A note from Amateur Softball Association
President Andy Dooley

I hope that all who attended the Junior Olympic (JO) Workshop found the sessions informative and helpful. Thank you to the National Office staff for putting together the valuable workshop that everyone could learn from.

I would like to welcome all of the new JO Commissioners who were attending the JO Workshop for the first time. And thanks to all of the Commissioners and other Amateur Softball Association of America (ASA) leaders and members who also attended.

Next month I am sure some of you will begin the season. I just want to remind you to get your teams registered and make sure that your umpires are registered also.

I know the new RegisterASA.com program has its issues. But I want to thank John Miller and his staff, including Lori Coleman and Nancy Teehee, for meeting with the associations that have requested extra attention and time. If your association needs help regarding Register ASA, please contact John (jmiller@softball.org) at the National Office.

Please also make sure your local association has all of the ASA National Championships its hosting posted online. Teams are looking for this information already so please make sure you have a Web site that gives them the information needed.

From April 23-25, the Board of Directors will be meeting. If you have something you would like discussed by the Board, please contact your territorial vice president. They can request that your concern be placed on the agenda.

I want to thank each of you for what you do for ASA each and every day.

Have a good February.
A note from The Inside Pitch editor
Jamie Blanchard

Welcome to the February 2010 edition of The Inside Pitch, the official newsletter of the Amateur Softball Association of America (ASA). Thank you for reading.

A lot of exciting things are happening at the National Office in Oklahoma City over the next few months. On March 6, the ASA Hall of Fame Stadium opens up for the season with The Preview College tournament. We are also preparing to announce our marquee event for the summer so be sure to stay tuned.

Recently, the National Office hosted the Junior Olympic (JO) Commissioners for the two-day JO Workshop. A lot of information was given out on everything from the Achieve, Certify, Educate (ACE) Coaching Certification program to our new Register ASA system. Hopefully most concerns were addressed during those presentations.

Julie Bartel, Holly Krivokapich and I also hope that our JOs took away one thing about the Marketing and Communications staff: We are always here to help. Please let us know what you need to spread ASA in your area. If you need promotional materials, contact us. If you need logos or photos, contact us. We have a lot of resources that we would love to share with the local ASAs.

And remember, if you would like to have a news item or photo included in The Inside Pitch, send it to me electronically during the first week of the month at jblanchard@softball.org. Any items, including photos, not submitted by the deadline may not be included. Please plan ahead to allow yourself enough time to submit items about your association.

If you have anything that you would like to submit for our March 2010 issue of the electronic Balls and Strikes Magazine, Holly is now taking story ideas. Please send her an e-mail at hollyk@softball.org.

Talk to you next month!
Another year of action kicks off at the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) Hall of Fame Complex on March 6 in Oklahoma City, Okla., with The Preview college tournament featuring a Bedlam match-up at 3 p.m. The four-game tournament also includes Nevada vs. Louisville at 10 a.m., Oklahoma State vs. Nevada at 12:30 p.m. and Oklahoma vs. Louisville at 5:30 p.m.

“We’re excited to be a part of such a great event,” Oklahoma Head Coach Patty Gasso said. “The competition will be tough with teams like Oklahoma State, Louisville and Nevada, but it will be exciting for our student-athletes and fans to experience the Bedlam atmosphere in a special venue like ASA Hall of Fame Stadium.”

The Preview will mark the first time pitcher Kelani Ricketts, an OU freshman, has played at the Stadium since leading her team to the 2009 18-Under GOLD National Championship.

General admission all-day tickets are on sale now through the ASA for $15. To purchase tickets, call 1-800-654-8337 or visit www.SoftballOutlet.com. Tickets will also be on sale at the ASA Hall of Fame Stadium on March 6.

The Preview is just the start of an exciting line-up of events at the ASA Hall of Fame Stadium featuring all levels of the sport, including high school fast pitch and slow pitch and ASA 12-Under, 14-Under, 16-Under, 18-Under and GOLD. The USA Softball 2010 Women’s National Team may also return to the stadium July 22-26 for the 5th World Cup of Softball, although an official announcement has not been made.

