I would like to extend a congratulations to not only all the National Champions that have recently been crowned but also to those who advanced to a National Championship. It takes a lot of hard work and dedication to even make it to a National Championship site and I commend you on your efforts. I hope that your experience playing ASA ball has been very enjoyable and met all your expectations.

In my last letter, I mentioned that the Council agendas would be mailed to you. I apologize that this has not be done yet. We had some unexpected changes which led to the delay but we are working diligently to get this information out.

Thanks to our staff in Oklahoma City for hosting the Border Battle and World Cup of Softball. I was able to attend and witnessed all the hard work they put in and want to say “Job well done!” Also a congrats to both our men’s and women’s teams who did a great job at representing the USA as always.

We have appointed an ad hoc committee for the review of Register ASA updates. The committee represents all our territories. Steve Walker sent out a questionnaire earlier and we welcome any feedback and comments you have. If you have specific questions and or needs regarding Register ASA, please contact Steve or John Miller at the National Office.

We are also reforming the tournament restructuring committee and a meeting is set in place. We will review current legislation and write additional legislation if we feel the need to submit something to change the tournament structure. Last year we sent out a survey and we had an overwhelming response that most people did not like the way we award National Championships so we are doing our best to possibly make a list of options for the Council to consider in Shreveport.

Thanks for your dedication to ASA. I look forward to seeing many of you soon in Shreveport.
A note from The Inside Pitch editor
Jamie Blanchard

Welcome to the August 2010 edition of The Inside Pitch, the official newsletter of the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America.

How has your summer been? For those of you at the national office, we have only great things to report, especially when it comes to the USA Softball program.

Hopefully you watched our Women's National Team win their fourth World Cup of Softball title, whether in the Hall of Fame Stadium or in front of your television. It was a great tournament throughout but also bittersweet as the World Cup marked the retirement of Jennie Finch.

At her retirement ceremony following the Championship Game, Executive Director Ron Radigonda had the opportunity to thank Jennie on behalf of everyone she has touched, through her clutch performances and off the field activities. Her teammates had the opportunity to share what she has meant to them. There was not a dry eye in the stadium.

Jennie has been a great ambassador for softball throughout her career. And in true Jennie fashion, she spent her last week in the Red, White and Blue talking mostly about the bright future that USA Softball has. She's right.

At the World Cup, the Futures Women National Team defeated Canada, the 2010 International Softball Federation (ISF) Women's World Championship Bronze Medalists, to take third place in the tournament. Just a couple weeks ago, the Junior Women's National Team went undefeated at the III Pan American Championship (18-Under) in Bogota, Colombia, qualifying for the 2011 ISF Junior Women's World Championship in South Africa.

The women's programs are not the only bright spots for the USA Softball. Our Men's Slow Pitch National Team played well at the second Border Battle, attracting new interest firsthand the exponential growth of a sport here at the youth level is larger and better than it has ever been. Lykins was 66.

I don't know if his parents placed a mask and small brush in his crib at birth, but I wouldn't blink if they had.

Another day passed Tuesday and we were fed the typical sports stories we come to expect this time of year -- Terrell Owens landing with a new team, the major league baseball trade line approaching, nobody thinking UNLV football will be a factor in conference play.

Lykins never made headlines. His passing wasn't part of any ESPN ticker. His friends like to joke that Jim was born in either Kentucky or Ohio, depending on the story.

He was just a guy who loved his job like no other, who demanded those under him adhere to certain standards, who lived to teach the proper technique and temperament of an umpire, who would fret over the complexities of a task and yet always manage to finish it on time.

Harry Truman joked that he couldn't see well enough as a boy to play baseball, so they made him an umpire. It's a lonely job. It really is a thankless one. There are good umpires and bad, approachable and uncommunicative, sensible and illogical.

Jim Lykins wanted nothing more than those under him be competent.

“We knew not to piss Jimmy off -- that definitely put the fear of God into you,” said Chuck Stanley, an umpire of 37 years who worked the last 20 under Lykins. “Jimmy told it like it was. He never held anything back. Officiating is about judgment, and if your judgment sucked, Jimmy let you know that in no uncertain terms, he expected better.

“You're better than anything, Jimmy taught the professionalism of officiating. He taught you confidence, how to manage a game and be in control. This was his love. He was a mentor to us. A friend. As a former high school teacher, I always said the excellence of someone is not only the positives you hear from colleagues but also going into the restroom and seeing your name on the bathroom walls. That was Jimmy. He had a strong whip but made you better. If you didn't work hard, you didn't work.”

The softball world July 26 said goodbye to its greatest player, its greatest ambassador, the face of its national team for the last decade, in watching Jennie Finch play her final game for the United States.

Here, in a far quieter way Sunday, Nevada lost a figure, who while certainly not as celebrated and prominent within the game as Finch loved it as much.

Jim Lykins was a Vietnam War veteran who began playing softball while in the Air Force, who was an umpire at the 2000 Olympics, who in 2005 received his 40-year pin for calling ASA games, who the last two years served as rules interpreter for the NIAA, who leaves behind a wife and three children, a stepson, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, a softball community of friends that stretches across the country.

Who when you saw him at tournaments either sitting in his chair or tooling around in a cart, you knew he was a man in charge, a man who just loved his job and did it admirably for decades, impacting the lives of countless others.

Guys like that don't usually make headlines. Maybe they should more often.

“His final decisions were always from the heart,” Commerford said. “I have no idea how we are going to fill his shoes.”
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Chamberlain advanced to third. Shipman (Valencia, Calif.) single to second base, and seventh, leaving runners on base in the fourth, fifth including a double would not score again, Puerto Ricans, who combined for four hits advanced to third on a passed ball. The scored Aleimalee Lopez, who doubled then Figueroa sacrifice fly to centerfield that scored Wilson, who reached on a walk, also scored on an Ally centerfield. Cheyenne Cordes (Fairfield, Calif.), on the board with a two run homer to against Puerto Rico, Wilson put Team USA pitch of the first inning of the semifinal finisher Argentina.

