Hope everyone has heard the umpire say "Play ball". The season should be underway and tournament play should be in full swing by the end of May.

Please be sure and review the tournament listings on the national Web site (www.asasoftball.com) and also on your local association page. The National Council approved some additional tournaments which include the "Gold Territories" and the host would be glad to have all of the teams that were not able to qualify for the ASA/USA Softball National Championship tournaments this year.

As a reminder to all of the leagues, please make sure that the umpires you use for the regular season are registered with Register ASA (www.registerasa.com). It is important for insurance purposes that they are registered.

I hope that your local association is hosting the Major League Baseball (MLB) Pitch, Hit and Run contest this year. It’s the first time the Girls’ National Softball Division.

Let’s have a great season and enjoy ourselves. I look forward to talking to you again in May.
A note from The Inside Pitch editor
Jamie Blanchard

Welcome to the April 2010 edition of The Inside Pitch, the official newsletter of the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America. Can you believe the season is already underway?

When I joined the National Office staff in June 2009, I was able to jump right into the thick of things, with the Women’s College World Series just starting and the World Cup of Softball, with the inaugural Border Battle, were just around the corner. This year, it has been quite the experience learning about the calm before the storm.

I found out that it is so “calm” in Oklahoma City because everyone is in their offices working hard to make sure the storm of upcoming activity comes and goes without a hitch. The lights in the National Office are going out later and later every night.

Thank you to everyone on the local level who is burning the midnight oil with us too. We appreciate all of the hard work that our members are doing across the country to make the ASA the best it can be. Your hard work does not go unnoticed, especially when an e-mail comes with a 2 a.m. dateline.

Hopefully some of you will be able to break away from your associations later this summer for the World Cup, July 22-26, in Oklahoma City. We have the honor of hosting not only three talented Team USAs (the Women’s National Team, the Women’s Futures National Team and the Men’s Slow Pitch National Team) but also some of the best in women’s fast and men’s slow pitch from Canada. Team Japan, the Olympic Champions, will also be here, giving the Red, White and Blue a good challenge.

When you come to town, be sure to say “Hello” to our newest staff member Steven Embree, the Register ASA/Events Coordinator. I know what a warm welcome the ASA membership gives so I have no doubt he’ll feel at home soon.

If you need anything, I am always here to help, or at least try to help. Please let me know what you need to spread ASA in your area. If you need promotional materials, e-mail me. If you need logos or photos, contact me. We have a lot of resources that we would love to share with the local ASAs.

Until next time, play ball.

ASA promotional packets on sale for $7

The Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America advertising and promotional packets are still on sale for $7 each, which includes a DVD and the cost of shipping. Commissioners and Junior Olympic (JO) Commissioners can place orders for their association by e-mailing Jamie Blanchard, Coordinator of Marketing and Communications, at jblanchard@softball.org.

If ordering the packages to distribute at a specific event, please order at least two weeks before you need to receive them, if possible. Include the date of your event in the e-mail to ensure they are shipped in time.

The promotional packets are great tools for attracting new sponsors as well as leagues and teams.

All 2010 registration materials mailed

All registration materials (forms, rulebooks, scorebooks, umpire tests, etc.) have been shipped. If you have problems, or need additional registration materials, please contact Debbie Ford (dford@softball.org).

In March, a billboard for the World Cup of Softball, featuring the images of Olympic Champions Jennie Finch and Jessica Mendoza, was put up on Interstate 35 near the 50th Street exit in Oklahoma City.
Steven Embree of Norman, Okla., has joined the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America's National Office staff as the Register ASA/Events Coordinator, the ASA announced earlier this month. He started with the National Office in Oklahoma City on March 30.

Embree's current focus is providing phone and e-mail support to Local ASA Associations using the new online Register ASA (www.registerasa.com) registration process for individuals, teams and umpires. In the summer, he will turn to events, assisting in the management of tournaments at the Hall of Fame Complex, including the World Cup of Softball, which returns to Oklahoma City, July 22-26.