Other highlights of the 2010

ASA/USA Softball’s Facebook tops 10K, eyes 11K

The ASA/USA Softball Facebook page (www.facebook.com/asausasoftball) topped 10,000 fans last month. The new goal is to have 15,000 fans by the announcement of the finalists for the 2010 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year.

Facebook has proven as a very successful way to communicate with fans across the United States and the world, with hundreds of people commenting and asking questions on the page every week. It has also been a great way to gauge the opinions of athletes, coaches and umpires.

On Twitter (www.twitter.com/asausasoftball), more than 4,200 are following ASA/USA Softball. With Twitter, ASA is able to deliver short messages like scoring updates when major events are held at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex.

Several ASA associations have taken to social media - including Georgia, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nor Cal, Oregon and Sacramento. If your association is using social media, send an e-mail to Jamie Blanchard (jblanchard@softball.org) so your ASA and the National Office can connect.

Next issue of Balls and Strikes hitting the net in March

The first 2010 issue of Balls and Strikes online magazine comes out next month. If you have a story idea for the March magazine, please contact Holly Krivokapich (hollyk@softball.org) as soon as possible.
Every day, millions of lives are shaped with a softball and a little open space.

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Registration is now open for the spring 2010 Responsible Sports Community Grant period

The Liberty Mutual Responsible Sports Community Grants are almost here! Registration is now open for the spring 2010 Responsible Sports Community Grant period. To get started go to ResponsibleSports.com/Grant to search to see if your organization is registered.

Register now, spread the word, and get everyone involved for the opening of the grant period from March to May 31st. Use the money for things like new equipment, upgrade field conditions, start a scholarship fund, or whatever, you decide. What would you do with $2,500? Get started at ResponsibleSports.com/Grant today!
JO WORKSHOP

the ASA to activate the National girls’ softball division of the PHR competition. Other Friday activities included a session on the new Register ASA system for administrators, coaches and tournament directors, a session on the Achieve, Certify, Educate (ACE) Coaching Certification program, a tour of the newly renovated National Softball Hall of Fame and Museum and the ASA Hall of Fame Stadium, which recently reopened to the public, and the reception for the JO service awards.

Receiving awards were Joe Pavone of Chicago ASA for 5 years of service in the JO program; Sally Commerford of Nevada ASA for 10 years; Dave Forte of Central California ASA for 10 years; Glen Gotcher of Fort Worth ASA for 10 years; Cliff LaRose of Connecticut ASA for 10 years; Sarah McMahon of Kansas ASA for 10 years; Rick Hansen of Washington ASA for 15 years; Carol Pipgras of South Dakota ASA for 15 years; Kim Townsend of Georgia ASA for 15 years; and Don Smiley of Greater San Joaquin ASA for 20 years.

Saturday was another full-day starting with a presentation on tournament bracketing for JO events and recognition of the 2009 ASA Complex of the Year presented by Stabilizer Solutions Ballyard Products winner Heritage Park Softball Complex in St. Joseph, Mo. Saturday’s agenda included regional breakouts and open discussion as well.

“Thank you once again for allowing me the opportunity to attend the JO Workshop this past weekend, it is greatly appreciated,” Detroit ASA Commissioner Stu Alderman wrote. “Kudos also goes out to the entire ASA staff for all the hard work put into this event as well as all other ASA events to make ASA the best that it can be for the softball community.”

The JO Workshop is held on a biennial basis and first began in the 1990s. It will happen again in 2012.

“We’ve had a lot of positive changes made within our organization over the past several months including the implementation of our new Register ASA system,” Radigonda said. “The workshop is a great opportunity for our National Office staff to make our local leadership aware of the changes so they can activate them in their area. Our members across the country will really benefit from the time and work being put in this Friday and Saturday.”

Delaware ASA Hall of Fame welcomes the Class of 2010

The Delaware ASA Hall of Fame inducted three members on Jan. 30 in Wilmington, De. The inductees were Bob Hudson, Jean Lane and Barbara Thornton. Hudson began umpiring in 1982. He was inducted into the ASA National Indicator Fraternity in Oklahoma City, Okla., in 1999 and in the same year, was honored by the International Softball Federation.

Since 1993, he has umpired in Men’s Major Slow Pitch National Championships and has umpired in Women’s Slow Pitch Nationals since 2001. Hudson has served as Delaware’s Umpire-in-Chief. He has also organized and instructed several ASA National Umpire Schools on the Eastern Seaboard.