All three medaling countries have now qualified for the next International Softball Federation (ISF) Junior Women’s World Championship, December 2011, in Cape Town, South Africa. Also advancing to South Africa from the Pan American Championship are fourth place finisher Brazil and fifth place Federation (ISF) Junior Women’s World Championship, December 2011, in Cape Town, South Africa. Also advancing to South Africa from the Pan American Championship are fourth place finisher Brazil and fifth place finisher Argentina.

After leadoff Lahners was hit by the first pitch of the first inning of the semifinal against Puerto Rico, Wilson put Team USA on the board with a two run homer to centerfield. Cheyenne Cordes (Fairfield, Calif.), who reached on a walk, also scored on an Ally Carda (Elk Grove, Calif.) single to shortstop.

Puerto Rico responded with a Malerie Figueroa sacrifice fly to centerfield that scored Aleimalae Lopez, who doubled then advanced to third on a passed ball. The Puerto Ricans, who combined for four hits including a double would not score again, leaving runners on base in the fourth, fifth and seventh.

Chamberlain started the third with a double to centerfield. On a Madison Shipman (Valencia, Calif.) single to second base, Chamberlain advanced to third. Shipman stole second then Cordes reached first on a walk. With bases loaded, Carda hit a sac fly that scored Chamberlain. Shipman was called out at the plate on the same play. Cordes scored on a double steal, advancing home when Shelby Pendley (Albuquerque, N.M.) stole second.

In the fourth, the Red, White and Blue scored their last run when Lahners doubled down the left field line to plate Kourtney Savarola (Arnold, Md.), the pinch runner for Amber Freeman (Lakewood, Calif.). Freeman led off with a single to left center.

The American’s pool play game scores from Bogota: USA 9, Colombia 1 (five innings); USA 15, Peru 0 (three); USA 7, Argentina 0 (five); USA 15, Mexico 3 (six); USA 3, Canada 0; USA 7, Brazil 0 (five) and USA 12, Dominican Republic 1 (four).

“From beginning to end, I thought that these young women did a tremendous job representing the United States,” Johns said. “Every time they stepped on to the field, they embraced and upheld the strong tradition of USA Softball. I’m incredibly proud to have them playing for this program and for our country.”

In the tournament, Team USA outscored opponents 77-7, while outpitching competitors 91-19. The team combined for a .672 slugging percentage with 23 doubles, seven triples and three home runs.

Chamberlain led the team offensively, going 16 for 25 at the plate with 11 runs scored and 13 RBI. With her 11 extra base hits (seven doubles, two triples and two home runs), she accumulated a slugging percentage of 1.320, by far the highest in the tournament. She went 6 for 6 in stolen bases, bested only by Shipman, who went 9 for 10.

Wilson went 13 for 24 with one double, one triple and one home run, with 12 runs scored and five RBI. Other top performers include Shipman, who had seven RBI in an 8 for 19 performance, and Cordes, who went 8 for 21, including three doubles and a triple, with 10 runs scored and six RBI.

Carda, Escobedo, Erin Gabriel (Poland, Ohio), Haeger and Cheyanne Tarango (Anaheim Hills, Calif.) were the most impressive pitching staff in Bogota, combining for 71 strikeouts. Carada, who made three appearances, and Gabriel, who made two, both had a 1-0 record with no earned runs. Tarango also went 1-0.

Escobedo and Haeger, both who play for the Arizona Hotshots GOLD ASA team, led in the circle, both reaching a 3-0 record. Escobedo struckout 23 and allowed five hits and a run in her 14.1 innings played across five games. Haeger, who had 20 strikeouts, pitched 18 innings in five games. She gave up nine hits and two earned runs.
Canada upsets Team USA in Border Battle

Team Canada held off a last inning rally by the USA Softball Men’s Slow Pitch National Team to escape with a 30-29 win in the second Border Battle of slow pitch softball at the ASA Hall of Fame Stadium on July 24.

The USA, which led only once in the game at 16-15, trailed 30-25 entering the bottom of the seventh inning and USA fans were anticipating another come-from-behind USA victory after last year’s inaugural Border Battle where the USA rallied after trailing early for a 30-23 victory.

But the USA came up short in the inning after scoring four runs on six consecutive hits to close the gap to the game’s final margin.

Johnny McCraw’s (Lake Wylie, S.C.) two-run homer brought across the third and fourth runs in the seventh, with no outs. That, however, changed in a hurry because the USA was out of homers, limit of 10, and any ball hit out of the ballpark after that would result in an out.

After Rick Baker (West Harrison, Ind.) singled, putting runners at first and second, Scott Kirby (Destin, Fla.) sent the ball over the fence, resulting in the first USA out. Then, losing pitcher Scott Brown (Andover, Minn.) hit the ball over the fence for the second out. Down to its last out, the USA’s Ryan Robbins (Columbus, Ind.) hit the ball back to the mound to Canada pitcher Brian Higginbotham, who ran to second base for the force and the third out to end the game.

Higginbotham, who was the losing pitcher in last year’s Border Battle, contributed four hits to the 32 hit Canadian offense. He drove in six runs on three homers and a double before hitting another homer in the sixth inning, which was past the homer limit. Higginbotham is one of the 10 players back from last year who joined six newcomers on this year’s team.

Team Canada Head Coach Jeff Long is hoping the two teams will play next year. “We would love to play another,” said Long, as he accepted congratulations from his players and fans. “We just wanted to stay close with them and see what we could do. Everybody was on the same page and pulled for each other.”