“We’re excited to have Steven join the National Office staff. He has a versatile set of skills that will be a great asset to our membership,” said ASA Executive Director Ron Radigonda. “Steven has experience in Internet services from his internship at the University of Oklahoma. On the events side, he has experience with the American Junior Golf Association, which gives me great confidence that he’ll do excellent work at our stadium. I think his strengths will really be a benefit to our organization as we move forward with the registration process and our events get underway.”

Prior to joining the National Office staff, Embree was an intern for the University of Oklahoma’s athletics department, generating, formatting and updating weekly content for their SoonerSports.com Web site. He also previously interned at the Oklahoma City advertising agency Ackerman and McQueen, participating in projects for the Oklahoma Tourism Department.

Embree worked with a six-member team at the American Junior Golf Association, hosting golf tournaments across the country. In addition to setting up courses for tournament play, Embree also served as the on-course rules official during tournament play and was the media contact for the events. He also conducted Junior-Am tournaments with AJGA sponsors and completed sponsor fulfillment packages.

Embree received his Bachelor of Arts in advertising from Oklahoma’s Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication in May 2008. He is currently pursuing a master’s degree at Oklahoma.

National Office recognizes three staffers for years of service

Three National Office employees were recognized in March for reaching a benchmark in their years of service with the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America in 2009. Steve Walker and Cindy Wakley have worked 20 years each. Chris Sebren has worked at the National Office for five years.

Julie Bartel on maternity leave through May

Julie Bartel, the Director of Marketing and Communications, and her husband Jon are expecting the arrival of their first child later this month. As of April 13, she is on maternity leave, and is not expected to return to the National Office until the summer. Please direct all marketing and communications questions and requests to the Assistant Director Holly Krivokapich (hollyk@softball.org) or Coordinator Jamie Blanchard (jblanchard@softball.org).

Over 16k people fans of ASA/USA Softball on Facebook

On April 10, the ASA/USA Softball Facebook page (www.facebook.com/asausasoftball) reached 16,000 fans, with over 200 fans coming aboard since hitting that mark. Additionally, Twitter (www.twitter.com/asausasoftball) has almost 4,900 followers. Thousands more are expected to join on both fronts during the Women’s College World Series and World Cup of Softball.

Balls and Strikes Online hit the Web in March

The first 2010 issue of Balls and Strikes Online Magazine came out in March. Inside the 45-page issue were stories including a Q&A with the newest member of the Women’s National Team, Eileen Canney, and a profile on Natalie Innocenzi, the ASA Umpire who doubles as the Rose Queen for the 2010 Tournament of Roses.

To download the latest issue of Balls and Strikes, as well as back issues, visit www.asasoftball.com/communications/ballsandstrikes.asp.
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Pennsylvania bestows honors at Hall of Fame Banquet

The 36th Annual ASA of PA (Pennsylvania) Spring Meeting/Hall of Fame Banquet was held the weekend of March 5-7 at the Holiday Inn-Grantville, Pa. The ASA of PA hosts each year the spring meeting which allows representatives from each District within Pennsylvania to attend a general session on Saturday morning and then to attend break out meetings involving everyone from youth to adult, fast pitch, slow pitch, modified, coed, masters and seniors. These break out meetings allow input from the grass root players to invited guests from the National and Regional levels and closing on Sunday with a general council meeting to address legislation proposals, announce elected player reps, election of officers and a general information session.

The Hall of Fame Banquet was held Saturday evening with 408 attendees. Hall of Famers in attendance was recognized by President, Dean Amick. Special Awards were presented with Don Thoman being awarded the J. Richard Millhouse Umpire Award; the Delaware Times was recognized for the Sportswriter Award; ASA of PA President’s Award recipient was District 15 Commissioner, Jeff Sell and the “Honored Guest” award was presented to Craig Cress, director of Membership at the National office. The Pennsylvania teams winning National Championships were awarded plaques. Those teams recognized were Marysville 10U who won the 10U Girls Slow Pitch; Keating’s Fitness Center, Men’s Fast Pitch Class “B”; Blue Lake Builders, Men’s Fast Pitch Class “C” and Spring Ford AA for being the champions at the Men’s Senor 55AA Slow Pitch East.

