A note from Amateur Softball Association President Andy Dooley

Just a few weeks ago, the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America’s Board of Directors met in Virginia Beach, Va. One of our primary discussion topics was the rising cost of insurance. We are doing the best we can to keep the costs to a minimum but we need help from everyone involved in the ASA. It is not a problem just with our youth programs. It is adult players. It is umpires. Athletes and umpires, coaches and managers and even complex and field owners and operators, please be aware of any potential hazards out on the field of play. Use your best judgement and do not put yourself or other people on fields that are not fit. It is our high claims that are causing a rise in insurance cost so please help maintain safe conditions at all times.

Another topic of discussion at the board meeting was the continuing decline in registrations in all aspects of the organization. We really need our commissioners and the staff of local associations to be active in recruiting for the ASA. Where ever you are, you should be on the lookout for potential teams and umpires. If we continue to have declines, it will cause the Board of Directors to make reductions in the budget, which can affect the services we provide. We do not want any services interrupted so please recruit.

Best of luck to everyone as we head toward championship play. It was noted at the meeting that while we do have some troublesome areas, we have great athletes. We have great coaches. We have great umpires. At the ASA, we set the standard for tournaments because of our great event directors and volunteers. Thank you!

The pinnacle of ASA play is in the USA Softball National Team program. This summer, please support those athletes. The women and junior women will be in Plant City, Fla., Salem, Va., and Bowie, Md., prior to the women playing in the World Cup of Softball VI in Oklahoma City. Before the Border Battle III, our slow pitch men will be playing at the McQuade in Bismarck, N.D. and later in Cincinnati.

The school features first hand instruction from members of the 2011 USA Softball Women’s National Team coaching staff including Head Coach Ken Eriksen (University of South Florida) and assistant Mike White (University of Oregon). Portions of the school will also feature former USA Softball Women’s National Team Head Coach turned USA Softball Director of Coaching Education Mike Candrea (University of Arizona). Candrea led the program to a Gold and Silver Medal at the Olympic Games as well as numerous other medals in international competition before retiring from his USA Softball coaching duties in 2008.

After the opening of the school on Friday, Eriksen will address the audience about his experiences as the head of the 2011 Women’s National Team, which is aiming for a fifth

*NATIONAL COACHING SCHOOL* CONTINUED ON PAGE 4
A note from The Inside Pitch editor
Jamie Blanchard

Welcome to the May 2011 edition of The Inside Pitch, the official newsletter of the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America.

Sue Enquist once told a journalist “What I love about the game is that the game doesn’t know who is supposed to win.” After the opening weekend of the NCAA Division I Softball Championship, with three unseeded teams advancing from regional action, those words have never been truer. Will the winner of the NCAA Women’s College World Series be a favorite like No. 1 seed Arizona State? Or will it be an underdog like Houston, Oklahoma State or Kentucky?

The only thing that were know for sure about the post season is that Oklahoma City is where champions are made. On the field of the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) Hall of Fame Stadium, student athletes will become superstars. Remember Jennie Finch in the Arizona gear? Or Kaitlin Cochran in maroon and gold? Stacey Nuveman was a UCLA Bruin before she was an Olympic Champion. Who will join Jennie, Kaitlin and Stacey as icons of USA Softball?

Following the post season, more than 30 of the most talented softball players in the country, many fresh off the plane from Oklahoma City, will come to Chula Vista, Calif., to try out for the 2011 USA Softball Women’s National Team. The Red, White and Blue is what every softball player dreams about when they’re playing 12-Under ball. Wearing “USA” is what players hope for when they’re signing their National Letter of Intent. Playing for the Women’s National Team is the ultimate goal.

We hope that you will join us in Oklahoma City this summer to watch players come full circle. At the Women’s College World Series, they are playing for a national title. In July, they will take on the world at the World Cup of Softball VI.

Troy ‘Doc’ Jenkins passes away at 66

Dr. Troy Lee “Doc” Jenkins died Friday, May 6, 2011 at River Region Medical Center. He was 66.

Born in Utica, he made his home in Vicksburg where he had a dental practice. He attended Hinds Community College in Raymond and graduated from Millsaps College. He went on to the University of Tennessee Dental School in Memphis where he graduated in 1971. He was an exceptional athlete, having been inducted in the Sports Hall of Fame at Hinds Community College and Millsaps College. He currently was serving as District Commissioner of ASA for the surrounding communities.

He was past president of the Vicksburg Dental Society. He was an avid golfer and founder of Dr. J’s Golf Tournament.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Troy Edwin and Nell Brister Jenkins.

He leaves his wife, Joan R. Jenkins of Vicksburg; a daughter, Vicki Webb of Lawrenceburg, KY; a son, Jason Jenkins and fiancee Kayla of St. Petersburg, FL; a sister, Shelby J. Lewis (Bobby) of Utica; 3 nieces, Lisa Whatley (Rick), Lori Mitchell (Mork) and Lesley Carter (Christian); 1 great-niece, Amber Mitchell (Will) and 4 great-nephews, Justin Caldecott (Amanda), Brett Caldecott (Crystal), Nick Mitchell and Connor Carter.

Memorials are requested to the Vicksburg-Warren Humane Society, PO Box 820171, Vicksburg, MS 39182.
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.
Livermore, Calif. to host National Coaching School

World Cup of Softball title July 21-25 in Oklahoma City. Other Friday clinics are “Beginning Pitching” with White and “The USA Approach of Hitting” with Candrea.