The loss was the first for the USA after four exhibition games, including two in Cincinnati last weekend. As expected, USA Head Coach Steve Shortland was disappointed, but he didn’t make any excuses either.

“They (Canada) came ready to play. We just didn’t respond,” said Shortland.

If there was a key inning in the ball game it was the fourth inning when the USA made two crucial errors to keep alive the Canadian offense. Instead of getting out of the inning with only two runs, the USA errors kept the door open as Canada scored 10 times on eight hits.

In the fourth, third baseman James Kelly (Amherstburg, Ont) homered after an out. Then, Ryan Caley (London, On.) hit a grounder to USA shortstop Jeff McGavin (Macomb, Mich.) who couldn’t come with the ball cleanly. Mike Hook (Milton, On.) doubled before Jason Gallicchen (Langley, B.C.) hit a routine grounder to USA second baseman Jeremy Isenhower (Olathe, Kan.). He came up with ball but his throw was wide to first baseman Rusty Bumgardner (Gastonia, N.C.). USA middle infielder Brian Wegman (Hamilton, Ohio) got the second out on a tremendous throw from deep short for the second out, but Canada added six more runs on six hits before the USA retired the side.

The inning featured three home runs, including two run blasts by Jeff Gare (London, On.) and Jeff Falardeau (Welland, On.). Gare drove in four runs and finished with a five-for-six performance and was one of the most consistent Canadian hitters throughout the weekend.

The USA out-hit Canada, 35-32, with McCraw perfect in six at-bats and six runs batted in while Bumgardner, Brett Helmer (Newport, N.Y.), J.D. Genter (Fort Ogletorpe, Ga.) and Wegman each collecting four hits apiece.
USA wins KFC World Cup of Softball

In Jennie Finch’s final game as a member of the USA Softball Women’s National Team, the Americans sent the icon out in fitting fashion as Team USA captured its fourth consecutive World Cup title at the 2010 KFC World Cup of Softball presented by Six Flags in Oklahoma City, Okla. Finch (La Mirada, Calif.), best known for her pitching, appeared at first base in the 5-1 victory over Japan, the 2010 ISF Women’s World Championship Silver Medalists.

Following the game, Finch left her cleats at home plate, with her husband Casey Daigle and son Ace by her side. Finch has been a member of the Women’s National Team for 10 years, helping the Red, White and Blue to an Olympic Gold Medal in 2004 and Silver Medal in 2008.

“I have had a career that has far surpassed anything that I could have ever imagined. Just thinking about everything that has happened, all I can say is ‘Wow.’ I’m incredibly blessed to have had all of these opportunities,” said Finch, a three time World Champion. “I am sad that this was the last time I’ll wear this uniform, something that means so much to me, but I’m so happy for the chance to wear it. I’m so happy that I could do what I love with these amazing women, who are not only my teammates but my best friends, and am so thankful for how they have touched my life. I’m not sure what comes next for me. I just know that softball will always be a part of my life.”

Natasha Watley (Irvine, Calif.), who had all of the team wear Finch’s signature glitter headband with the slogan “Dream and Believe” on the band, was perfect at the plate, going 3-for-3, scoring two runs and driving in one other to help Team USA to a fifth consecutive victory over Japan this season.

Team USA starter Monica Abbott (Salinas, Calif.) threw a complete game, allowing one run on four hits. Abbott struck out 10, moving her World Cup record total to 35.

“I don’t think Jennie will ever not be the face of softball,” Abbott said. “She carries it so well and she’s done more. I think that even though she’s retiring her on field skills, the limits are boundless for her. We should all expect the best from her. I think her impact on the game is going to jump up a level from here. Obviously, USA Softball wise, we’re going to need some people step up and hopefully some good young guns. Eileen Canney did a great job this week. It’s always fun to see that. Hopefully Cat (Osterman) will get healthy. I think it’s all up for grabs.

Everyone is going to go out there and do the best that they can.”

Team USA opened the scoring in the bottom of the first. Watley reached on a leadoff single and scored on Jessica Mendoza’s (Camarillo, Calif.) base hit up the middle. The Americans tacked on two more in the second when Watley and Lauren Lappin (Anaheim, Calif.) came around on a triple down the right-field line by Caitlin Lowe (Tustin, Calif.). Watley reached on her 12th single of the tournament, a new World Cup record.

Japan scored its first run in the third when Misato Kawano scored on a single up the middle by Eri Yamada. Team USA added another run in the bottom of the third. Kaitlin Cochran (Yorba Linda, Calif.) walked and advanced to second on a wild pitch. She later scored after Andrea Duran (Salinas, Calif.) reached on an error.

Team USA added an insurance run in the sixth when Ashley Charters (Beaverton, Ore.) reached on a single and advanced on a sacrifice bunt from Lappin. Charters then took advantage of a wild pitch to move to third and scored on a sacrifice fly from Watley.

After giving up a two-out double to Misato Kawano in the fifth, Abbott retired the final seven batters she faced en route to her third win of the tournament. Naoko Matsumoto went 2-0-3 for Japan against Abbott.

Starter Makiko Fujiwara lasted just 1.2 innings, allowing three earned runs on five hits. Tomo Yasufuku allowed a hit and an unearned run in her 2.1 innings. In two innings, Naho Emoto gave up another two runs to Team USA.

Cochran ended the game with a single and two walks, while Charters went 2-for-3.

In the noon game against the USA Softball Women’s Futures National Team, a 3-0 loss for Futures, Finch tossed a three hit shutout. She struck out 12 and walked one. It was her final international start in the circle, and she was presented with that pitching rubber following the Championship Game.

“It felt awesome,” Finch said. “They are the future of USA Softball. They are the best of the best so I knew I had our work cut out for us. As a competitor, that’s what you focus on even with that last pitch. Of course, I knew it could be my last pitch.”