There were four individuals inducted into the Hall of Fame as players. Those inducted as players were David Rocco, Barry N. Weaver, Barry Parmer, Sr. and Mary Ann Curran. Also inducted were the York County Convention and Visitors Bureau as sponsor and this year the first team was inducted into the Hall of Fame. The team that was bestowed the “first” honor was the Reading Rising Suns.

A special honor was bestowed to Andrew Loechner, Jr., ASA of PA State Commissioner at the Hall of Fame banquet. Andy was presented the International Softball Federation Medal of Honor at the ASA of PA Hall of Fame Banquet by ISF President, Don Porter. Andy has retired from the position of the ISF Secretary General which he has held since 1987 and became the twelfth recipient of the prestigious ISF Medal of Honor. The award is considered the highest level of honor that an individual can receive within the ISF.

Illinois ASA honors six at Hall of Fame Banquet

The Illinois ASA held their Annual Hall of Fame Banquet and induction ceremonies on Saturday, March 27 at the Decatur Hotel and Convention Center in Decatur. A crowd of nearly 300 was in attendance to honor six individuals and four teams.

The individuals honored were Glen Brandt, sponsor; Pat Creek, umpire; Gary Fraase, player-manager; Larry Ginger, meritorious service; Billy Phillips, pitcher and Gary Lonnon, utility. Both Phillips and Lonnon are deceased. Teams enshrined during the evening were Pleasant Plains Brandts, Bloomington Lady Hearts, Quincy Jets and Champaign Nohren Farms Masters.

The speaker for the evening was Illinois ASA Vice President Emeritus Joe Snedeker, who also serves as the Director of the Illinois ASA Hall of Fame Museum in Casey. Snedeker reported to the group in attendance that the museum is now under construction and formal dedication ceremonies are scheduled for July 3, 2010 in Casey. Special speakers for the dedication ceremonies will be Snedeker and Illinois ASA State Commissioner Don Brewer. Plans are now being completed to host a 23-Under men’s fast-pitch game as a part of the day’s program in nearby Casey Stadium.
Border Battle returns to OKC

“I was surprised to be selected for the team because there are a lot of good softball players to choose from. It could have been any number of guys,” said rookie Jeff McGavin (Macomb, Mich.), who has been playing slow pitch for 11 years. “To be one of the 15 to make it, it’s an honor. The thought of putting on that uniform just sends chills down my spine. It’s a pretty cool thing to play for the USA. It’s something that you want to do the right way. I’m really looking forward to putting everything I have into the Border Battle. Just playing, and having it aired on television, is a bit nerve wracking but it will be a great experience, a great honor for me.”

Steve Shortland (San Antonio, Texas), who has 29 years of slow pitch experience, will return as the Head Coach of the Men’s Slow Pitch National Team. Assisting him are Pat Dalsanders (Spokane, Wash.) and Randy Raper (Hackleburg, Ala.), both who coached alongside Shortland at the inaugural Border Battle. Todd Joerling (New Melle, Mo.), a member of the 2009 team, will serve as the honorary captain this year.

“The Border Battle is a tremendous opportunity to showcase our sport and I am truly honored to be part of it again,” Shortland said. “The 2009 USA team was perhaps the greatest collection of slow pitch talent ever assembled and we look forward to putting an even better product on the field in 2010. Based on last year’s event, we realize how talented Canada is and we can’t rely on reputation alone to win. This team will work hard to keep the Border Battle title here in the United States.”

The Border Battle is scheduled to be shown live on the networks of ESPN as are all USA Softball Women’s National Team games during the World Cup. Last year, when Team USA battled back to top Team Canada 30-23 after falling behind 16-8 going into the fourth inning, ESPN recorded a 0.7 as a standalone game reaching over 650,000 households.

Tickets for the Border Battle are on sale now as a part of the 2010 World Cup of Softball Ultimate Fan Zone ticket package ($325/$275), the All Session Reserved ticket package ($75) and the All Session General Admission ticket page ($40). Individual tickets will go on sale later this summer. To purchase tickets, call 800-654-8337 or visit softballoutlet.com.