Saturday and Sunday’s instruction includes classes on both defense and offense as well as base running, hitting, pitching and outfielding. Candrea will also speak on the Liberty Mutual Responsible Sports program. The National Coaching School concludes Sunday morning with a question and answer section with the staff.

A special room rate of $79 per-room plus tax is available at the Courtyard Marriott, 2929 Constitution Drive, in Livermore but space is limited. To book a room, call 800-321-2211 or visit their website at Marriott.com. The online group code is “ASAASAA” for a king room and “ASAASAB” for a double room.

For more information visit on the school, the 2011 USA Softball National Coaching School presented by Liberty Mutual, visit USASoftball.com.

Find an Aquafina MLB Pitch, Hit & Run (PHR) event

Major League Baseball is looking for youth softball players to participate in free Aquafina MLB Pitch, Hit & Run (PHR) competitions across the country. Check out the PHR website at www.mlb.com/phr/ for a listing of competitions in each state, including many this weekend.

Top competitors in each market advance to MLB ballparks and the top 24 kids each year earn a free trip to the MLB All-Star Game!

If you don’t see an event near your area, you can register to host a competition by visiting www.mlb.com/phr/.

ISF selects ASA to host Congress October 27-30 in OKC

The Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America and the International Softball Federation (ISF) announced today the XXV ISF Congress will take place in Oklahoma City October 27-30 at the Oklahoma City Marriott on Northwest Expressway.

“We thank the ASA for the comprehensive and competitive bid that they put forward to host our Congress,” said ISF President Don Porter. “They certainly have experience with staging their own national meetings as well as tournaments, so the XXV ISF Congress will certainly be in capable hands in terms of the local support. There is a lot of business to cover during the time there, but I know the delegates will also enjoy their time in Oklahoma City.”

Oklahoma City was chosen over a bid from the Bahamas Softball Federation and the 2011 congress marks the first time the meetings will take place in the United States since Tampa in 2001. In 2009, the congress traveled to Venezuela, in 2007 it was in Philippines, in 2005 Taiwan played host, and 2003 it took place in China.

“On behalf of the ASA and Oklahoma City, we are thrilled to be welcoming the world softball leaders to the softball capital of the United States,” said ASA/USA Softball Executive Director Ron Radigonda. “This congress will see participants from six continents and we are ready to meet and strategize with them on the critical issues facing international softball including a plan for reinstatement into the 2020 Olympic Games.”

The ISF Board of Directors will arrive on Wednesday, October 26 with the delegates arriving from around the world on Thursday for meetings that finish on Sunday. Numerous commission meetings will take place at the beginning of the weekend including, but not limited to Playing Rules, Development, Equipment Standards, Hall of Fame, Athletes and Competition. Once the commissions are completed, the Congress will convene beginning Sunday morning.
Seven individuals, four teams enter Illinois ASA HOF

The 41st Annual Illinois ASA Hall of Fame Induction Banquet was held on Saturday April 9, 2011 at the Decatur Hotel and Conference Center in Decatur. Illinois ASA Commissioner Ken Hancock gave the invocation before more than 360 people were served a buffet style dinner before seeing seven individuals and four teams enter into this hallowed hall of honor for their outstanding softball accomplishments.

Don Brewer the Illinois ASA State Commissioner served as the Master of Ceremonies and he kept the evening’s program moving with the help of his good friend and Illinois ASA Commissioner Jerry Stewart who also is the cochairman of the Illinois ASA Hall of Fame Committee.

E.T. Colvin, from Mississippi, the ASA National President elect, was in attendance and was also given an honorary induction into the Illinois ASA Hall of Fame. Colvin accepting this honorary induction chose to address those being inducted by saying, “One of the great things about being president elect is that I get to attend these types of functions and meet people who love the game of softball as much as I do.” He closed by saying; “Thank you for allowing me join you tonight in enjoying these festivities tonight and if they’re ever is anything that I can do for you my name is in all of those two hundred thousand rules books out there, and I look forward to the rest of the evening.”

Brewer asked for all the member of the Illinois ASA Hall of Fame to stand and be recognized. Brewer went on to recognize all the ASA commissioners and dignitaries in attendance.

“The Illinois ASA Hall of Fame museum from Casey made a short presentation showing what they have done since the ribbon cutting of the Hall of Fame last July 3rd.

Before the evening’s program ended three special awards that are so important in the Illinois ASA that are given annually at the Hall of Fame. The Don Plarski Umpire Award for umpiring accomplishments over the coarse of their career was earned by Mary Sylvester. Jerry Stewart presented this award to her by saying, “I had several male umpires come up to me and ask why we (The ASA) were choosing women to work the state championship game of the Men’s 45 & Over National Tournament and I simple told them because they earned the job.”

Accepting Mary Sylvester said, “Umpiring has been a big part of my life. And I have made a lot of friends. Umpiring is a family just like a softball team is a family.” She closed with a simple “Thank you.”

This year’s recipient of the Moreland Fink JO Award was Cary Frey Cary who was not able to attend this year’s induction banquet so Bob Adams who was to present this award to him accepted on his behalf.

The Rowe - McCord Meritorious Service Award was awarded to Paul Tomazzoli for his lifelong dedication to the Illinois ASA program. Jerry Stewart presented this most prestigious award to Tomazzoli by saying, “I worked with Paul in Effingham at the Women’s State tournament and I thought I saw something there. I think he has a chance to make a real good umpire. He stayed with and he stayed with and he is one of the best!”