Futures was knocked into the Third Place Game to face No. 4 Canada. The Futures took an early 1-0 lead against Canada when Canada’s starting pitcher Danielle Lawrie, the two-time USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year, walked Katelyn Boyd (Phoenix, Ariz.) in after allowing two other walks and a single.

Canada tied up in the bottom of the third when Melanie Matthews scored on a wild pitch. Matthews was hit with a pitch by Futures starting pitcher Jordan Taylor (Valencia, Calif.) to reach base. The 1-1 tie stayed on the board until the sixth inning when the score changed to a 3-3 tie.

Valerie Arioto (Pleasanton, Calif.) led off the sixth with a solo shot to left field to break the tie and another run was put up off a single by Jenae Leles (Sacromento, Calif.) giving the Futures a 3-1 lead.

Canada tied it up in the bottom of the sixth when Caitlin Lever scored off an RBI groundout by Jen Salling. Jen Yee who singled earlier in the inning scored the tying run, scoring on a passed ball.

The evenly played game ended in the top of the seventh when the Futures put six runs up on Canada to take a commanding 9-3 lead that Canada was unable to overcome in the bottom of the seventh.

Taylor earned the win with 7.0 innings of play, retiring seven batters with a strikeout.
Finch says farewell to softball

Arguably the most recognized softball player in the World, Jennie Finch (La Mirada, Calif.) announced July 20 that she would hang up her Red, White and Blue uniform and retire from USA Softball July 26, following the 2010 KFC World Cup of Softball presented by Six Flags. During her 10 year career with USA Softball, Finch has emerged as an icon bringing recognition to the sport on levels transcending the diamond.

“I feel an outpouring of gratitude for so much and for so many that it’s really hard to put into words. Playing USA Softball has been more to me than I ever imagined possible. I could never have dreamed what an amazing ride this has been,” said Finch. “I have been honored with so many amazing opportunities and I have to credit so many people; from the women before me to everyone at USA Softball to the fans and everyone involved in the sport who have made this such a special part of my life.”

Finch entered the USA Softball National Team program in 2001 at the Pan American Qualifier. She has been on the National Team every year since then and in 2004 earned an Olympic Gold Medal in Athens and in 2008 an Olympic Silver Medal in Beijing.

“To be a little girl, wearing USA stuff, watching the Olympics and then to grow older and to compete alongside the women you have admired is unbelievable. It’s so surreal that I was able to play with my role models in Leah (O’Brien-Amico), Lisa (Fernandez) and Laura (Berg),” said Finch. “There is so much history, pride and tradition with USA Softball and I feel extremely blessed to be a part of it for the last 10 years. It has taken me places I have never dreamt of and given me relationships that go way beyond the softball field. I am thankful to my teammates, coaches, USA Softball, sponsors, my friends and family who have allowed me to not only create my dreams but to live them.”

Along with her Olympic medals, the 6’1” pitcher is a three time World Champion and a two-time Pan American Champion. She spent most of her time in the circle, but recently has emerged at the plate and defensively at first base. Her most recent Championship win in the circle was at the 2009 Japan Cup where she threw a one-hitter against 2008 Olympic Gold Medalist Japan as well as hit a two-run double to lead the USA to a 2-0 defeat over Japan. In 2009, Finch was also named the USA Softball Player of the Year.

“Jennie has meant so much to the sport and the growth of it. She has brought it to a whole new level of recognition as a worldwide sport. She has been instrumental in growing the sport both on the fielder as a pitcher, player and hitter but also as a person,” said ASA Executive Director Ron Radigonda. “She is one who has never turned down an autograph or photo requests and truly appreciates her fans. She is as fan friendly as anyone out there. She has a respect for the young athletes who aspire to be her because she was that young girl at one time. I know she will continue to do what she can to help grow the sport and we at ASA appreciate all the time she spent with USA Softball. She will always be a great person in the sport of softball but more importantly a good person.”

Finch came on the international scene in after a stellar career at the University of Arizona. She set the NCAA record for consecutive wins with 60 and was a two-time Honda Award winner for Nation’s top softball player. Outside of softball she was named one of People’s Most Beautiful people in 2004, was a member of The Celebrity Apprentice cast in 2008 and most recently she earned recognition for becoming the first female to hit a home run at the MLB Legends and Celebrities Softball Game.

“It’s a sad day for the sport of softball,” said the only four-time softball Olympian Laura Berg. “Softball is losing one of its greatest icons with the retirement of Finch. She has always been and always will be a great model for kids. She has been an amazing ambassador for the sport in the U.S. and globally. I’m honored to call her my teammate and friend.”

At age 29, Finch has played on several USA Softball rosters, being a rookie at age 19 but now a decorated veteran. During this time, she has touched the lives of many former and current teammates who will forever remember the athlete and most importantly person she is.

“Being able to see the sport grow so much in the past 10 years is such an honor. It’s incredible how much it has grown not only in the United States but also internationally. Hopefully I will continue to be involved with the development of the sport in some way just not in uniform. USA Softball will always be part of me and I plan to work in proving more opportunities in the future.”
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Alissa Haber, Women’s National Team honored by USOC

World Champion outfielder Alissa Haber was voted the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) Female Athlete of the Month for June 2010, based on her record breaking play at the 2010 ISF Women's World Championship in Caracas, Venezuela, the USOC announced today. The USA Softball Women's National Team was also selected as June 2010's Team of the Month for their performances leading to a seventh consecutive World Gold Medal.