“It was a thrill and an honor to participate in the Border Battle last year and I am absolutely happy to be asked back. Why wouldn’t I want to be a part of something like that again?” said veteran Johnny McCraw. “It’s going to be hard to top last year though. Everything was perfect. But we’ll have some new faces this time who will represent this country and this sport well. Just watching them experience the Border Battle and seeing their reaction is what I’m really looking forward to in Oklahoma City. Thank you to ASA/USA Softball for making this happen for us.”

Both teams will arrive in Oklahoma City on Wednesday, July 21 and have a series of exhibition games on Thursday and Friday before the Border Battle game returns on Saturday. A home run exhibition will also be held during the World Cup.

“Softball Canada is extremely pleased that the Border Battle is back for 2010,” said Softball Canada President Kevin Quinn. “This is a great opportunity for our Slow-Pitch membership to become involved in a very high level of competition and we truly appreciate the support of the ASA in setting up this competition.”

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Action at the ASA Hall of Fame Stadium underway

The Oklahoma Sooners and Oklahoma State Cowgirls, now ranked No. 12 and No. 9 respectively in the ESPN.com/USA Softball Collegiate Top 25 poll, squared off in its first of three Bedlam softball battles this season to kick of the action ASA Hall of Fame Complex in Oklahoma City. Since, the home of softball has hosted the Oklahoma Special Olympics Regional Championship and the ASA Combat Capital Classic, with many more exciting events coming up this season, including the High School Spring Classic (April 16-17), the Live Earth Oklahoma 6K Dow Run for Water (April 18), ASA Fast Pitch Tournament (April 23-25), and MLB Pitch, Hit and Run (May 1).

Future action at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex includes the OSSAA Slow Pitch State Championship (May 5-6), the Sooner Athletic Conference Championship (May 7-8), Region 2 Junior College Championship (May 7-9), the Big 12 Championship (May 14-16) and the Women’s College World Series (June 3-9). In June and early July, the complex will also play host to the 12-Under, 14-Under, 16-Under, 18-Under Hall of Fame Qualifiers and 18-Under Gold National Qualifier.

The marquee event of the season is the World Cup of Softball, which includes international women’s fast pitch and men’s slow pitch, from July 22-26. Competing in the women’s event are Canada, Japan, the 2010 Women’s National Team and the 2010 Women’s Futures National Team. Team USA will take on Canada in the Border Battle.

ASA Hall of Fame Stadium is also hosting the Girls’ 12-Under B Southern National Championship (August 4-8) as well as several other events throughout August, September and October. For a complete listing, and additional information including how to purchase tickets, visit www.asasoftware.com/complex/get_stadium_events.asp.
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Registration is now open for the spring 2010 Responsible Sports Community Grant period

The Liberty Mutual Responsible Sports Community Grants period is open! Help your softball team or league win $2,500 this spring!

As an added bonus, all ASA softball organizations that can get 100 certifications will earn a 35-percent discount at softballoutlet.com during the month of June!

To get started go to ResponsibleSports.com/Grant to search to see if your organization is registered.

All you have to do is take the Responsible Sports Parenting or Coaching coursework and pass the brief review quiz to earn your point. The organizations with the most points at the end of the grant period win! That’s it.

Get started at ResponsibleSports.com/Grant today! The deadline is May 31.

An Insider’s Guide on earning a $2,500 Community Grant: The Extra Point

Learn from past winners and the team at Responsible Sports through our new Community Grant eNewsletter, Extra Point.

Sign-up today!

Extra Point will be sent two times per month throughout the three-month grant period, and once after the grant period closes. Each issue will feature:

• A Key Grant Promotional Theme with exclusive new downloads
• “Where Are They Now?” Past Winner Feature
• “What I Learned” Parent Perspective

Get on this list and receive the inside scoop twice a month on how to win!
Every day, millions of lives are shaped with a softball and a little open space.

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Far from the stadium lights and the roar of the crowd come the moments when youth sports matters. These opportunities help form bonds that enrich the game and enhance the lives and life skills of young players. That’s why Liberty Mutual and our partners are proud to bring you the Responsible Sports™ program – offering educational resources, training tips and teaching tools for youth sports parents and coaches, plus coaching awards and valuable community grants.

