So Cal ASA/USA to host Junior Worlds in 2019

Turn to page 15 to learn more about the Championship coming to Southern California for the first time. With the announcement, the United States will host three consecutive Junior Women’s World Championships
A note from the President of ASA/USA Softball

Phil Gutierrez

I must began this letter with an apology, for in my last month’s letter I mistakenly stated that it would be my last letter as President as my two-year term as President was ending at the completion of our upcoming Annual Council Meeting. Yet, here is another letter from me.

The past two years as President of ASA/USA Softball have been incredible. I thank the Council for granting me the opportunity, the great honor and the tremendous privilege of representing you throughout our country as well as internationally. I must also thank specific persons or groups of people who have provided exceptional support to my presidency during the past two years. First and foremost, our Executive Director, Craig Cress, and his National Office personnel. These folks work very hard in support of our efforts at the grassroots level and produce incredible results. Their support helped make my term much more gratifying than it could have been. Secondly, our Board of Directors who volunteered tireless hours to enthusiastically participate in the governance of our organization. Their policy decisions and guidance were many and also necessary so our organization can move ahead at a faster pace and more efficiently. Lastly, my So Cal ASA/USA staff, who continued to produce excellent results during the times that I was away for long periods of time taking care of my duties as President of ASA/USA Softball. I am immensely grateful to them for their loyalty, dedication and extremely hard work.

The minutes of the Board of Directors’ September meeting have been sent to all Council Members by email. The minutes contain a very important decision made at that meeting, the rebranding of our organization. Effective September 1, 2016, ASA/USA Softball will be known only as USA Softball. This action was taken in an effort to help reverse the decline in team and umpire registrations through better marketability and increased opportunities for sponsorships. This change should also be helpful in our attempt to be included in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Program, which appears more likely than at any time since our sport was removed from the program several years ago. The final vote to add sports to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Program will be held by the International Olympic Committee at the 2016 Olympics next August.

Further information on international play, the Softball Division, formerly known as the International Softball Federation, of the World Baseball Softball Confederation held its congress in Oklahoma City, Okla. during October. At that meeting USA Softball was awarded the bid to host the 2017 Women’s World Championship Qualifier at our ASA Hall of Fame Stadium Complex. All countries of the Americas that wish to compete in the 2019 Women’s World Championship in Japan must qualify through participation in this qualifier. This event will also be a qualifier for the 2019 Pan American Games. Additionally, Southern Cal ASA/USA was awarded the bid to host the 2019 Junior Women’s World Championship. This event will be played at the site of the previous two World Cups of Softball, Bill Barber Park in Irvine, Calif.

Finally, this year’s Annual Council Meeting begins on October 31 at the Galt House Hotel in Louisville, Ky. I look forward to seeing each of you there. Please travel safely!
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Dallas-Fort Worth ASA/USA Softball held their 18U GOLD Qualifier this month. Congrats to each of the teams in their pursuit of a GOLD National Championship! #PlayASA

Do you have a photo you’d like to submit for the Inside Pitch? Submit your photos to ndorety@softball.org by the 20th of each month and you could be featured!

Nevada ASA/USA Softball held their 25th Annual ‘Toys for Tots’ tournament. Thanks to all who participated and donated toys to the cause! They collected three boxes of toys for the kids. Way to go Nevada ASA/USA!
Lisa Steiner, a ‘super softball mom’ from Florida, supports Julie Johnson, a member of the National Umpire Staff, by purchasing a ‘JJs Gems’ shirt at the Lee County Qualifier. The back of the shirt says “Best of luck to all those dealing with Cancer and those who are survivors!”

**Contact Florida ASA/USA Softball** to purchase your ‘JJs Gems’ shirt to support Julie Johnson!

Shirts cost $15 plus shipping and come in red and navy. Checks can be sent to Florida ASA/USA Softball at 11815 SW 102 Court, Miami, FL 33176. Please write that the check is for your ‘JJs Gems’ shirt.

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This photo is from the “Rogue Waves,” an ASA/USA team out of Portland. This is their second season under head coach Jaclyn Imhof. Imhoff pitched in college at College of the Siskiyous, San Jose State and Oregon Institute of Technology amassing an impressive 87-17 record. Imhoff inspires all of the girls on her team and is seen as a role model by many female athletes in the state. Imhoff’s teaching focuses on several key words: passion, fierce, fearless and loyalty. These are just a few of the things that Imhof is teaching her athletes. Thanks for playing ASA/USA Softball!