Lane, a former fast-pitch player, started playing outfield with the Maida Pharmacy travel team that was established in the 1950s and early 60s. Among her list of softball accomplishments includes an ASA National Championship with the Delaware Air National Guard team.

She was the charter member of Delaware’s first senior women’s team. Lane competed at the 1997 National Senior Olympics in Tucson, Ariz., and has continued to compete in senior softball since.

Thornton served as the Delaware ASA Commissioner for 12 years, before stepping down this past fall.

She was a key member of the three-time Class ‘A’ National Champion Coastal Cardinals. She also coached the team to 14 national appearances.

Thornton, who coached at the University of Delaware and at Ursuline Academy, helped found and coach the Delaware Magic travel fast-pitch team. From the 1994 Magic, 10 went on to play NCAA D-I, D-II or D-III softball.

In 2004, Thornton received the prestigious “Pioneer Award” from the Delaware Women’s Sports Association for providing female athletes an opportunity to grow and prosper into young women.

Ed Lindsey to serve on new sports group

The Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau has created a not-for-profit subsidiary aimed at attracting amateur athletic events to the area, local government and tourism officials: Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission.

Buffalo ASA’s Ed Lindsey, who is a former ASA Eastern Territorial Vice President, will serve on the 36-member Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission. The group will also have representation from the Bills, Sabres, Bisons, and many area colleges and universities.
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ASA’s Official Team Insurance Plan for the 47th year!

Bollinger provides Team Insurance Plans for ASA’s JO and Adult Teams. These coverages stand ready to defend and protect you in the event of injuries or lawsuits arising out of your softball activities.

- **ASA Team Accident Insurance Plan** provides a $250,000 Excess Medical Expense benefit for injuries to your players.
- Various deductible options offer you additional savings.
- **The ASA Team Liability Insurance Plan** provides your team with $5,000,000 protection for bodily injury or property damage claims arising out of your team’s games, practices or fundraising activities.

Note: Many ASA Associations are requiring Individual Registration for their Junior Olympic teams. One benefit of Individual Registration is that Liability and Accident Insurance are automatically provided as part of the ASA membership fee. If your local ASA Commissioner is using Individual Registration, you do not need to purchase the ASA Team Insurance Plan. Contact your ASA Commissioner or Bollinger for more information.

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**Leading the way with ASA Individual Registration:**

**Best Practices for Teams and Leagues**

- **Why Individual Registration?** As the National Governing Body for Softball, ASA/USA Softball is committed to the goal of providing accident and liability insurance to all participants in the Junior Olympic (youth) program. This is especially important as more and more American families do not have their own medical insurance. To ensure that our JO players receive the insurance protection they need, ASA/USA Softball has been converting to Individual Registration (as opposed to team registration) for the JO Program. Individual Registration is also available to Adult leagues in certain areas.

- **How is the insurance plan for Individual Registration different from Team Insurance?** There is no difference in the limits of coverage under the Individual Registration or Team Insurance plans. The program is still administered by Bollinger and underwritten by Markel Insurance Company.

- **How to get started?** Contact your local ASA Commissioner or JO Commissioner for details on how to Individually Register. To find the contact information for your Commissioner, go to the ASA/USA Softball web site at [www.ASASoftball.com](http://www.ASASoftball.com).

- **For answers to Frequently Asked Questions on Individual Registration**, please visit Bollinger’s ASA web site, [www.BollingerASA.com](http://www.BollingerASA.com) and click on “Individual Registration.”

*Important Note: In order to participate in ASA Junior Olympic/Youth Championship Play, all teams must be ASA Individually Registered or purchase through Bollinger the ASA Team Insurance Package Plan.*
The Responsible Sports Season Evaluation Tool™ is now live! An easy-to-use, online survey tool designed to help leagues and teams measure season-over-season improvement and allow you, the parents, to give valuable feedback to your league. Get started today!