Memorable youth sports moments are waiting for you. Visit ResponsibleSports.com/Softball today.
The Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America and USA Softball announced on April 2 the coaches that will lead three different USA Softball Women’s National Teams in competition during the 2010 season. Jay Miller (Starkville, Miss./head coach Mississippi State) will return for his second year as Head Coach of the USA Softball’s Women’s National Team.

Assisting Miller on the National Team staff is Gordon Eakin (Sandy, Utah/head coach BYU), Ken Eriksen (Tampa, Fla./head coach South Florida) and Barbara Jordan (Northridge, Calif.). Chuck D’Arcy (Sacramento, Calif.) will also serve as an assistant coach for the National Team when the team competes in Canada in July. The National Team will look to capture its eighth World Championship Gold medal in Caracas, Venezuela, as well as defend its World Cup title in Oklahoma City. Go to www.usasoftball.com for more information on the World Cup of Softball.

Kate Drohan (Evanston, Ill./head coach Northwestern) will serve as Head Coach of the USA Futures National Team, marking her first time as a coach in the USA Softball program. Mike Larabee (Fayetteville, Ark./head coach Arkansas) and Jamie Pinkerton (Broken Arrow, Okla./asst. coach Iowa State) will serve as assistants for the Futures Team. The Futures National Team will compete in Ohio against the National Team and at the World Cup of Softball.

Karen Johns (Starkville, Miss./asst. coach Mississippi State) will lead the Junior Women’s team at the World Championship qualifier in Colombia as Head Coach. Suzy Brazney (Huntington Beach, Calif./head coach Golden West College), Stacy Iveson (Prescott, Ariz./head coach Yavapai College) and Pat Murphy (Northport, Ala./head coach Alabama) will join Johns on staff.

The rosters for both the Futures National Team and Junior Women’s Qualifier team will be announced at a later date.

Being a family member of Team USA has its benefits.

Take advantage of partnership travel discounts.

United Airlines 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 to all USOC members for USOC/NGB associated events. Visit www.united.com/USOC to book your flight, or to learn more.

**Flying America’s Team for 30 Years**
The full list of 66 games that will be played at the International Softball Federation’s XII Women’s World Championship has been set by the sport’s world governing body. Caracas, Venezuela, will host the ten-day competition (June 23-July 2), which will consist of national teams from 16 different countries.

The 16 teams that will compete are: Argentina, Australia, Botswana, Canada, China, Chinese Taipei, Cuba, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Great Britain, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa, USA, and Venezuela.

The first game will feature Japan against Argentina, and Opening Ceremonies will also take place that day, June 23. The United States will start the competition on June 24 at 1 p.m. against China. Team USA also plays against New Zealand June 25, Botswana on June 26, Australia on June 27, Dominican Republic on June 28 and Czech Republic on June 29. Playoffs are June 30 and July 1 with medal games on July 2.

Click here for a complete game schedule.

Team USA comes in as the defending World Champions, having defeated Japan in the gold medal game of the last edition of the event, which took place four years ago in Beijing, China. Just two years later, however, in that same stadium, Japan would avenge the 2006 loss by capturing the Olympic softball gold medal with a 3-1 victory over the Americans. The two teams are in separate pools for this year’s world championship, however, so the opportunity to go head-to-head wouldn’t come until a possible playoff matchup.

“Without question we are certainly in store for some exciting competition at the women’s world championship,” ISF President Don Porter said. “The fans and media will witness some terrific play by elite-level athletes over those ten days in Caracas.

“This is just another step bringing us closer to the event. Today we’ve announced the game schedule. The organizing committee is in the process of launching the event website. And with this list of games in hand we will now work to finalize plans for international TV coverage. With only 91 days until the first pitch, everything is coming together for what I’m confident will be a world-class experience not only for the athletes but for all parties involved,” Mr. Porter said.