Submitted By Brandy Taylor
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Hello and welcome to the October 2015 issue of The Inside Pitch, the official newsletter of ASA/USA Softball!

First off, thank you for taking the time to read through this newsletter and learning more about what is going on throughout the country within this organization. At the end of next month, as many of you know, we will be holding our Annual Meeting in Louisville, Ky. I have taken the lead on this year’s tradeshow and expect for it to be a huge success. Hopefully many of you will be able to attend and visit with our exhibitors. I truly think there will be a booth that catches you by surprise with either the services, product or community that they have to offer. Make sure to enjoy the free drinks from 6:30-7:30 p.m. at booth 21 courtesy of The Shreveport-Bossier Sports Commission, our future host of the 2016 ASA/USA Softball Annual Meeting.

We wrapped up the 2015 season out here at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex this past month. Many Champions were crowned in many different areas of competition: NCAA, High School, Special Olympics and of course our ASA/USA divisions. Hundreds of thousands come each year to to Complex and the 2015 season proved no different.

As we look to 2016, if you can think of ways to improve the number that register to ‘Play ASA/USA,’ feel free to share. Obviously our Marketing team and National Office Staff here in OKC have many great tools that are available to you if you reach out. Shoot us a call and we can see how to help you.

Hopefully I’ll get the opportunity to meet many of you that I haven’t encountered yet, so feel free to just come up, mention where you are from and introduce yourself. I know that I’ve heard a lot about the Annual Meeting from people at our local organizatons when I traveled this past summer and from many others up here at the National Office. It’ll be a great to learn more about how this organization runs and meet the people that help make it successful in many areas all across the country.

Hope everyone has a great month and I hope to see you at the Annual Meeting in Louisville.
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The 2015 season at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex comes to a close

This past month, the Complex wrapped up the 2015 season after a busy October. The Slow Pitch Championship Series crowned four National Champions in the Men’s Class A, Men’s Class D, Women’s Open and Men’s Super divisions. Turn to page 32-33 to read more about each Championship. The Complex also hosted the Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association (OSSAA) Fast Pitch State Championships. Seventy-six high school programs came from all across the state to compete for the right to be a “State Champion” in the seven divisions.

New episodes of Softball 360 now online

Relive the 2015 season by watching all episodes online. Make sure to check out the new episodes: 10-13!

Big 12 Softball returns to Oklahoma City in 2017

The Big 12 Conference is reinstating the Big 12 Softball Championship, which will be held at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex. Last held in 2010, the Championship is scheduled to return in a two-day event in May 2017. The Championship will include pool play for the top six teams that will feed into playoff games. Seven conference members sponsor softball as a sport-Baylor, Iowa State, Kansas, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Texas and Texas Tech.

2015 USA Softball National Coaching School

Make sure to sign up and get instruction from current and former USA Softball Women’s National Team Coaches in Las Vegas. Instructors include Ken Eriksen, Laura Berg and Mike Candrea.

Layout now available for the Annual Meeting Tradeshow

Come visit the Grand Hall on November 4th from 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. EDT to learn more about each of our exhibitors and what they have to offer. This year’s show is presented by Liberty Mutual Insurance. You’ll be amazed by our excellent list of exhibitors this year. We’ll see you there on November 4th in Louisville! Click here to see the tradeshow layout and additional information.
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Visit PlayPositive.com for helpful advice, tools and resources you can use on and off the field.
Eleven ASA/USA Softball National Umpire Schools, including an Advanced National Umpire School for Fast Pitch, will take place across the country from Dec. 2015 through June 2016. The schools will take place in 11 states: California, Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas and Virginia.

“These 10 ASA/USA National Umpire Schools and the Advanced Fast Pitch Camp are designed to teach umpires at every level the ins and outs of being an ASA/USA umpire,” said ASA/USA Director of Umpires Kevin Ryan. “They are also designed to leave the umpires with training ideas to go back to their Local Association and share with their complete umpire program. To continue to learn and lead while on and off the field is something ASA/USA Softball holds in the highest regard. Attending one of these schools would be extremely beneficial to all who attend.”