Accepting his award Tomazzoli said, “This award is a great privilege I want to thank the ASA and also I want to thank my wife. Thank you.”

New items for ASA Umpires at OfficialGear.com

The Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America’s Official Gear catalog and the OfficialGear.com website now offers equipment and uniforms for basketball and football officials, the ASA announced April 13. Earlier this year, the ASA also began offering new items for softball umpires including the three-disc ASA Umpire Mechanics Volume II Set ($39.95), offered at OfficialGear.com.

“We know that when many of our umpires are not on the softball field, they take the professionalism and integrity they have learned through ASA Softball and bring it on to other fields of play,” said ASA Executive Director Ron Radigonda. “We’re pleased that Official Gear can become a one stop shop, offering our umpires everything they need to umpire or officiate a game. Umpires can expect the same great service and quality merchandise to supply them with uniforms and accessories to umpire and officiate other sports like baseball, football, and basketball.”

Items that can now be purchased include a basketball referee shirt, both in black and white and gray with black pin stripes, and football official jersey as well as caps, belts, knickers, shoes and socks for football referees. Whistles and lanyards are also offered through Official Gear. New flipping coins are offered for umpires along with a variety of equipment including chest protectors, face masks and leg protectors.

A follow up to ASA Umpire Mechanics Volume I, the new ASA Umpire Mechanics Volume II is an animated instruction DVD that gives umpires a look at the one, two and three umpire systems, including the proper positions and movements for each system. The full set can be purchased for $39.95 or separately at $19.95 per disk. Official Gear items can be ordered online at OfficialGear.com. Orders can also be made by calling ASA Properties at 800-654-8337 weekdays.
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Building effective parent/coach relationships can help everyone have a more productive and beneficial season. Research shows when parents support our children’s teachers, students learn more. This concept can be transferred to softball, where kids will have a better experience if we work in unison with the coach to create a positive youth sports environment.

Sometimes, it’s easier said than done. That’s why we’ve created an entire section dedicated to helpful tips and tools for ways to approach the coach.

A couple strategies to take into consideration:

• Empower your child to speak: there are several advantages to having your children, rather than you, speak directly to the coach. Many coaches are more open to suggestions from players than from parents. The biggest plus is that this can be an empowering experience for children, even if they don’t get the change they want

• When you need to intervene: Sometimes it calls for parent comment, sometimes it best left to talk to your athlete and restrain from approaching the coach over every action you see or hear

“ASA is thrilled to offer Clubspaces to all of our members. We truly believe that leagues that use Clubspaces will find it dramatically easier to manage their league, saving time and resources. Clubspaces is ideal for all ASA leagues.”

—Ron Radigonda, Executive Director of ASA

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Innovative sports-lighting systems can be a key opportunity for softball organizations interested in satisfying environmental concerns and saving money.

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SPORTS LIGHTING THEN AND NOW
Sports lighting involves projecting light over long distances. In prior generation systems, this resulted in about 25% of the total light generated by the luminaires landing on the playing surface. The rest went into the sky or on adjacent property as wasted spill light and light pollution. To compensate for the wasted light, additional luminaires were necessary to achieve the desired light levels for play.

Today, thanks to advances in the reflector system efficiencies and aiming design, as much as 70% of the light generated can be directed onto the playing surface. As a result fewer fixtures are needed to purchase, install, and operate.

All sports lighting systems differ, so consider environment, playability and budget to help ensure you’re getting a lighting system that fits your needs.

Environment
Good environmental light control can contribute to reduce energy costs in addition to controlling light pollution. Manufacturers can use sophisticated reflectors systems and visors to help direct spill light back onto the playing surface, which limits the light trespass and reduces electrical costs.

Playability
Balancing energy efficiency, environmental concerns, and costs are big considerations, but determining the quantity and quality of light necessary for your facility is just as important. Desired amount and quality of light can be determined by considering several factors including sport type, player skill level, field size, spectator capacity, and any videotaping requirements.

The Illuminating Engineering Society of North America provides recommended light levels for both indoor and outdoor facilities. User groups such as Little League Baseball® and Softball and Amateur Softball Association have also established their own guidelines for lighted facilities.

With some sports lighting, light levels depreciate over time. It is important to make sure your system is designed to provide target footcandles to ensure the light you purchased is maintained over the life of your lighting system.

Going green means efficiency and quality. When evaluating a system, consider how long light levels are guaranteed. Some systems offer guaranteed constant light levels for 25 years, meeting IESNA and League standards. Technology that reduces sky glow and spill light also results in the ability to keep glare out of the players’ eyes.

The quality of light on the field is specified in terms of uniformity, or evenness, of light on the field. It is stated as a ratio, like 3:1, meaning the brightest point on the field should be no more than three times the darkest point. This is important because in play, a ball appears to changes speeds when it passes from dark to light areas, making it difficult for participants to follow the flight or gauge the speed.

Maintaining both quality and quantity of light on the field over time is impacted by equipment design as well as maintenance practices. With proper maintenance, the overall performance of the lighting installation can be greatly improved.

Budget Considerations
Sports lighting budget considerations should include the capital cost and long-term costs of operating, maintaining, and managing the system. Routine maintenance and unexpected repair costs can add up if the lighting system is poorly designed from an electrical and structural standpoint. However, a system that is energy efficient and easy to operate and maintain can become part of a program’s success story.

Electrical Consumption
Energy efficiency presents the largest opportunity for cost savings. Differences in reflector system efficiencies and aiming design can vary, meaning one manufacturer may require fewer luminaires to achieve the same amount of light on the field, saving money on electrical costs, lamp replacements, and other maintenance costs.