"It is a tremendous honor for Alissa and the Women's National Team to be singled out as the top performers in the U.S. Olympic Movement for June 2010," Amateur Softball Association (ASA) Executive Director Ron Radigonda said. "When you look at the list of nominees, you see there was no shortage of outstanding accomplishments for U.S. athletes, and we are incredibly proud that our athletes were recognized as the absolute best of the best. Softball is in a difficult time right now. But these awards, the worldwide participation in the ISF Women's World Championship and the upcoming World Cup of Softball in Oklahoma City, proves that our athletes and our sport are still thriving."

Haber (Newark, Calif.) made her presence known in her first appearance at Worlds, setting several records while helping Team USA to a ninth overall World Championship on July 2. Haber's most impressive performance at Worlds came on June 17 against 2008 Olympic bronze medalist Australia. She went 3-for-3, hitting two doubles, with one run and four RBI. In total for the month, Haber played seven games, starting all in the outfield. She went 14-for-20 at the plate with one walk for a .700 average (.615 for the event overall). Even excluding the two World Championship games that fell in July, Haber set the record for most RBI in a World Championship, scoring 19 (20 overall) to push her past Jessica Mendoza's (Camarillo, Calif.) 16. She ranks fourth for most career RBI at Worlds, trailing three-time World team member Mendoza by only 10 RBI. Haber is now tied for first for the most doubles in a single Worlds, hitting all seven in June, and is second for most hits with 14 of 16 also coming in June.

Coming in second place in the female category was tennis star Serena Williams (Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.). Williams won five straight singles matches in June en route to capturing her fourth Wimbledon title and also captured the doubles title with sister Venus at the French Open. Judo player Kayla Harrison (Middletown, Ohio), who undefeated in two matches in June, won the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) Female Athlete of the Month for June.

The USA Softball Women's National Team went 8-0 in June, en route to winning the World Championship on July 2 by shutting out 2008 Olympic Champion Japan in Caracas, Venezuela. The USA outscored opponents 84-6 in June (95-6 overall), highlighted by a 7-0, five inning win over host country Venezuela and a 20-0, three inning victory over Botswana. Four June victories were shutouts.

In June, the Americans went 79-for-186 at the plate, averaging .426 as a team. The team hit 18 doubles, including Haber's seven, nine triples, three by Kaitlin Cochran (Yorba Linda, Calif.) and four home runs, three from Jennie Finch (La Mirada, Calif.). USA batters were walked 30 times and even more impressive, struck out only 21 times in 186 at-bats. Pitchers Finch, Abbott (Salinas, Calif.), Cat Osterman (Houston, Texas) and Women's National Team rookie Eileen Canney (Paradise, Calif.) all went 2-0 for a combined 80 ERA in June. Three struck out 13 batters each while Osterman struck out 21, giving the pitching staff a combined 60 strikeouts. The pitchers only allowed only 16 hits in eight games, including two extra base hits. USA fielders had two errors, compared to the opponents combined 17.

Overall for the Worlds, the 2010 team and team members rank highly. They now rank No. 1 in the history of the World Championships in batting average (.402), runs scored (95), RBI (78), walks (37) and triples (10). They are third in hits (92), second in doubles (20) and fifth in home runs (5).

The 229 at-bats ranks the 2010 team fourth. Mendoza, Haber and Natasha Watley (Irvine, Calif.) rank 1-2-3 in event batting average (.402), runs scored (95), RBI (78), walks (37) and triples (10). They are third in hits (92), second in doubles (20) and fifth in home runs (5).

Prior to the inclusion of the interactive fan poll on Twitter, Watley, who also won the July 2009 award, sat in second place. However, strong fan support catapulted her to the top of the overall standings as she garnered 29 percent of the votes for the month on the online poll.

Coming in third place in the Team of the Month category was last month's winner, the USA Softball Women's National Team. The team went 6-1 at the World Cup to take home their fourth title in five years. As a team, they hit .310 while outscoring opponents 33-6. The team had one loss but came back for two more wins, allowing only one run in the last 14 innings. The pitching staff combined for a 1.15 ERA while allowing only six earned runs in 47.0 innings. Team USA defeated 2008 Olympic gold medalists Japan, 5-1, in the championship game for the Gold Medal.

Watley recognized by USOC for July 2010 performances

The U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) announced softball player Natasha Watley and track & field star David Oliver as its July Athletes of the Month, while doubles tennis champions and brothers Bob and Mike Bryan were awarded Team of the Month honors.

Watley (Irvine, Calif.) is the second consecutive softball player to win the USOC Athlete of the Month as Alissa Haber took home the honor in June. Watley's strong performance in the 2010 KFC World Cup of Softball presented by Six Flags propelled her to the top spot this month along with some help from her fans. Over the course of the World Cup, Watley hit at .565 clip with 13 hits and a team-high seven runs scored. Her team-high 13 hits were all singles and she was a perfect 4-for-4 in stolen bases. She was one of four players to start in all seven games as the USA went 6-1 to claim its fourth World Cup title. Prior to the inclusion of the interactive fan poll on Twitter, Watley, who also won the July 2009 award, sat in second place. However, strong fan support catapulted her to the top of the overall standings as she garnered 29 percent of the votes for the month on the online poll.

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ASA Softball and Liberty Mutual have partnered together to help our children get the most out of their youth sports experience with the Responsible Sports program. This summer, Liberty Mutual is offering adult ASA members and coaches a $5 off coupon to SoftballOutlet.com upon completion of a free no obligation auto, home or life insurance quote.

SoftballOutlet.com is your 24/7 softball source where you can use this $5 off coupon on anything! From Jennie Finch headbands to USA Softball apparel and player merchandise and more! This offer ends August 26, 2010.

Learn More >>

Fall 2010 Community Grant Race starts September 1

Starting September 1, and continuing through November 30, the fall 2010 Community Grant race will be live! You need to rally your community to complete the coursework, credit your favorite softball organization and connect with your community for support.