Each ASA/USA National Umpire School is run by a team of National Umpire staff members, who serve as the clinicians. With a ratio of at least one clinician per 25-30 students, each participant will receive hands-on personal instruction on both fast pitch and slow pitch umpiring including base and plate mechanics. At the Fast Pitch Advanced Umpire School, instruction is focused on fast pitch only while the ratio is one instructor per 10 students.

Registration fees for National Umpire Schools vary by location. To register for an upcoming National Umpire School or an Advanced Umpire School, please contact the school coordinator as listed here. Please note that only certain schools are currently open for registration.
ASA/USA Softball will donate $3,500 to the Susan G. Komen for the Cure® of Central and Western Oklahoma. The money, raised by an eBay auction of pink items used by 2015 USA Softball Women’s National Team athletes during July’s World Cup of Softball, brings USA Softball’s eight year donation total to $75,200.

“The pink auction is a great way for us to support women in whatever they’re going through,” said USA Softball outfielder Janie Takeda (Placentia, Calif.), whose autographed jersey netted $215. “I hope our efforts as an organization can encourage those affected by breast cancer to keep fighting and have hope for the future.”

Last month, 17 autographed, game-worn jerseys from members of the 2013, 2014 and 2015 USA Softball Women’s National Team items went up for bid on eBay. For the past eight years, members of the USA Softball Women’s National Team donned pink uniforms in a “Pink Out” game during the World Cup of Softball to honor breast cancer survivors and create awareness for breast cancer research.

Pink items worn and used by USA athletes throughout the past eight years are permanently on display at the National Softball Hall of Fame and Museum, 2801 N.E. 50th Street in Oklahoma City.
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The 27th World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Softball Congress lasted three days at the Renaissance Hotel and Convention Center in Oklahoma City. Delegates from 42 countries across five regions joined top World Governing Body officials, including WBSC President Riccardo Fraccari and WBSC Softball President Dale McMann, to discuss and decide numerous topics related to world softball governance and the sport’s global activities.

Southern California ASA/USA Softball was chosen as the host of the 2019 WBSC Junior Women’s World Championship. The selection, which was announced during the General Session at the Congress, marks the first time that Southern California ASA/USA Softball will host a WBSC World Championship as the event will be played in Irvine, Calif.

“Southern California ASA/USA thanks the World Baseball Softball Confederation - Softball Division for their selection to host the 2019 Junior Women's World Championship,” said ASA/USA Softball President and Southern California ASA/USA Commissioner Phil Gutierrez. “We look forward to working with the City of Irvine to host this prestigious world event at one of the best softball venues in Southern California, Bill Barber Park. We are excited for the opportunity to bring the best Junior Women’s National Teams in the world to Southern California where world class softball athletes will put their incredible talents on display for everyone to see.”

Hosted by Southern California ASA/USA Softball, the 2019 WBSC Junior Women’s World Championship will be held August 11-17, 2019. This will mark the third-consecutive WBSC Junior Women’s World Championship the United States will host, as the 2015 tournament was recently held in Oklahoma City and the 2017 tournament will be held in Clearwater, Fla.

“ASA/USA Softball is very honored that Southern California ASA/USA was awarded the 2019 WBSC Junior Women’s World Championship,” said ASA/USA Softball Executive Director Craig Cress. “Southern California ASA/USA has a great track record in hosting national and international events. Thank you to the members of the WBSC - Softball Division Congress for placing their support and confidence in Southern California ASA/USA and ASA/USA Softball by giving us the opportunity to host this prestigious event.”

ASA/USA Softball submitted the 2019 bid on behalf of Southern California ASA/USA and the City of Irvine. The tournament will be held at Bill Barber Park, which is no stranger to international softball as the facility was the site of the World Cup of Softball in 2014 and 2015. Bill Barber Park boasts four softball fields, including Deanna Manning Stadium which features stadium seating, and state of the art facilities for fans and athletes.