By choosing environmentally friendly Musco sports lighting for their Warhill Sports Complex, James City County will save about $404,000 in energy and operating costs over the next 25 years. Another factor contributing to these savings is the purchase of the control and monitoring system along with the lights.

With a control and monitoring system, lights can be scheduled via web, phone, fax, or email to be turned on only when the field is in use. If a game is unexpectedly rained out, officials can simply phone into the control center to have the lights turned off instantly.

Energy-conscious lighting benefits programs, environment
Tackling a lighting project can be a significant undertaking and investment. Obviously, communities want their decisions to result in a trouble-free lighting system that will be a safe, energy-efficient source of pride, rather than a disappointing source of continuing high-maintenance headaches and neighborhood complaints.

Be sure to do your research on local regulations and codes as well as the different products companies have to offer. Find the fit that will best help your association reach its goals, both in the short and long-term.

Balancing your lighting needs with environmental concerns doesn’t have to be difficult. Thanks to advancements in sports-lighting technology, lighting that provides ideal playing conditions for your team can also help to preserve the environment for tomorrow’s athletes.
On June 6, 2011 near the site of the NCAA Women’s College World Series in Oklahoma City, over 25 USA Softball Olympians will join other top softball players and National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) Hall of Fame coaches to launch the Champions Festival, an event designed to create a new standard of personal excellence for the player, parent and youth coach. The athletes and coaches represent 160 national and international medals with Olympians in attendance spanning all four quadrennials.

The first in a planned series of Champions Festivals spanning many sports, this day long event includes a Champions’ Toolbox and Game Day Routine, insights on pitching, hitting, and defense play, and discussions of nutrition and wellness. The day will conclude with a Celebration where participants can interact with the Olympians and Hall of Famers in a casual setting, followed by game one of the Finals of the Women’s College World Series.

Champions Festival was the brainchild of Sue Enquist, former UCLA head coach, 11-time national champion and 4-time Hall of Fame inductee. “I realized long ago that anyone can be a champion if they are willing to understand and embrace the champion mindset,” Enquist said. With Women’s Professional Softball League Coach of the Year Cindy Bristow and business executive Robin Pokoj, Enquist launched Champions Festival in January. “We want to recalibrate how the youth player views competition,” she continued. “It’s about committing to a Champion’s Declaration that shapes your actions day to day and year to year.”

For more information, visit ChampionsFestival.com.

Over 25 USA Softball Olympians to unite in OKC

Raven Chavanne
nominated for
U.S. Olympic
Committee Female
Athlete of the Month

USA Softball Women’s Futures National Team member Raven Chavanne (Thousand Oaks, Calif.) is nominated for the U.S. Olympic Committee’s April 2011 Female Athlete of the Month award, based on her performances with the third ranked University of Tennessee softball team, the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America announced May 5.

An invitee to the 2011 USA Softball Women’s National Team Selection Camp next month in Chula Vista, Calif., Chavanne has wrecked havoc on Tennessee opponents all season, most recently Radford, Mississippi State and Arkansas. The sophomore posted at least two hits in each of her last six games, hitting .778 (14-for-18) over that seven-game stretch.

In the last two games of the month against Southeastern Conference (SEC) foe Arkansas, Chavanne reached safely in seven consecutive plate appearances. She had three doubles, a single and three walks during that stretch. Earlier in the month she hit .583 (7-of-12) during Tennessee’s high-profile sweep of then-No. 19 LSU, April 15-17.

Chavanne had 10 multi-hit games in April. For the month, she hit at a .485 clip (32-of-66) with 19 runs scored, four doubles, a triple and went 9-for-9 on steals and is currently on a career-long 14-game hitting streak. Chavanne has successfully reached base with a hit in 17 of her 19 games in April.

In addition to being selected as the nominee for the USOC’s April 2011 Female Athlete of the Month award, Chavanne was recognized as the National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) Division I National Player of the Week and the Southeastern Conference (SEC) Player of the Week for Week 12 of the season, April 25-May 1.
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Athletes blog for USASoftball.com

In February, 2010-11 USA Softball Junior Women’s National Team members Cheyenne Cordes, an outfielder from Fairfield, Calif., and Chelsea Goodacre, a catcher from Temecula, Calif., started blogging biweekly for USASoftball.com. They will be blogging through the International Softball Federation (ISF) IX Jr. Women’s World Championship (19-and-under), December 6-17, 2011, in Cape Town, South Africa, giving aspiring National Team members and fans alike a glimpse into the life of an elite ball player.

Click here to read the Junior Women’s National Team blog.

Recently, two-time USA Softball Women’s National Team member Ashley Holcombe Bell and Megan Langenfeld, a member of the USA Softball program for years, also blogged about the 2011 USA Softball Women’s National Team Selection Camp, this June in Chula Vista, Calif.

For the Women’s National Team program blog, click here.

Men’s Slow Pitch National Team heads for McQuade, Cincinnati

The Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America announced May 13 that the 2011 USA Softball Men’s Slow Pitch National team will play June 24 at the Clem Kelly Softball Complex in Bismarck, N.D., and July 14 at the Mid-America Ballyard in Cincinnati. Both exhibitions will serve as preparations for the July 23 Border Battle III, which will be aired live on ESPN from the ASA Hall of Fame Stadium in Oklahoma City.