Your organization can use the money for anything, mat upgrades, equipment, coaches education, you decide. Join the hall of fame like Lake Zurich Baseball & Softball who will use the money to fund equipment purchases.

Go to ResponsibleSports.com/Grant to get started today!

Listen to the Jennie Finch podcast

In his newest episode, Positive Coaching Alliance Founder and Executive Director Jim Thompson welcomes Olympic Gold Medalist and USA Softball Women’s National Team pitching All-Star Jennie Finch. Borrowing a line from Billie Jean King, Finch talks about the “privilege of pressure,” encouraging youth athletes to enjoy the moment and to Honor The Game by honoring themselves, their teammates, the history of the sport, and the opportunity to learn life lessons through sports. Listen >>
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Savannah Edwards of Edmond, Okla., has joined the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America National Office staff as the IT Systems Analyst. Edwards joined ASA on Aug. 9.

Edwards will work in several capacities in the IT department including but not limited to ASA Registration support, Access application support, Registration reports, Umpire Evaluation software support, ASA Portal and Umpire Portal databases.

“We are very excited to welcome Savannah into the ASA family. She will be an invaluable asset to our IT department in several different areas,” said ASA Executive Director Ron Radigonda. “Savannah excelled in her college courses and was a leader in many different organizations. Her work ethic and personality will be a great fit at ASA.”

Edwards is a 2010 graduate of the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond. She graduated Summa Cum Laude with a degree in Management Information Systems. At UCO she was a member of several honor societies and served as President of the AITP (Association of Information Technology Professionals).

**Trade Show registration set to open this week**

The annual Trade Show will be held during the ASA National Governing Council Meeting in Shreveport, La. The show, which is expected to attract 1,000 people, is Saturday, November 6, from 5-9 p.m. at the Shreveport Convention Center.

The cost for cities, counties and visitors bureaus is $500 per-space (10 feet by 10 feet). Companies and manufacturers can exhibit for $650. The deadline to register and submit payment in full is October 1. Interested exhibitors can contact Jamie Blanchard at jblanchard@softball.org for an exhibitor packet.

Space assignments, which can be requested on the exhibitor packet, are made based on the date of payment.

**Chrome Horse recognized for 21 years of ASA slow pitch**

The Chrome Horse slow pitch team was honored July 1 before a minor league baseball game by the Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Parks and Recreation Department for their performance over 21 seasons, in which the team has played ASA Softball at a high level.

This team originated with a group of graduates from Cedar Rapids Jefferson in 1989. Chrome Horse, still the same group of friends, has since finished in the Top 10 at the state level and played at the ASA National Championships in Montgomery, Ala.; Salem, Ore.; Plano, Texas; Midland, Texas; Ardmore, Okla.; Shreveport, La.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Bismarck, N.D.; and Liberty, Mo. At the 2005 Hooters ASA Men’s West Class D Slow Pitch National Championship, the team took fourth, their highest finish nationally.

Many players on the team have earned all tournament awards, First Team All-State and National All-American distinctions, none of which would be possible without the support of Priority Graphics, Metal Fab, Bergen Insurance, Chrome Horse, Chucks Bar and Grill, Bushwood, Derlein Scale and Buffalo Wild Wings.

“The team takes pride in the fact that it never kicked players off the team or replaced players for more talented players,” coach Warren Valenta said. “The team has always added players based on the player fitting into the softball family on and off the field. The team is together all year round not just during the season. This group has beaten much more talented teams by just being a team versus a group of talented individuals.”

In addition to honoring the team, the ceremony also included a home run derby featuring the areas best 12-inch slow pitch softball home run specialists. Nick Nissen of Chrome Horse won the competition with 8 out 10 swings for home runs, some in excess of 400 feet.

**National Softball Hall of Fame nominations due September 1**

Per article 312 of the ASA Code, the nomination forms for the National Softball Hall of Fame’s Class of 2011 are due by September 1. Download the nomination form by clicking here. The form should be accompanied by a resume, scrapbooks/newspaper articles and testimonials.

Questions can be directed to Holly Krivokapich at hollyk@softball.org.

**Overflow hotels selected for the annual meeting**

The host hotel for the ASA National Governing Council Meeting in Shreveport is the Shreveport Hilton. The three overflow hotels have been confirmed: Best Western on Lake Street (starting at $101.78 with code ASA Conference), Holiday Inn on Lake Street (starting at $111.97 with code ASA block) and Sam’s Town on Clyde Fant Parkway (starting at $132.33 with code S11ASA).
Before a hometown crowd in Powder Springs, Ga., the East Cobb Bullets became the first team from Georgia to win the ASA GOLD National Championship, topping Team North Florida 6-3 in the Championship Game.

 POWDER SPRINGS, Ga. – In front of a crowd of more than 600 raucous fans at Lost Mountain Park, Lexi Overstreet delivered the hit of her young softball life as she hit a three-run home run in top of the ninth inning to make the East Cobb Bullets the first-ever team from the state of Georgia to win the ASA 18-Under GOLD National Championship by coming-from-behind to defeat Team North Florida, 6-3, on August 7.

 Overstreet delivered the majestic home run deep over the right-center field fence to keep the Bullets undefeated and give the Kennesaw (Ga.) team the state of Georgia’s first national championship in the 17 year history of the ASA national tournament.

 North Florida did not go down without a fight, just as they had in their nine previous elimination games, as they put runners on first and third with one out in the bottom of the ninth inning. Sami Fagan lofted a ball to shallow center field, but a diving catch by center fielder Haley Downs gave the Bullets their second out and after pitcher Lori Spingola got Ryan Iamurri to fly out to left field, East Cobb earned their spot in fast pitch history.