“The WBSC Softball Division is proud to award USA Softball and Southern California ASA/USA the rights to host the 2019 WBSC Junior Women’s Softball World Championship,” said WBSC - Softball Division President Dale McMann. “The WBSC and all of our partners look forward to working closely with Southern California ASA/USA to provide the best organization and facilities for our U-19 women national teams. As hosts of past WBSC-sanctioned events, we are confident our junior women athletes will have a successful world championship.”
Margaret L. “Maggie” Withroder (Fort Worth, Texas) passed away on October 17 after a lengthy illness.

Maggie was born March 20, 1948, in Hutchinson, Kan. She grew up in the country and attended Haven schools and earned a bachelor’s degree in physical education and a master’s degree in recreation administration. Maggie moved to Fort Worth in 1969 and worked for the Fort Worth Park and Community Services Department for 30 years. She was a lifelong member of the Episcopal Church and served her church in multiple roles camp director for the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA, representative to Province VII committees and youth director of Christ the King Episcopal Church.

Maggie was a member of Sigma Kappa sorority where she served as a province officer, national song leader, advisor to Kappa Eta Chapter at Texas Christian University. She also served on the Texas Amateur Athletic Federation (TAAF) Executive Board for 12 years, where she also had a stint as President and was inducted to the TAAF Hall of Fame in the sport of softball. Maggie served as Commissioner of ASA/USA Softball for Tarrant County, women’s representative to the United States Olympic Committee, executive board member for ASA/USA Softball, team leader to the National Women’s Softball team, conducted several national softball tournaments and hosted the Olympic softball team on numerous occasions in her community. She was on the United Cerebral Palsy Board of Tarrant County (now known as the Easter Seals of North Texas) since 1979 and served that board as president, chairman of the board and in 1998 was selected as National Volunteer of the Year. She is survived by her sister, Judith W. Graber of Fort Worth.

As Published in the Star-Telegram

The clock is ticking until the 84th ASA/USA Softball Annual Meeting kicks off in Louisville, Ky. from Oct. 31-Nov. 6, 2015. This year’s host will be the Galt House Hotel, located in the heart of downtown Louisville.

Over 300 voting members of the National Council for ASA/USA Softball will be in attendance. Click here for an agenda.

This year’s tradeshow will take place on Wednesday, November 4.

The 35th annual National Softball Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony will be held on Saturday, November 7. Inductees include Bonnie Anderson (Springfield, Ore.) - Umpire-Posthumous, John Davide (Centereach, N.Y.) - Slow Pitch Player, Andy Dooley (Thaxton, Va.) - Commissioner, Sue Enquist (San Clemente, Calif.) - Meritorious Service, Mark Ingrao (Falls Church, Va.) - Umpire, Charles Moss, Sr. (Lanexa, Va.) - Meritorious Service, Steve Padilla (Manteca, Calif.) - Fast Pitch Player and Mike White (Eugene, Ore.) - Fast Pitch Player. Turn to page 27 to learn more about four inductees.

The “Swing For A Cause” golf tournament is back! This annual event benefits the ASA/USA Special Programs and Special Olympics NIT. This year’s tournament will take place at the Cherokee Golf Course. Limited club rentals are available at Cherokee and will be available on a first come, first serve basis. Click here for a flyer.

For additional information (forms for council members, training session information, etc.) on the Annual Meeting, visit the event page.
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After hosting numerous ASA/USA events this year, Tyger River Park in Duncan, S.C. has been selected as the 2015 Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America/USA Softball Complex of the Year presented by Stabilizer Solutions, Inc. Tyger River Park, operated by Spartanburg Parks and Recreation Department, will receive their award at the 84th ASA/USA Annual Meeting in Louisville, Ky. and will also receive approximately $2,000 in field maintenance products from Stabilizer Solutions.

“Congrats to Tyger River Park on winning the 2015 Complex of the Year award,” said Chris Sebren, ASA/USA Director of Championships. “Spartanburg has built an exceptional facility that provides fans and teams with everything that they could dream of and more. This is truly one of the premier complexes in the United States.”