A complete roster of the 2011 USA Softball Men’s Slow Pitch National Team is available at USASoftball.com.

In Bismarck, Team USA will play at 6 p.m. and 9:30 June 24 in the Sam McQuade Sr. Budweiser Charity Softball Tournament, which is the largest softball tournament in the world, attracting more than 400 teams annually. The Red, White and Blue’s opponents in the two games will be all-star teams selected from the Open Division teams in the McQuade tournament.

Admission to the McQuade is $6 for one day pass, $10 for a two-day pass and $13 for a three-day pass. Tickets are available at the gate of the Clem Kelly Softball Complex, 605 West Arbor Avenue.

In Cincinnati, Team USA will again play a doubleheader July 14 against Team Cincinnati at 7 p.m. and 9:30 at the Mid-America Ballyard, 6960 Blue Rock Road, and sign autographs immediately following the second game. Last year, Team USA and Team Cincinnati also squared off with the Red, White and Blue taking both games, 31-21 and 31-29.

Admission is $3 at the gate. Following the action in Cincinnati, Team USA leaves for Oklahoma City, where they will compete in two days of exhibitions before taking on the Canadian Men’s Slow Pitch Team July 23 at 3 p.m. CT. The exhibition schedule for Oklahoma City will be available at a later date.

In the Border Battle II played last July, Team Canada held off a last inning rally by the Americans to escape with a 30-29 win. Team USA, which led only once in the game at 16-15, trailed 30-25 entering the bottom of the seventh inning but gave fans hope of a 2009 repeat, when the Americans won 30-23 after trailing early.

Tickets for the Border Battle and the Oklahoma City exhibitions are on sale now as part of the 2011 World Cup of Softball Ultimate Fan Zone ticket package, which costs $275 with a replica Team USA jersey and $325 for an authentic Nike jersey. Tickets are also available in the All Session Reserved ticket package ($75) and the All Session General Admission ticket page ($40). Single session tickets go on sale July 5.

To purchase World Cup tickets in advance, call 800-654-8337 or visit SoftballOutlet.com.

Nine additional athletes accept invitations to 2011 WNT Selection Camp in Chula Vista

The Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America announced on May 4 the names of nine additional athletes who have accepted an invitation to the 2011 USA Softball Women’s National Team Selection Camp at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista, Calif., June 12-17.

The athletes are Megan Bush (Anaheim Hills, Calif./Florida); Whitney Canion (Aledo, Texas/Baylor); Brigette Del Ponte (Peoria, Ariz./Arizona); Dallas Escobedo (Glendale, Ariz./Arizona State); Andrea Harrison (Garden Grove, Calif./UCLA); Ashley Lane (Escondido, Calif./Michigan); Stacy May (Reno, Nev./Iowa); Jenna Rich (El Segundo, Calif./Stanford); and Chelsea Thomas (Pleasantville, Iowa/Missouri).

Two previous announcements of participants were made on March 16 and April 6 with the final announcement of participants to be made May 31.

Other participants are Valerie Arioto (Pleasanton, Calif./California); Ashley Holcombe-Bell (Fayetteville, Ga./Alabama); Katelyn Boyd (Phoenix, Ariz./Arizona State); Raven Chavanne (Thousand Oaks, Calif./Tennessee); Kaitlin Cochran (Yorba Linda, Calif./Arizona State); Kat Dotson (Savannah, Ga./Tennessee); Taylor Hoagland (Flower Mound, Texas/Texas); Molly Johnson (Tucson, Ariz./Kentucky); Megan Langenfeld (Bakersfield, Calif./UCLA); Whitney Larsen (Vestavia Hills, Ala./Alabama); Jena Leles (Sacramento, Calif./Arizona); Blairle Luna (Austin, Texas/Texas); Meagan May (Spring, Texas/Texas A&M); Michelle Moultrie (Jacksonville, Fla./Florida); Keilani Ricketts (San Jose, Calif./Oklahoma); Brittney Schutte (Fountain Valley, Calif./Florida); Jessica Shults (Valencia, Calif./Oklahoma); Jordan Taylor (Valencia, Calif./Michigan); Rhea Taylor (Buford, Ga./Missouri); Nikki Williams (Mission Viejo, Calif./Washington); and Shawna Wright (Lancaster, Calif./Washington).
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WWW.SOFTBALLOUTLET.COM
The Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America announced on May 11 the Top 10 Finalists for the 2011 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year award, which will be announced at the opening of the 2011 NCAA 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.

The Top 10 finalists represent nine schools and five different NCAA Division I Conferences. The list is comprised of three seniors, three juniors and four sophomores. The 2011 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year will be chosen from the 10 finalists.

The finalists are Katelyn Boyd (Arizona State); Kayla Braud (Alabama); Megan Bush (Florida); Raven Chavanne (Tennessee); Kelsi Dunne (Alabama); Ashley Hansen (Stanford); Blaire Luna (UCL); Jordan Taylor (Michigan); and Chelsea Thomas (Missouri). For more information on the Top 10 finalists, click here.

Now in its 10th year, past winners of the USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year award include UCLA’s Stacey Nuveman, Florida State’s Jessica Van der Linden, Texas’ pitcher Cat Osterman (three-time winner), Tennessee’s Monica Abbott, Virginia Tech’s Angela Tincher and Washington’s Danielle Lawrie (two-time winner).

Fourteen selected as Players of the Week

Every Tuesday throughout the regular NCAA Division I softball season, ASA/USA Softball announced the USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Week recipient via USASoftball.com. In total, 14 different athletes representing 12 schools received the honor in 2011.