Heritage Park, operated by the City of St. Joseph Parks, Recreation and Civic Facilities Department, opened in spring 2003, following two years of construction from October 2001 to March 2003. The 25-acre facility has five playing fields overseen full-time by Brian Jackson, the athletic field supervisor. The fields are used year round for softball tournaments, most recently including the 2009 ASA Girls’ A 14-Under Fast Pitch Northern National Championships, and even a one-day community fitness and kickball day.

One of the original goals of Heritage Park is to try to make it better each day, each month and especially each year,” Halloran said. “The staff prides itself on keeping the facility, especially the playing fields in great shape on a daily basis. Along with the manicured grounds, treating each and every visitor to the complex with the utmost in kindness, courtesy and respect is of the utmost importance to each and every staff person and volunteer.”

The facility also has a 42 by 54 foot playground area that is covered with a shade structure to prevent injury from foul balls. Three sides of the playground are fenced while the fourth side has benches with shade for parents. Heritage Park also has two areas between fields, one a deck area and another a flat brick patio, that are covered with umbrellas, often providing a comfortable place to eat the affordable food and drink from the concession stand.

In 2010, Heritage Park will host the ASA Girls’ B 18-Under Fast Pitch Northern National Championships along with a variety of other ASA approved events.

For more information on Stabilizer Solutions, visit their Web site at stabilizersolutions.com.

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$79/night if you mention you are with the Metro Detroit ASA Umpire School
Room reservations must be made by March 9, 2010 to receive this rate

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Friday, April 9, 2010 – Best Western Palace Inn
6:00 – 10:00 pm  Check In/Hospitality

Saturday, April 10, 2010 – Oxford Middle School
8:00 – 9:00 am  Check In and School Photo
9:00 – Noon  Instructional Sessions
9:00 – Noon  Lunch
1:00 – 4:00 pm  Instructional Sessions
Best Western Palace Inn
6:00 – 7:00 pm  Optional Buffet Dinner
8:00 – 11:00 pm  Hospitality

Sunday, April 11, 2010 – Oxford Middle School,
8:00 am – Noon  Instructional Sessions
Noon -1:00 pm  Lunch
1:00 – 3:00 pm  Instructional Sessions
3:00 – 3:30 pm  Closing Ceremony

2010 - 2011 National Tournaments scheduled in Michigan:
• Northern Territory Girls 18-Under A  Novi, MI  August 2010
• Northern Territory Girls 14-Under B  Novi, MI  August 2011
• Northern Territory Girls 16-Under A  Mt. Pleasant, MI  August 2011
National tournament umpires must attend a National Umpire School.

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After finishing the 2009 season with a 51-12 record and a NCAA National Championship title, the University of Washington begins the 2010 softball season with a No. 1 ranking in the ESPN.com/USA Softball Pre-Season Collegiate Top 25 Poll announced today by the Amateur Softball Association (ASA). ASA/USA Softball is in its eighth season of releasing the ESPN.com/USA Softball Collegiate Top 25 Poll along with weekly Players of the Week and ultimately the USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year Award.

The complete pre-season poll is posted at www.usasoftball.com.

Led by 2009 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year Danielle Lawrie, Washington, with 17 first-place votes, posted a 5-1 record at the 2009 Women’s College World Series, defeating Florida 3-2 in the second game of the Championship Series after defeating the Gators 8-0 in the first game. Florida dropped to a pre-season fifth-ranking after finished up the year with a 63-5 record, the only team in 2009 to post single digits in the loss column.

Alabama, with one first-place vote, starts out the 2010 campaign with a second-place ranking, after finishing last season with a 54-11 record. No. 3 Michigan and No. 4 Arizona, with one first-place vote, round out the Top 5 in the pre-season poll.

No. 6 UCLA is the other holder of a 100 responses to my posting within the first 90 minutes and almost 300 total candidates interested in just two weeks.” At a cost of $25 for each ad, Mass ASA has spent $75 to place the ads in three different categories including general labor and education (Alfonse has varied the third option). “I get the posting out to what I consider the optimal job market,” Alfonse said.

He warns that surfing through craigslist can result in unwarranted content, as certain areas of the site do contain inappropriate material. Alfonse has not seen that as an issue with getting the word out to potential umpires, however. “For a directed use tool though, it’s awesome,” Alfonse said. “Metro Boston ASA, last season, spent $3,000 on print media looking for umpires throughout 70 cities and towns. We received three responses with no new umpires registered. We spent $75 on Craigslist and registered 80 new umpires just through that tool. This year for the now combined Mass ASA, I’m not going to waste any money on print media. I realize it’s a risk but the rewards are just too high with craigslist.”