Previous award winners include Arrowhead Park (Broken Arrow, Okla.) in 2014, Charlie McVay Complex (Roswell, N.M.) in 2013, the Botetourt Sports Complex (Botetourt County, Va.) in 2012, the James I. Moyer Sports Complex (Salem, Va.) in 2011, Veterans Park and Athletic Complex (College Station, Texas) in 2010, Heritage Park Softball Complex (St. Joseph, Mo.) in 2009, Twin Creeks Softball Complex (Woodstock, Ga.) in 2008 and Freedom Ridge Park Complex (Ridgeland, Miss.) in 2007. The Field of Dreams Complex (Las Cruces, N.M.) won the inaugural 2006 award.

“Congratulations to all those who have helped Tyger River Park join the ranks of ASA/USA Complex of the Year award winners,” said Jon Hubbs, President of Stabilizer Solutions, Inc. “These fields have to be in premier shape, as they are the centerpiece of a true recreational paradise.”

Built in 2012, Tyger River Park is South Carolina’s premier baseball and softball tournament facility. The complex sits on 137 acres and features a disc-golf course, a ‘splash pad’ to escape the summer heat, four picnic shelters, over 10 acres of playground equipment and fitness trails that have outdoor fitness equipment. Inside the ballpark, there are 12 baseball/softball fields, a championship stadium field and batting cages. The 12 fields are clustered in groups of four in an overall park layout resembling a four-leaf clover. Each field offers covered spectator seating, spacious covered dugouts with major league style benches and 14-foot scoreboards with countdown game timers. The championship stadium has stadium seating for a capacity of 600 and showcases 300-foot fences to give teams and fans the ultimate championship experience. Each cluster of fields has a “scorers tower” that serves all four fields while a park-wide sound system allows staff to keep communication with fans in case of an emergency. At the heart of Tyger River Park is an observation tower, located right next to the clubhouse, which overlooks the entire park.

“This a tremendous achievement for South Carolina ASA/USA and the County of Spartanburg,” said South Carolina ASA/USA Softball Commissioner Chad Greene. “I have personally traveled the country with ASA/USA Softball and Tyger River Park is definitely one of the top complexes in North America and I have the luxury of having it in my backyard. This award is truly an honor and we are thrilled to accept it.”

Most recently, Tyger River Park hosted the 2015 ASA/USA Girls’ 18U Class A National Championship, which was held at the end of July.
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For the first time in over 30 years, the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Junior Men’s World Championship (JMWC) returns to American soil as 19 athletes have earned a spot on the 2016 USA Softball Junior Men’s National team. These athletes will face the top 19-Under international Junior Men’s teams in Midland, Mich. where they will seek the program’s first medal since the 1985 WBSC JMWC in Fargo, N.D.

Click here for the roster for the 2016 USA Softball Junior Men’s National Team.

“The coaching staff is very excited about this cycle of players,” said USA Softball Junior Men’s National Team Head Coach Tim Lyon (South Jordan, Utah). “We have a nice mix of returning and new players. This should be the deepest group we have had in some time. Given the fact we have four players who gained a lot of experience at the last World Championship, we expect big things out of this group. It is great to be playing on home soil and we look forward to a great World Championship in Midland next summer.”

In addition to Lyon, the 2016 JMNT will also be led by Assistant Coaches Scott Standerfer (Charleston, Ill.), Tyron McKinney (Ashland, Ohio) and Dan Nessler (North Mankato, Minn.), while Dan Highland (Normal, Ill.) will serve as the team leader for the U.S. delegation.

Four athletes will once again don the Red, White and Blue as veterans on the JMNT. Bryce DuCharme (Hudson, Wis.), Justin Perez (North East, Pa.), Peyton Hall (Prairie du Chien, Wis.) and Zane Chason (Alma, Ga.) will guide the 15 rookies on the squad, leading the team with their prior Junior Men’s World Championship experience. Chason finished the 2014 WBSC JMWC with a 1-1 record in the circle, pitching 23 innings with 22 strikeouts while DuCharme led the 2014 roster with 12 singles and a .378 (14-for-37) batting average.

As they prepare for the WBSC JMWC, slated for July 22-30, the 2016 JMNT will start their season with a training camp in Irvine, Calif. January 1-4. Pitchers and catchers will also attend a series of camps before the team reunites in Normal, Ill. in June for a series of exhibition games and training. The team will regroup again in early July for their final training and exhibition games before the WBSC JMWC.

Click here for a complete schedule for the 2016 USA Softball Junior Men’s National Team.