On May 17, Tennessee pitcher Ellen Renfroe became the final USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Week named for the 2011 season, taking the award for her work May 9-15. The freshman was named the Southeastern (SEC) Conference Tournament’s Most Valuable Player after helping lead third-seeded and then-No. 7-ranked Tennessee to the program’s second SEC Tournament title. Megan Yocke of Kentucky (March 7-13), Blaire Luna of Texas (March 14-20), Brianna Hesson of Georgia (March 21-27), Kenzie Fowler of Arizona (March 28-April 3), Anissa Young of LSU (April 4-10), Morgan Melloh of Indiana (April 11-17), Kelsey Bruder of Florida (April 18-24), Jen Mineau of Fordham (April 25-May 1); and Annie Lockwood (May 2-8) have all recently been named the USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Week.

They join Dallas Escobedo of Arizona State (Feb. 7-13), Reina Gaber of Houston (Feb. 14-20), Michelle Moultrie of Florida (Feb. 20-27) and Chelsea Thomas of Missouri (Feb. 28-March 6), who claimed the honor during the first four weeks of the season.

For more information on the USA Softball Collegiate Players of the Week, click here.

No athlete won the award multiple times this season. In 2010, Danielle Lawrie of Washington, the eventual USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year, set the record by being named USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Week three times in a season.

Arizona State finishes regular season at No. 1

In the final ESPN.com/USA Softball Collegiate Top 25 poll of the 2011 regular season, Arizona State (50-6, 17-4 Pac-10) is ranked No. 1, the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America announced May 17. The Sun Devils, No. 1 for the fourth consecutive week, were ranked No. 10 in the pre-season poll released January 25. With a 2-1 weekend over then-No. 12 Stanford (38-15, 10-11 Pac-10), Arizona State was named Pac-10 Champions, earning the No. 1 seed in the NCAA Division I Softball Championship. Michigan (51-4, 18-2 Big Ten) remains No. 2 in the poll after two 8-0 performances against Michigan State while Alabama (46-8, 19-6 SEC) improved to No. 3.

In Week 10, the last time that the Sun Devils were not No. 1, Michigan was the top team. Other teams that have previously held the No. 1 spot this season are Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia and UCLA.

Click here for all 2011 ESPN.com/USA Softball Collegiate Top 25 polls.

The ESPN.com/USA Softball Collegiate Top 25 poll is released every Tuesday during the regular season. The final poll of the 2011 season will be released June 14.
Arizona State University was named the No. 1 seed in the NCAA Division I Softball Championship Sunday when the NCAA Division I Softball Committee announced the 64-team field on May 15. The Sun Devils, champions of the Pac-10 Conference, were 50-6 entering the post season. Unscathed in a regional that included Long Beach State, North Dakota State and San Diego State, the Sun Devils are now 53-6.

Sixteen teams including Arizona State remain in the hunt for the 2011 NCAA Division I Softball Championship. In Super Regional Championship action, the Sun Devils take on No. 16 Texas A&M in Tempe, Ariz. No. 9 Oklahoma travels to Tucson to face No. 8 Arizona. No. 5 Missouri hosts No. 12 Washington while No. 4 Florida hosts No. 13 Oregon.

On the other side of the bracket, an unseeded match-up between Houston and Oklahoma State in Stillwater, Okla., highlights the action. No. 11 Baylor travels to No. 6 Georgia while No. 7 California travels to unseeded Kentucky. No. 2 Alabama hosts No. 15 Stanford.

Thirty conferences were awarded automatic qualification to the tournament, and the remaining 34 slots were filled with at-large selections to complete the bracket. The top 16 teams were seeded nationally, with three seeded teams failing to advance out of regional action, May 19-22. No. 3 Texas, No. 10 Michigan and No. 11 Tennessee were each eliminated before home crowds.

Team pairings were determined by geographical proximity, with the exception that teams from the same conference were not paired during regional competition, when possible.

The Big 12 Conference led all conferences with eight teams in the championship. The Southeastern Conference and Pac-10 placed seven in the championship while five teams from Conference USA were selected. California State University, Fresno, remains the only team to be selected to all 30 championships. Four teams are making their initial appearances in the tournament: Jackson State University, Jacksonville University, University of Memphis and New Mexico State University.

Only 10 schools have been crowned the NCAA Division I softball champion since the tournament started in 1982, and nine are in this year’s bracket. The NCAA Women’s College World Series will be held June 2-8 at the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) Hall of Fame Stadium in Oklahoma City.

For more information on the tournament, including the complete television schedule, visit NCAA.com/WCWS/.
THE AMATEUR SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION (ASA) OF AMERICA AND MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL® (MLB™) INVITE YOU TO HOST AN AQUAFINA® MLB™ PITCH, HIT & RUN™ (PHR) LOCAL COMPETITION!

It's time to mark your calendar for the PHR. Host a free Local Competition this Spring (March-early May) and provide this great opportunity for the youngsters in your community. Space is limited this year, so we encourage you to visit www.mlb.com/phr and register today. If you do not have a date/time in mind yet for your event, the system will allow you to enter TBD and we will follow-up with you in early 2011.

Hosting a free PHR competition provides boys and girls ages 7-14 the opportunity to showcase their baseball and softball skills. Participants have the chance to advance through four levels of competition, including Team Championships hosted at Major League ballparks, and the 2011 PHR National Finals hosted during MLB All-Star Week.
Participation in Batters Up USA on the rise

For years, studies by the Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association have shown a steady decline in participation in just about every sport out there.