**College Corner**

**Washington begins 2010 season as No. 1**

After finishing the 2009 season with a 51-12 record and a NCAA National Championship title, the University of Washington begins the 2010 softball season with a No. 1 ranking in the ESPN.com/USA Softball Pre-Season Collegiate Top 25 Poll announced today by the Amateur Softball Association (ASA). ASA/USA Softball is in its eighth season of releasing the ESPN.com/USA Softball Collegiate Top 25 Poll along with weekly Players of the Week and ultimately the USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year Award.

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No. 6 UCLA is the other holder of a first-place vote with one and is the only team along with No. 10 Oklahoma in the top ten that did not make a 2009 WCWS appearance. The Sooners made the biggest leap in the poll, finishing last year at No. 17.

After receiving votes in the final 2009 poll, No. 23 ULL and No. 24 Fresno State cracked the Top 25 while Jacksonville State and North Dakota State dropped out, but both are still receiving votes.

**Lawrie headlines Top 5 Watch List for 2010**

ASA has selected its initial “Watch List” for the 9th Annual USA Softball National Collegiate Player of the Year Award. This award, which is considered the most prestigious honors 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 Tincher and 2009 winner Washington pitcher/hitter Lawrie.

The 2010 Pre-Season Watch List is comprised of 50 players representing 35 schools and 14 different NCAA Division I Conferences. The list includes 27 seniors, 17 juniors and six sophomores. The complete list of the Top 50 athletes is posted at www.usasoftball.com.

The ASA will announce the 25 finalists on April 7. A player does not have to appear on this initial watch list to be considered as a top 25 finalist. However, once the top 25 finalists are named the winner of the award will come from that list.

Freshman can qualify for the top 25 list once they have competed at the collegiate level.
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The Amateur Softball Association of America (ASA) and Major League Baseball (MLB) are partnering in 2010 for the MLB Aquafina MLB Pitch, Hit & Run (PHR), which this year will feature a Girls’ National Softball Division for the first time.

“ASA is thrilled to be partnering again this year with Aquafina MLB Pitch, Hit & Run, especially at the National level,” said ASA Executive Director Ron Radigonda. “We have previously had two really strong trial years in the Girls’ division and are excited MLB has activated the girls’ side to the National level. I strongly encourage all ASA teams, leagues and local associations to take advantage of this opportunity to showcase our sport at the National level, participate and host a local competition. PHR is very important to continue the growth and promotion of our sport.”

Hosting a free PHR competition provides boys and girls, ages 7-14, the opportunity to showcase their baseball and softball skills. It also provides a great community event in just two to three hours; minimum of 30 participants per local competition.

The official skills competition of Major League Baseball, PHR is intended to encourage youth participation and emphasize the fun element of baseball and softball. All participants must begin by competing in a Local competition, which can be hosted by any organization, league, civic group or set of volunteers in the community. PHR is free of charge to both the participants and the local hosting organization.

The Four levels of competition are Local, Sectional, Team Championship and the National Finals. The local event is hosted one day in March, April or early May with winners advancing to the sectional in their area.

The top scorers are eligible to compete in the Team Championship in a Major League Stadium in June. The top scores nationwide, from the Team Championships, earn an all-expense paid trip to the MLB All-Star Game in Anaheim, Calif. to compete in the National Finals competition.

PHR is a 1-day event that is easy to administer and can often be completed in only a few hours. The competition can be hosted on a baseball/softball diamond or any open field. Registered hosts will receive an administrative kit with a handbook, promotional posters, registration forms, strike zone banner, award ribbons, and participation baseball cards for all participants and more information required to host the event.

Please take advantage of this great opportunity by signing up now to host a free Local Competition for the boys and girls in your community this spring (March 1 – early May).

Please visit www.mlb.com/phr for more information and to register online for your free Local Administrator Kit, which contains materials and information required to host. Space is limited so do not wait.

For general information, send your name, address, organization and questions to: pitchhitrun@website.mlb.com.