Team USA will look to improve upon its fifth place finish at the last WBSC JMWC, which was held in Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada in 2014. Team USA finished with a 7-4 record, their best in a Junior Men’s World Championship since 1985.
Forty-three athletes received initial invitees for the 2016 USA Softball Women’s National Team Selection Camp to be held January 2-8, 2016 at Bill Barber Park in Irvine, Calif. Those athletes who accept the invitation to try out will vie for 17 spots on the 2016 USA Softball Women’s National Team (WNT) roster that will compete at the World Cup of Softball XI, the XV World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Women’s World Championship in Surrey, B.C., Canada and the Japan Cup.

Click here to see the 43 athletes who have received an invitation to try out for the Women’s National Team

Additional athletes may be invited to the USA Softball WNT Selection Camp at a later date. During the selection process, athletes will participate in position drills as well as simulated games and be evaluated by the Women’s National Team Selection Committee (WNTSC). The complete 2016 schedule for the WNT, including exhibition games, will be announced at a later date.

For updates on the USA Softball Women’s National Team and events throughout the 2016 season visit www.ASAUSASoftball.com.
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With a capacity crowd of 256 in attendance, the Connecticut ASA/USA Softball inducted its newest Hall of Fame members at its annual awards dinner in late September at Costa Azzurra in Milford, Conn. District Commissioner Carl Pignone served as host.

Jim Carey, the former Naugatuck Valley District Commissioner for 20 years while also serving as Connecticut ASA/USA Vice President, was the recipient of the Joseph T. Barber Distinguished Service Award. Carey was previously the Chairman of both the Fast Pitch Hall of Fame committee and State Tournament committee in Connecticut.

Tom Chiappetta, who played a big part in recent years in organizing and revamping many aspects of the Hall of Fame Awards Dinner, was honored with this year’s Bernie Iassogna Award for service to Connecticut ASA/USA Softball. Chiappetta has built the dinner into a yearly success.

**Fast Pitch inductees:**

- **Stephen “Spider” Eldridge:** His playing career has lasted over 40 years and still continues today. Edridge has played pitcher and second baseman for his squads in 14 State Tournament and three National Tournaments.

- **Michael Matarazzo:** His teams made the State Tournament 16 straight years, winning six titles. Matarazzo played in the National Championship Tournament twice and earned second team All-American honors as catcher.

- **Buddy Phelps:** He played second, third and shortstop with equal prowess as he led his teams to 19 straight berths in the State Tournament in which his squad won three straight titles from 1978-1980.

**Slow Pitch inductees:**

- **Lawrence “Larry” Deschaine:** Deschaine contributed to the success of several of the top teams not only in Central and Southern Connecticut, but also to teams from New York, New Jersey and Florida.

- **Nelson Eddy:** Eddy led his teams down ‘glory road’ many times. He was a part of two Connecticut Class A Titles won by ‘Cip’s Home Plate’ and also was a member of eight sectional Championships. He is still displaying his skills in the state senior leagues.

- **Kevin Russo:** Russo was not only a key contributor to the success of some of the top teams in Connecticut (Rays, Keystone and Century 21) but was also a leader on the charitable front. His 2003 Century 21 team raised nearly $100,000 that was contributed to the Make-A-Wish foundation.

**Umpire inductees:**

- **Joseph Languell:** Languell has been an ASA/USA umpire for 25 years. He has officiated at the state, regional and national levels. Languell has also officiated many high-school tournaments. He has held several offices with the Northwest Connecticut Umpires Association.
Charles Moss, Sr. (Lanexa, Va.) - Meritorious Service

A cornerstone of umpiring in Virginia, Charles Moss, Sr. began his umpiring career in 1974 at the age of 16 in Falls Church, Va. Five years later, he joined the Fairfax Softball Umpires Association and kicked off a career with ASA/USA Softball that spanned 25 years. His umpiring credits included two Central Atlantic Regional Slow Pitch Tournaments and six National Championships, including the first Men’s Master’s 35-Over in 1985. He then worked his first of four Super Slow Pitch National Championships in 1990. His final National Championship assignment came in 2002 when he umpired at the Slow Pitch Championship Series. Along with his National Tournament assignments, Ingrao is a member of the National Indicator Fraternity, is an ISF Certified Umpire and an Elite Umpire in the slow pitch category. Ingrao also has several accomplishments as an administrator for the Central Atlantic Region, including serving as the Metro Washington DC Deputy Umpire-in-Chief (UIC) from 1989-2004. He also served on the National Umpire Staff from 2006-2012.