This year’s event marks the 45th anniversary of the first-ever softball world championship. Five women’s teams competed in Melbourne, Australia, in 1965, and one year later the first men’s world championship was held (eleven countries competed in Mexico City). Eventually world championships were also started in the junior women’s and junior men’s categories (age 19-and-under).
Great Britain qualified for the International Softball Federation’s XII Women’s World Championship by finishing second at the 2009 European Championships in Spain – the team’s highest-ever placing in European competition. But then the GB team, which receives no funding whatever from the British government or its sporting agencies, faced the daunting task of raising the money to compete – a task made even harder when the tournament was moved from Oklahoma City to Venezuela. While there is still some money left to raise, GB Softball General Manager Bob Fromer explains how the team has managed to find most of what it needs with a couple of months to spare.

Qualifying for the World Championships by right for the first time in British Softball history – priceless! It was a euphoric time for the GB Women’s Fastpitch Team in Valencia last summer when we finished second behind the Netherlands in the European Championships and came fairly close to winning. Our goal going into the tournament was to finish in the top three and qualify for the 2010 World Championships, and it feels great when those kinds of goals are achieved. On the first night back in Britain, the party went on till dawn.

FACING REALITY

But then the cold reality set in. This is a team that hasn’t received a penny of funding from the British government since 2007, because we’re no longer on the Olympic program. All our players and staff members had to put in close to $800 to compete so successfully for our country in Valencia last summer – an amount that was just about manageable, although some players struggled.

But preparing properly for the World Championships (we had originally planned to go to the Canada Cup beforehand), and then competing in them, was going to cost far more than getting to Spain – far more than our players and their families could support.

We had earned the right to play in the World Championships, and everyone wanted to go. But if we couldn’t find or raise the money, how could we manage it? Finding sponsorship is tough for softball as a minority women’s sport in Britain at the best of times. But with the credit crunch biting deep, this certainly wasn’t anything like the best of times.

Then things got worse. The International Softball Federation, because of the clash of dates, decided in December 2009 to move the tournament from Oklahoma City to Caracas, Venezuela. Not only was it going to be more expensive for us to get to Venezuela than to North America, but now the Canada Cup was out of the picture as an ideal warm-up competition and we would have to find another way to prepare.

With a January 2010 deadline looming for us to tell the ISF whether we would be in Venezuela, we were between a rock and a hard place.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13
GETTING HELP

Then we got some help – from the ASA and from members of the softball community around the world.

We discovered that British Airways runs a contest called “Great Britons”, designed to support young sportspeople and artists by giving them free flights to help with their projects or careers. We entered the contest as a team, hoping to win up to 16 flights to the World Championships, and we were shortlisted along with seven other entries. Winners are determined by public votes on the “Great Britons” website, and we asked all our contacts in softball for help. And we weren’t disappointed!

The ASA ran a story at the top of its website urging people to vote for us. The European Softball Federation newsletter did the same. Jessica Mendoza, who ran a clinic for our young players in London in the autumn of 2008, mobilised all her friends and supporters, as did Bobby Simpson at Higher Ground Softball in Georgia. The Dutch National Team and other European teams voted and we got votes from Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. And the result was that we had more firepower than the other contestants, led the voting from start to finish and won the 16 free flights – not to Venezuela, because British Airways doesn’t fly there, but to Florida where we’ll hold a pre-Worlds training camp in June.

THE MAGIC SPONSOR

Winning the British Airways contest got us started, but we still needed to find another $50,000 or more if our players and staff members were to avoid paying a crippling amount of personal money.

And that’s when the sponsor that we never thought we could find suddenly appeared – appropriately enough, around Christmas time last year.

The company is called NP Aerospace, and it’s based in Coventry, a city with a mixed industrial base in the heart of England, down the road from Birmingham. NP Aerospace uses advanced composite materials to manufacture products for customers in the aerospace, electrical, automotive, defense and medical industries, but they are principally known for making anti-ballistic protective helmets, body armor and vehicle shields used by the British military in Iraq and Afghanistan, by police forces in Britain and other countries and by Red Cross workers in war zones around the world.