 In the wildly exciting championship game, East Cobb, who was undefeated in the tournament, saw themselves in an early hole as Team North Florida’s Kasey Fagan hit a two-run home run in the bottom of the first inning. Sami Fagan lofted a ball to shallow center field, but a diving catch by center fielder Haley Downs gave the Bullets their second out and after pitcher Lori Spingola got Ryan Iamurri to fly out to left field, East Cobb earned their spot in fast pitch history.

 The Bullets answered in the top of the third inning when they tied the game on a run scoring ground out by Chelsea Thomas and a Downs double which scooted past a diving left fielder Sami Fagan, who recovered in time to throw Downs out as she tried to leg out a triple.

 Spingola struggled through the bottom of the third inning as Sami Fagan led off the inning with an infield hit. Iamurri reached on an error by third baseman which put runners on the corners. After Iamurri moved to second on a delayed steal that did not induce a throw from East Cobb catcher Alysha Rudnik, Kasey Fagan hit a grounder back to Spingola who threw home to keep the game tied, but as a result loaded the bases.

 The game’s momentum turned with the next batter when Alex Powers hit a fly ball to left field which East Cobb’s Chelsea Thomas grabbed and threw a strike to home plate, gunning down Kasey Fagan by two feet and keeping the game tied. Spingola then got Kayla Hunt to ground out to third base.

 In the top of the fifth inning, East Cobb’s Kallie Kase lined a triple to left field that just grazed off the glove of North Florida’s Alex Powers. Dallas Hardin followed with the wildest play of the game when Kaylee Williams pinch hit for Hardin, dropped down a bunt that caught Kase off third base. The throw to North Florida third baseman Kasey Fagan forced her inside the foul line where Kase slide away from the tag to make it back to third base. Williams, seeing the play develop, hustled to second base and as she drew the throw, Kase raced home with the go-ahead run.

 North Florida, who was looking to fight off elimination for the tenth straight game, had Kasey Fagan lead off the bottom of the sixth inning with line drive single to center field. Spingola struck out Powers looking and then got Kalia Hunt to ground to third base, forcing Fagen at second before ending the mild threat by getting Haley Fagan to fly out to left field.

 The dramatic seventh inning saw Spingola retire Hensley for the first out before hitting Jackie Traina with a pitch. Tori Williams struck out for the second out before North Florida leadoff batter Sami Fagan beat out a bunt to put the runner in scoring position. Iamurri battled Spingola for seven pitches as a wild pitch...
moved runners to second and third and a little dribbler to third base saw the speedy lamurri beat out the throw scoring the game-tying run. Kasey Fagan walked load the bases before Alex Powers lined softly to center field to push the game into extra innings for the eventual East Cobb title victory.

**National Semifinal Game: Team North Florida 2, Team Florida 0**

In a Sunshine State semifinal, Team North Florida continued its impressive run out of the loser's bracket as they defeated Team Florida, 2-0, to set up a meeting with the East Cobb Bullets in a Border Battle between Georgia and Florida at GOLD.

Dunnellon-based Team North Florida used a two-run, second inning home run by Kelly Hensley to advance to the championship game as the combination of Courtney Radke and Jackie Traina combined for a two-hit shutout.

Radke earned the win with four innings of two-hit ball, striking out four without a walk while Traina earned her second save of the day, going three perfect innings. The pair allowed Team Florida just two base runners, a second inning leadoff single by Chloe Saganowich and a third inning infield hit by Gabrielle Brown.

Team Florida was not able to muster much offense and when they were able to make solid contact Team North Florida came through with solid defensive efforts, including a diving catch center fielder Haley Fagan made in the bottom of the fourth inning that robbed Bailey Schinella of an extra base hit.

Hensley was the offensive star for Team North Florida, who won its ninth straight game of the tournament. Team North Florida's right fielder had two of her team's three hits, including the towering homer that cleared the left field fence scoring Alex Powers who had walked earlier in the second inning.

**Winner's Bracket Final: East Cobb Bullets 2, Team Florida 0**

With a berth in the ASA 18-U GOLD National Championship game on the line, the East Cobb Bullets took a major step to the state of Georgia's first-ever title as they defeated Team Florida in the winners bracket final of the ASA 18-U GOLD National Championship Tournament on Saturday afternoon at Lost Mountain Park.

The teams took different routes into the winner's bracket final as the East Cobb Bullets won both of their pool games while Team Florida dropped their two pool games. However, on the strength of pitching that recorded four shutouts in five bracket games, Team Florida swept through bracket play, outscoring their opponents, 21-3. The Bullets, owners of three shutouts in bracket play, entered the game with a nearly identical scoring margin of 20-3.

In the highly anticipated game, East Cobb's Lori Spingola outdueled Team Florida's Sara Nevins. Spingola threw a two-hit, shutout with 10 strikeouts for the fifth shutout of the week for the Bullets. Nevins struck out eight batters over seven innings, allowing solo runs in the fourth and fifth innings.

The hometown favorite Bullets jumped on the board with an RBI-double by Lauren Coleman in the fourth inning. The left-handed Coleman sliced a ball to left field which split left fielder Kaitlyn Raile and center fielder Ayanna Andrews, scoring Kelsie Hodgson.

The Bullets added a run in the top of the fifth inning when Kalie Kase walked to lead off the inning and was followed by back-to-back singles by Dallas Hardin and Chelsea Thomas as East Cobb loaded the bases with nobody out. After the first out of the inning, Sierra Lawrence lifted a towering fly ball to right field for a sacrifice fly to make the score 2-0.

Team Florida ran themselves out of a potential rally in the bottom of the second inning when Bailey Schinella took off for third base and was thrown out when East Cobb catcher Austyn West fired to third base where Kelsie Hodgson ran Schinella back towards second base and tagged her to end the inning.