Mark Ingrao (Falls Church, Va.) - Umpire

Mark began his umpiring career in 1974 at the age of 16 in Falls Church, Va. Five years later, he joined the Fairfax Softball Umpires Association and kicked off a career with ASA/USA Softball that spanned 25 years. His umpiring credits included two Central Atlantic Regional Slow Pitch Tournaments and six National Championships, including the first Men’s Master’s 35-Over in 1985. He then worked his first of four Super Slow Pitch National Championships in 1990. His final National Championship assignment came in 2002 when he umpired at the Slow Pitch Championship Series. Along with his National Tournament assignments, Ingrao is a member of the National Indicator Fraternity, is an ISF Certified Umpire and an Elite Umpire in the slow pitch category. Ingrao also has several accomplishments as an administrator for the Central Atlantic Region, including serving as the Metro Washington DC Deputy Umpire-in-Chief (UIC) from 1989-2004. He also served on the National Umpire Staff from 2006-2012.

Steve Padilla (Manteca, Calif.) - Fast Pitch Player

In an era of iconic men’s fast pitch teams, Steve Padilla was a driving force from the circle. Starting out in the Men’s Class A division, Padilla led his team Tee House to the 1982 Men’s Class A Fast Pitch National title while earning ASA All-American honors. Once word of his pitching abilities spread, Padilla made the jump to the Men’s Major division and never looked back. Joining the California Kings in 1983, he would earn his first ASA/USA Men’s Major Fast Pitch National Championship the following year, helping his squad win 10-straight games en route to the title where he was also named the MVP. Padilla’s 5-0 performance at the National Championship while giving up just one unearned run helped him garner another ASA/USA All-American accolade. Through 10 additional seasons, Padilla earned three additional All-American honors with Guanella Brothers and the Nor Cal Merchants and earned a Men’s 40-Over National Championship in 1994 with the Merchants. Padilla also made a name for himself on the international scene as a member of the USA Softball Men’s National Team that claimed the silver medal at the 1987 Pan American Games. He also competed in five U.S. Olympic Festivals. Once his playing days came to an end, Padilla continued to play a role in men’s fast pitch as a coach in the National Team Program. Padilla served as an assistant coach for the 1999 Men’s National Team at the Pan American Games in Winnipeg, Canada and the ISF World Championship in Sydney, Australia. He also was an assistant coach for the Puerto Rican Women’s National Team at the 1996 Olympic Games in Athens, Ga.

Mike White (Eugene, Ore.) - Fast Pitch Player

One of the most respected pitchers in the game, Mike White put his teams on the map at both the national and international scene. A native of New Zealand, White spent some time as a member of their Men’s National Team before coming to the U.S. to begin his playing career in the Men’s Major division. White’s impressive resume includes nine ASA/USA All-American titles and three Men’s Major Fast Pitch National Championships. White also has a storied career with the USA Softball Men’s National Team Program beginning in 1995 when he earned a silver medal at the Pan American Games in Mar Del Plata, Mexico. In his 11 years as a member of the Team USA, White helped guide the U.S. to three silver medals in the Pan American Games and one bronze medal at the ISF World Championship. He continues to help the National Team Program as a member of the coaching staff for the Women’s National Team and is also a member of the ISF Hall of Fame.
All Things Softball

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The Special Olympics North America Softball Invitational Tournament was held in Wichita, Kan. from September 24-27. This was the first time this international tournament has been held in Kansas. More than 430 Special Olympics athletes, representing 30 teams from 14 U.S. and Canadian Special Olympics Programs, competed. Kansas was represented by three teams: the Wichita Storm, the Newhope Bulldogs (Pittsburgh), and the Topeka Stars.