NP Aerospace has always been active in supporting sport and community projects in Coventry, and the Chief Executive, Roger Medwell, a former marathon runner, still coaches children at his local athletics club on Sunday mornings. He heard about the GB Women’s Team through his sister, who knows someone on the team.

Roger Medwell said: “No one seems to have realised what an incredible performance it was for the GB Women’s Team to qualify for the World Championships. Our company tends to support underdogs and we like to help people who excel in their own field but are struggling for support. I’m really proud to be involved with this team.”

And he announced that NP Aerospace would provide £25,000 ($40,000) to help the GB Women’s Team get to Venezuela.

THE HOME STRETCH

Thanks to NP Aerospace and British Airways, we now know that we can have our camp in Florida (where members of the ex-pat British community around Orlando will help to house and feed us) and then go on to Venezuela without having to ask our players to contribute more than they can afford.

And we might not have to ask them for anything in the end, because we continue to get other offers of help. American Airlines, who will fly us from Florida to Venezuela, have reduced the total fare by $2,000 to help us out. A German company in Caracas with a British CEO has offered to help us with expenses once we get there and provide a minibus so we sightsee in safety, as long as we agree to play against their (all-male) company softball team! Individuals in the UK have given us small donations, and of course relatives and friends are helping out too.

The Great Britain National Team program will continue to be excluded from British government funding for the foreseeable future, and the advances we have made over the past 10 years – from the depths of the European B Pool to a ninth place seeding at the World Championships – are going to be hard to sustain.

But it will be a thrill to be in Caracas, and our growing number of young players in the UK will have a strong legacy to inherit as they move up through our junior programs and on to the senior team in years to come.
Top 25 Finalists for 2010 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year named

The Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America announced today the Top 25 Finalists for the 2010 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year, which will be announced at the opening of the NCAA 2010 Women's College World Series in Oklahoma City. This award, which is considered the most prestigious honor in Division I women's collegiate softball, is designed to recognize outstanding athletic achievement by female collegiate softball players across the country. Past winners of this award include UCLA's Stacey Nuveman, Florida State's Jessica Van der Linden, three-time winner Texas pitcher Cat Osterman, Tennessee's Monica Abbott, Virginia Tech's Angela Tinch and Washington's Danielle Lawrie.

The Top 25 list represents 20 schools and seven different NCAA Division I Conferences. The list is comprised of 10 seniors, seven juniors, one sophomore and seven freshman. The 2010 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year will be chosen from the 25 finalists.

2010 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year Top 25 Finalists:

**Name (School) – Year – Position – Hometown**

Chelsea Bramlett (Mississippi State) – Senior – Catcher/Infield – Cordova, Tenn.
Francesca Enea (Florida) – Senior – Outfield – Woodland Hills, Calif.
Amber Flores (Oklahoma) – Senior – Infield – College Station, Texas
Alissa Haber (Stanford) – Senior – Outfield – Newark, Calif.
Sarah Hamilton (Florida State) – Junior – Pitcher – Tallahassee, Fla.
Megan Langenfeld (UCLA) – Senior – Pitcher/First Base – Bakersfield, Calif.
Danielle Lawrie (Washington) – Senior – Pitcher – Langley, B.C.
*Blaire Luna (Texas) – Freshman – Pitcher – Austin, Texas
*Jen Mineau (Fordham) – Sophomore – Pitcher – Schaghticoke, N.Y.
*Keilani Ricketts (Oklahoma) – Freshman – Pitcher – San Jose, Calif.
Melissa Roth (Louisville) – Senior – Catcher – Long Beach, Calif.
Taylor Schlopy (Georgia) – Junior – Pitcher/Outfield – West Hills, Calif.
Kirsten Shortridge (LSU) – Senior – Pitcher/Outfield – Keller, Texas
*Jenn Salling (Washington) – Junior – Infield – Port Coquitlam, B.C.
Danielle Spaulding (North Carolina) – Senior – First Base/Pitcher – Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.
Jen Yee (Georgia Tech) – Senior – Second Base – North Delta, B.C.

*Was not on Top 50 Watch list

Just days before the start of post-season play, a list of 10 finalists will be named and released on May 12. The three finalists will be announced May 26th while the winner of the 2010 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year Award will be announced prior to the start of the 2010 NCAA Women's College World Series.