**Fourth Place Game: Team North Florida 3, Texas Impact 0**

The hits kept coming for Team North Florida as they Dunnellon-based team won their eighth-straight game on Saturday morning, defeating Texas Impact Gold, 3-0, in the fourth place game at GOLD.

Team North Florida (11-1) entered the game on a rampage, having outscored its last five opponents by a, 40-1, margin including three, run-rule victories. In their 12th game of the championship, it didn’t take long for the Florida team to get on the board as they struck for three runs in the second inning.

In the bottom of the inning, wildness got to Texas Impact Gold starter Kaylee Garner as she walked Kelly Hensley to lead off the inning. After a sacrifice by Rachel Engel, Garner walked Tori Williams and Sami Fagan legged out a bunt down the third base line to load the bases.

Ryan lamurri lined a shot to third base that popped from the glove of a diving Nicole Morgan, scoring the first run of the game. Kasey Fagan singled up the middle scoring a pair of runs for a, 3-0, lead and chasing Garner in favor of Rachel Fox. The right-hander struck out Alex Powers and got Kalia Hunt to fly out to right field to limit the damage.

In the top of the fourth inning, Texas Impact Gold (6-3) rallied as the put runners on first and second as Team North Florida replaced their starter, Courtney Radke, with Jackie Traina, who threw a wild pitch on her first offering, putting runners on second and third.

The tall right-hander recovered and got Taylor Petty to ground to the box as she turned and fired to third base, getting Casey Tysarczyk caught in a rundown for the first out. Another soft grounder to the box loaded the bases as Traina forced the runner back to third in favor of a close play at first base. A ground out to shortstop resulted in a force at home and a pop up to the shortstop Sami Fagan behind third base kept the Texas Impact scoreless.

Traina picked up the save with four innings of one-hit relief while Radke earned the win after starting and throwing three innings of scoreless work. Team North Florida shutout its sixth opponent in bracket play and has allowed one total run over its last six games.

Texas Impact Gold finished the tournament with a 6-3 record after splitting two pool play games and going 5-2 in bracket play.

**Relive the 2010 ASA OLD National Championship online**

For more on the GOLD National Championship including brackets, box scores, photos and videos, visit the official website of all GOLD National Championships, gold.asasoftball.com, and the ASA Softball page on Facebook, www.facebook.com/asausasoftball/.
**Mr. D’s on top of ASA 2K Series**

The Mr. D’s/Custom Apparel/Miken Men’s A slow pitch team is on top of the 2010 ASA 2K Series presented by Combat. With a total of 100 points, the team trumped second place Famoussports.com, by 30 points. The six teams tied for third place with 60 points: Custom Truck, Fence Brokers, Midwest Coach/ Columbus Pipe/Mojo/DSS Bats/Easton, NW Combat, RentKing and WC Blaze.

The ASA 2K Series presented by Combat is in its third year of existence and consists of designated ASA tournaments that each award a $2,000 travel certificate to the first place team to travel to the ASA Men’s Class A National Championship. The first place team at each tournament will also receive a Combat prize pack that includes three bats, 15 batting shirts, shorts and hats.

“ASA is thrilled to be partnering with Combat Sports on the 2010 2K Series of tournaments,” said ASA Executive Director Ron Radigonda. “The 2010 series line-up has seven participating tournaments and we challenge slow pitch teams to take advantage of this opportunity to compete to become the 2010 ASA Men’s Class A National Champion.”

Teams will also be awarded points based on their finish in each ASA 2K event. The team with the most points at end of Series will also win a Combat prize if they attend the ASA Men’s A National Championship.

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**Rolla hosts future of USA Softball men’s fast pitch program**

*Courtesy of Doug Lindaman*

Thirty-nine young male fast pitch players participated in the ASA/USA Softball Junior Men’s Development Camp in Rolla, Mo., on August 4. The camp was held at the Ber Juan Sportsplex one day prior to the ASA 16-Under, 18-Under and 23-Under national tourneys. The 39 players represented 12 states and all are age-eligible (born in 1993 or later) for the next International Softball Federation (ISF) Junior Men’s World Championship in Argentina in 2012. After the camp, all 39 boys participated in the 16-U nationals on Thursday and Friday, August 5-6.

Catching received individual instruction for 45 minutes, beginning the day at 8:30 a.m. Pitchers, many of whom are already receiving monthly video feedback from the USA coaching staff, began a 45 minute session at 9:15. The remaining camp participants began at 10 a.m. and rotated between workout stations for hitting, bunting and fielding. After a two hour lunch break, necessitated by the 100 degree heat and high humidity, players were divided into three teams and a two hour controlled scrimmage was conducted.

Over 90 boys from 25 states have now expressed a desire to be considered for the next USA Softball Junior Men’s Team. Although there are only a small number of boys club teams in a handful of states, many age-eligible boys are gaining experience by playing in men’s fast pitch leagues and have found out about the potential for playing on the USA Softball National Team through various internet websites and social media outlets, as well as a very active recruiting effort by the USA Junior Men’s coaching staff.

USA Softball junior men’s head coach Tim Lyon was assisted by coaching staff members Scott Standerfer and Gary Mullican, along with selection committee member Doug Lindaman, in directing the camp activities. “We were very pleased with the turnout, the enthusiasm and the skill level of these athletes” said Lyon. “It is exciting to see as we look forward to the next ISF world championship only two years down the road.”

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**Nominate a player for 2010 Sports Kid of the Year**

Sports Illustrated Kids has opened up their search for the 2010 Sports Kid of the Year. Any young athlete (ages 7 to 15) who excels on the field, in the classroom and in his/her community is eligible. The deadline for nominations is September 1.

The winner will be featured on the cover of SI Kids, honored at SI’s annual Sportsman of the Year awards celebration in New York City and will appear on Cartoon Network’s first-ever “Hall of Game.”

Nominations can be submitted by clicking here.