Sports to register your team. Then rally parents, coaches and team supporters to review either the Responsible Sports Parenting or Responsible Sports Coaching guide online. After reading either guide, they’ll have to complete a short, corresponding online quiz.

Every time a person within your organization passes an online quiz, it’s worth one point. So connect with friends, family and neighbors to put up as many points as possible. Track your organization’s progress at the Community Grant leaderboard!

Time is on your side, and so are we, with a wealth of tools to drive your way to victory, such as our Tell-A-Friend Tool, a free and easy-to-use e-mail assistant, which will quickly spread awareness about your Responsible Sports Community Grant effort. Check out the Community Grant Toolkit for more helpful resources, including social media ideas! Get started today!
You’re not just buying lights. You’re buying an affordable system that reduces energy and maintenance costs year after year. That means while decreasing wasted energy, you’ll save money and help protect the environment for her future.

To learn more visit: www.musco.com/generations
The City of Roswell understood the importance of having a top notch facility for girls softball to come and play tournaments.

Previously known as “Wool Bowl Softball Complex”, the facility was completely torn down and built from the bottom up to provide a first-class facility for softball athletes. In addition to new sod and dirt on each field, new irrigation systems, fencing, concession stands, dugouts and restrooms were added during the overhaul. The complex also received brand new lights and scoreboards for each field. The New Mexico ASA hosted an opening ceremony tournament June 21-23 at the renovated complex, in which 34 teams participated. At the conclusion of the tournament, the fields were closed down for the remainder of the year to allow relief for the newly minted sod on the fields.

“We couldn’t think of a better recipient for this year’s Complex of the Year,” said Jon Hubbs, President of Stabilizer Solutions, Inc. “The fact that the city of Roswell went through such great measures to ensure a quality experience for their softball teams is outstanding. For them to completely rebuild their complex speaks numbers about the type of programs they want to provide. Congratulations on a well deserved award!”

Dedicated in memory of Charlie McVay, a former ASA coach, the city has taken great steps to ensure the longevity of youth softball in the Roswell area. The complex sits on five acres of land and includes four fields that are used strictly for softball. The complex features a central, air-conditioned, two-story command center, which hosts the concession stands, restrooms and scorekeeping tower. The tower also features a deck for the Umpire-in-Chief (UIC), Tournament Director or other tournament officials to view games on all the fields. A lift is also installed in the command center, providing access to all levels for those who cannot climb the stairs.
Being a family member of Team USA has it’s benefits.

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United has flown Team USA for over 30 years, and we strive to be the airline of choice for Olympic family members as well. That’s why we offer discounted fares for USOC/NGB associated events. Go to united.com/USOC to book your flight, or to learn more.
Lisa Fernandez honored as seventh most-influential Hispanic woman in sports

By espnW

USA Softball’s Lisa Fernandez was recently voted the seventh-most influential Hispanic female athlete of all time in a poll conducted by espnW and ESPN Deportes. Below is an excerpt from the article from espnW.

...By the time Fernandez reached high school, she had the attention of elite colleges that wanted her both as a pitcher and as a hitter.

“I have never met a coach or a player who could see the game before the game developed quite like Lisa can,” said former UCLA head coach Sue Enquist. “She had a coach’s curiosity even as a freshman. She could feel the momentum shift; she could pick up on an opponent’s signals or pitches. I knew as a coach we were going to capitalize on this ability. She is an absolute engineer of the game.”

In Fernandez’s four years at UCLA, she lit the NCAA on fire. She earned first-team All-American honors in each of her four seasons and helped the Bruins to two national championships. Her senior season, Fernandez led the nation in both ERA (0.23) and batting average (.510).

Her college dominance led to an opportunity to play for Team USA, and hence an international platform. Her first Olympics came in Atlanta in 1996, an emotional time for the family as Lisa donned a USA jersey just after her father had become a U.S. citizen.

It was also at these Games that Fernandez became a leading voice not only for her sport but for professional female athletes everywhere. At the time, the U.S. softball team had team sponsorships but did not allow its players to have individual representation. So when Fernandez, who had signed with both Louisville Slugger and Reebok right out of college in 1994, began play for a USA team that endorsed Nike and Easton, there arose a highly publicized dilemma.

Fernandez and agent Tom McCarthy (who still represents her) had to fight for female athletes to have individual sponsorships, even when they played on teams that might carry competing endorsers.

“It was important for me to fight for individual interests, at least when I did things privately -- like lessons or clinics -- so I could use the apparel and equipment I was comfortable using,” Fernandez said. “And then, on a greater scale, it was about providing an opportunity for the women behind me.”

Almost instantly during the ’96 Games, Fernandez became an American celebrity. Her 0.33 ERA in Atlanta dazzled fans. It was the first of three consecutive gold medals for Fernandez, and now she had sponsorships that created a capacity to extend her accomplishments into the American mainstream.

But it also allowed her to teach core values of a Hispanic culture that means so much to her.

“In the Hispanic culture you play and you live with a lot of passion and pride,” Fernandez said. “And when I go out and speak to people, I know that I don’t just represent me, I represent my families of Puerto Ricans and Cubans, and I want that responsibility. I want to represent these people.”

Enquist deeply appreciates that passion and pride.

“She has always been available to her community,” Enquist said. “In her core, she is so giving. From politicians to athletes to corporate America, she has never said no. I wish that would get more publicity.”

Perhaps this is the beauty of Fernandez’s impact. Perhaps her smaller physique is emblematic of her greater purpose: an undersized, modest presence who ends up leaving a lasting, meaningful impact.
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THREE EASY WAYS TO INSURE SOFTBALL:

1. Contact your ASA Commissioner—Visit www.Softball.org for contact info
2. Call Bollinger Sports, ASA Department—Ph: 800-526-1379 or ASAinfo@Bollinger.com