As it pertains to the baseball/softball world, only fast-pitch softball shows some stubbornness in avoiding a drop in numbers. Baseball, on the other hand, continues to take a hit for being a sport that's not exciting or one that makes no significant impact on addressing the epidemic that has become childhood obesity.

Batters Up USA, on the other hand, continues to chug along doing what the philanthropic group does: promoting both sports as fun, recreational programs. And if the 2011 numbers show anything, it's that that aim is working extremely well.

After a record-setting 2010 when the group supported just over 40 programs nationally, those numbers are likely to double – or more – this year. So what is the behind-the-scenes story as to why BUUSA is finding such success in an otherwise dormant domain?

One reason for the uptick is undoubtedly tied to some positive publicity from YMCA, which has about 4,000 sites around the country and did a nice story on Batters Up USA in its March newsletter about the group's primary directive of providing free equipment through a grant application available on BattersUpUSA.org.

Jess Heald, Batters Up USA executive director, said that the YMCA initiative has produced about half of this year's exploding number of requests for equipment.

“Last year we were at 44, which was a record,” Heald said. “That seems like a pitance now.”

For those of you who just came back out into the world after another battle with an April tax deadline, here's a review of just what it is that Batters Up USA does in attempting to keep blood flowing into the lives of both baseball and softball.

Batters Up USA provides free baseball/softball equipment – primarily bats, balls, tee ball sets, helmets, catcher's gear, and bases – to local organizations to support the creation of new programs or to assist existing programs in growing. The targeted audience is recreational programs for both boys and girls up to the age of 13, with priority given to those programs serving a high percentage of youth in need (i.e., inner-city and after-school programs). In the past, BUUSA has contributed to many such programs run by local parks departments, schools, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Police Athletic Leagues, independent local leagues, Little League, and other organized youth baseball/softball organizations.

For more information, please visit the BUUSA website at BattersUpUSA.org.

BUUSA’s Michele Smith inducted into two Halls of Fame

Talk about recognition! Batters Up USA board member and two-time Olympic softball gold medalist Michele Smith has been recognized by the Hall of Fame – and not just one, but two!

Smith, who can be found calling softball games on ESPN telecasts after a career as a professional softball hero in Japan, was inducted into the Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame too.

“It is an honor to have been inducted into both the Oklahoma Sports HOF and the Oklahoma State University Alumni HOF,” Smith said. “I feel like Oklahoma as a state is my second home state because of all the wonderful times I have lived and played ball there. “Being recognized by both Halls is very humbling, and something I value very much.”

Sports Events publishes a piece on Batters Up USA

With the assistance of BUUSA board member Sally Johnson, Sports Events magazine published a feature story on Batters Up USA in its March newsletter titled “Engaging the Underserved: Programs Help At-Risk Kids Play, Study & Succeed”. Check it out for yourself on page 46, with editor's comments on page 8.
ASA/USA Softball and OKC All Sports ‘Hometown Heroes’

To celebrate National Tourism Week, the Oklahoma City Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) hosted the 2nd Annual Hometown Heroes Luncheon at the Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Museum on May 10. More than 120 members of the Oklahoma City tourism and hospitality industry gathered to honor seven individuals and one visitor attraction as the 2011 Hometown Heroes for their contributions to tourism in Oklahoma City over the past year.

“We always enjoy bringing the Oklahoma City tourism and hospitality industry together to celebrate our accomplishments,” said Mike Carrier, president of the CVB. “Our industry has become what it is today from the hard work and commitment of the over 35,000 people employed in hospitality and tourism in Oklahoma County. We are excited to see what the future holds for Oklahoma City and who we will be honoring at the annual Hometown Heroes luncheon for many years to come.”

Oklahoma Lieutenant Governor Todd Lamb was in attendance to show his appreciation to the CVB and the Oklahoma City tourism industry. Also showing support were Sandy Pantlik, director of the Travel Promotion Division of the Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department, and Rhonda Hooper, chair of the CVB Commission.

Ron Radigonda on behalf of the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America/USA Softball and Tim Brassfield on behalf of the Oklahoma City All Sports Association accepted a Hometown Heroes award for the organization’s work with the NCAA Women’s College World Series (WCWS). The WCWS has called Oklahoma City home for 15 consecutive years. With an economic impact of more than $13 million and 10,000 to 12,000 room nights each year, it is one of Oklahoma City’s most significant sporting events with a total attendance of more than 62,000. The WCWS and Oklahoma City receives national attention through the daily ESPN broadcasts covering every game of the 7-day event.

Ron Radigonda, the executive director of the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America/USA Softball, speaks at the 2nd Annual Hometown Heroes Luncheon on May 10 in Oklahoma City.
Hilton HHonors™ Snapshot
3600 hotels. 10 distinct brands. 81 countries. 1 world-class program

Hilton HHonors is the leading guest reward program, giving frequent travelers a fast way to earn the rewards they want most. It is the only guest reward program to offer Points & Miles and No Blackout Dates with no capacity controls at more than 3,600 hotels worldwide.

In addition to redeeming HHonors points for complimentary nights, Hilton HHonors members can also redeem points for merchandise, vacation packages, unique experience rewards and more. Membership in HHonors is free. Travelers may enroll online by visiting JoinHHonors.com.

INSTANT PRIVILEGES
Make your check-in experience as fast and smooth as possible by telling us your payment and room preferences in your online HHonors profile.