Washington dominates the 2010 Collegiate Top 25 polls

Washington has held the top spot in the ESPN.com/USA Softball Collegiate Top 25 poll since June 9, 2009, just days after the Huskies won the Women's College World Series in Oklahoma City. And with 11 consecutive polls at No. 1, Washington is eyeing a whole season on top, complete with a second-straight National Championship.

After playing then No. 5 UCLA, and taking two of three games, the Huskies (33-3, 5-1 Pac-10) were supposed to face their toughest test of the season over the weekend against then No. 2 Arizona (32-7, 2-4 Pac-10). But the Dawgs made easy work of the Wildcats, sweeping the three-game series.

The Huskies will now travel down to Eugene to face No. 17 Oregon in a three-game series starting Friday, April 16 at 6 p.m. The teams will also face off Saturday at 1 p.m. and Sunday at Noon. The Ducks and Huskies are tied for first place with 5-1 records after Oregon earned a three-game sweep over then No. 15 Cal over the weekend.

The ESPN.com/USA Softball Collegiate Top 25 poll and the USA Softball Player of the Week are released Tuesdays. For a complete recap of the 2010 season thus far, visit the “College Corner” section of www.usasoftball.com.

Lawrie nabs second Player of the Week honor in 2010 season

Washington's senior ace Danielle Lawrie, the 2009 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year, became the first player in the 2010 season to win the USA Softball Player of the Week award twice when she took the honor on April 13. Lawrie also took the prize for Week 1 (Feb. 8-14).

Other Players of the Week are: Oklahoma's Keilani Ricketts (Feb. 15-21); Washington's Niki Williams (Feb. 22-28); Oklahoma State's Julie Ward (March 1-7); LSU's Kristen Shortridge (March 8-14); Stanford's Teagan Gerhart (March 15-21); Tennessee's Kat Dotson (March 22-28); and Florida's Ensley Gammel (March 29- April 4).
The Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America will be a part of Live Earth Oklahoma on April 18, a two day eco-festival, when runners in the April 18 Dow Run for Water start the 6K race and cross the finish line at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex. The Live Earth Oklahoma – Run for Water festival, April 17-18, will be the largest eco-statement in Oklahoma’s history, and coincides with a worldwide event of the same name.

The Dow Run for Water, is a series of 6K run/walks (the average distance women and children walk everyday to secure water) taking place over the course of 24 hours in 192 countries, to ignite a massive global movement to help solve the water crisis. Registration for the Oklahoma City race, which starts at 9 a.m., is $25 online through Active.com until April 15 and $30 until thereafter. Each participant will receive an organic T-shirt and a virtual goodie bag, which eliminates waste. A kids 1 mile run/walk will also be held at the Oklahoma City Zoo at 1:30 p.m. Saturday with a registration cost of $10 (by April 15).

The purpose of the Live Earth Oklahoma – Run for Water festival is to bring awareness of how precious our natural resources are, namely water. The educational and entertaining indoor/outdoor Eco-Village, held throughout the Oklahoma City Adventure District, will showcase companies and organizations that are involved in reducing waste and pollution, educate spectators on energy and alternative energy resources and supply eco-friendly products and services. The educational components are designed to bring focus and attention to issues that face both individuals and companies, as we pursue our lives. While water scarcity and resources are a focus, the weekend of events includes enlightening and entertaining conference sessions over a broad range of topics and a music festival featuring an evening concert, produced by the longest tenured and successful concert producer in Oklahoma, Howard Pollack.

Kidder continues, “Our efforts with using the internationally acclaimed Live Earth Brand are to encourage our citizens, companies and governments to reduce, reuse and recycle. Everyone can do something to help protect our resources and environment for our children and their children. We owe them that.”

A portion of the proceeds from the Live Earth Oklahoma - Run for Water will go to two local Oklahoma based water resource organizations SafeWater4Kids (www.safewater4kids.org) and Water4Foundation (www.water4.org). Individuals can also make donations online to Live Earth partners at www.liveearth.org/en/give.