UNPARALLELED CHOICE
Earn free nights quickly and easily just for staying at one of our 3,600 hotels worldwide across ten industry-leading brands like Hampton, Waldorf Astoria and of course, Hilton.

EARN REWARDS FAST
HHonors offers more ways to become an elite member, through nights, stays or points. Reach Silver status in just 4 stays to get privileges like a 15% point bonus & free health-club access.

FREE STAYS
Just by staying at one of our properties, you can earn points towards a free night at any of our ten distinct hotel brands, which start at just 7,500 points.††

BLUE
Achieve by enrolling
• Redemption stays with no blackout dates
• Late check-out* & Express check-out
• Complimentary weekday newspapers
• Spouse stays free

SILVER
Achieve with 4 stays or 10 nights
All Blue on property benefits, plus:
• 15% bonus on all Base Points
• Complimentary access to hotel owned and operated health clubs during stays

GOLD
Achieve with 16 stays, 36 nights, or 60,000 Base Points
All Silver on property benefits, plus:
• 25% bonus on all Base Points
• eCheck-In
• On-property benefits such as free internet, breakfast, and room upgrades**

DIAMOND
Achieve with 28 stays, 60 nights, or 100,000 Base Points
All Gold on property benefits, plus:
• 50% bonus on all Base Points
• Guaranteed room on reservations made 48 hours prior to arrival†

† Hilton HHonors points required for a free reward night range between 7,500 points for a Category 1 hotel and up to 80,000 points for Waldorf Astoria Hotel & Resorts
* Must be requested and is subject to availability
** Please see program Terms and Conditions at HHonors.com for more details
† Not applicable to extraordinary demand dates as determined by the hotel
Background

The Missouri Amateur Softball Association (ASA) is a massive non-profit that oversees over 2,000 individual teams, 300+ umpires and thousands of players across The Show Me State. Missouri ASA offers teams for both young and old, male and female and for first timers and experienced players, as well. Summers are busy with games, statistics and logistics and the fall off-season is shrinking every year as parents, players and officials look to get next year’s information earlier and earlier.

Challenge

When you have thousands of eager softball players and hundreds of dedicated volunteers looking to you for information, clear, concise communication is going to be your top priority. Previous to discovering Clubspaces, Missouri ASA was using Microsoft Frontpage to build and maintain the official association website, which doubled as the primary communication tool.

Missouri state commissioner Joey Rich:

“The biggest thing that we use Clubspaces for is the association website itself. Microsoft Frontpage was okay, but it wasn’t a tenth as easy as Clubspaces. I can update my website from anywhere in the world, all I need is a computer. Before, I had to be on my computer with my software and it was nowhere near as easy to manipulate as Clubspaces.”

Solution

Missouri ASA made the move to Clubspaces two years ago and the transition was smooth.

“We did the initial testing with Clubspaces and we got a lot of extra attention from your staff in terms of how we were going to set the whole site up. I gave them an idea of what I’d like the site to look like and they came up with several possibilities for me to choose from. I was able to pick the general format and the colors, so that helped get it started.”

It wasn’t long before Missouri ASA began using Clubspaces for more than just website building. In the two years since their site went live, it has begun using Clubspaces dynamic online player registration, payment processing, state tournament scheduling, team creation and more. It is looking at adding umpire registration and management in 2011. Missouri ASA also links to the Clubspaces-driven national ASA website that offers additional resources for softball enthusiasts from coast to coast.

Clubspaces also helped to alleviate some of the communication and logistical issues Missouri ASA was having, as well. It utilizes a combination of social media, timed email blasts and frequent website updates to keep players, coaches and volunteers in the loop.

“You have to keep that information pipeline stocked up, you’ve got to have new information on your site or people will stop coming to it.”

Clubspaces is the Official Online League Management System of ASA
Missouri ASA also uses its Clubspaces website to grant limited access to high-level volunteers so they can efficiently distribute forms, instructions and waivers.

“All district officers in our nine districts have access to a special page of forms that is used just by them and volunteers. There is a link on the main website that says “districts only” and “commissioners only” and they can go on there to save time. That page is the first place they look if they have a question and it is password protected so only they can get on there.”

**Result**

The goal of Clubspaces is to save coaches, volunteers and even league commissioners time and effort.

“I would say Clubspaces saves me a good six hours a month, and that’s probably conservative. Over the course of a year, I would say that Clubspaces saves me anywhere between 75 to 100 work hours. Saving this kind of time per year is a big deal. “

Missouri ASA is a vibrant, healthy organization that has more demands put on it every year and Clubspaces is helping to meet that challenge.

**Clubspaces is the Official Online League Management System of ASA**
Product Description

SportaFence™ is a revolutionary new design that allows softball and baseball outfield fences to be easily moved from field to field. It quickly adjusts to specific field dimensions.

Staffing Solutions

With SportaFence™ an entire field can be ready for play in one hour. This high quality fencing enhances player safety and adds excitement to the game.

Product Features

♦ Heavy-duty portable chainlink fence panels: 6ft H x 10ft L / Weight: 175 lbs. (also available in 5’H x 10’L)
♦ Constructed of durable galvanized steel with 8-gauge coated chainlink fence material.
♦ Connectors secure panels together to form one continuous fence.
♦ Legs collapse for easy storage.

References

♦ An ASA Official Portable Fence; NCAA Women’s College World Series®; NCAA Division II and III Softball Championships; City of Woodland, City of Santa Maria, Salem VA, etc.