The event kicked off at Lawrence Dumont Stadium with an Opening Ceremony featuring a parade of athletes, dignitaries, inspiring remarks by Chief Richard LaMunyon (retired, Wichita PD), the founder of the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics, fireworks and a dance. The Softball Invitational happened to occur during Special Olympics’ annual “Eunice Kennedy Shriver Day” on Saturday, September 26 – a global day of celebration to mark the legacy, vision, and continuing work of Special Olympics’ Founder – and ceremony attendees saw a special video message from Tim Shriver, Chairman, Special Olympics and son of Eunice Kennedy Shriver.

Competition was held at South Lakes Softball Complex for three days, with medal rounds held on Sunday, September 27. Both traditional Special Olympics teams (comprised entirely of athletes with intellectual disability) and Special Olympics Unified Sports teams (where people with and without intellectual disabilities play on the same team, as teammates) competed.

Each year, ASA/USA Softball officials and umpires from across the country volunteer their time and expertise to officiate the tournament, as part of Special Olympics’ commitment to providing high quality competitive experiences to its athletes. Each year, scores of officials apply to ASA/USA Softball in hopes of landing one of only 24 officiating roles available. As umpire Lisa DiLullo of Connecticut said, “Most Special Olympics sports officials get hooked with the first game and return many times, drawn by deep appreciation for the program and love for the athletes. We umpires pay our own expenses for the tournament, and receive no game fees. And the hundreds of volunteers who staff these events aren’t paid either. Is it worth it? Yes, yes, a thousand times yes.” Special Olympics Kansas President and CEO Chris Hahn said, “Special Olympics is a global movement with more than 4.4 million athletes globally, and more than 5,400 of them are right here in Kansas. This was an extremely rare opportunity for Kansans to see Special Olympics athletes from an array of states and nations compete at the highest levels and be inspired by the power and pure joy of sport.”

The Tournament was made possible due to the generosity of presenting sponsor Moose International, as well as ASA/USA Softball, High Touch Technologies, Special Olympics Kansas, the Coca-Cola Company, and the many local volunteers who helped support the event.

The 2016 Special Olympics North America Softball Invitational Tournament is slated to be held in Pennsylvania. Photos and results from the Special Olympics North America Softball Invitational are available on Facebook.

Softball emphasizes teamwork, physical fitness and strategic thinking - benefits and skills found on the playing field that Special Olympics athletes use as part of being active, contributing members of their communities. Currently, more than 94,000 Special Olympics athletes are participating in the sport globally, 65,000 of who participate in North America. Special Olympics is always in need of qualified coaches, so if you love softball and would like to learn more about volunteering where you live, find your local Special Olympics Program by visiting www.specialolympics.org.
When I recently told friends and family that I was going to Kansas, I begged them not to make jokes about Toto, a broomstick or the wicked witch. I was going to Wichita to umpire the Special Olympics National Invitational Softball Tournament from September 24-27 and I was thrilled. Of the 30,000 umpires registered with ASA/USA who were eligible to apply for this assignment, 24 umpires were selected. Two Milford, Conn. ASA/USA umpires were picked - Brad Sanchez and me.

Most Special Olympics sports officials get hooked with the first game and return many times, drawn by deep appreciation for the program and love for the athletes. We umpires pay our own expenses for the tournament, and receive no game fees. And the hundreds of volunteers who staff these events aren’t paid either.


This year, I arrived in Wichita a day before games began for a mandatory umpire clinic. There, ASA/USA Umpire Coordinator, Jim Ballengee, said that 30 teams from throughout the USA had registered to play. There were 17 traditional teams of athletes with varying degrees of cognitive and/or physical disabilities. There also were 13 unified teams pairing athletes with able-bodied “partners” for game play. Special rules make it a very level playing field. For example, partners in unified play cannot dominate the athletes; that is, to take a potential defensive play from an athlete in position to make it.

Special Olympics softball teams often have players of all ages, even including some sixty year olds. Men and women compete together and tournament directors take exceptional care to place teams in divisions with similarly skilled opponents. So as we reviewed the Special Olympics rules and ASA/USA points of emphasis before play began, Jim reminded us that the number one rule was to be flexible. We’d work up to four games a day.

My first day, an Alaskan umpire named Jack Eppeley and I umpired traditional team play. With the first pitch, I was reminded why I love this ‘job’. Athletes often high-five umpires as they run out onto the field. They play and take instructions from their respective coaches with an intensity uncommon in many leagues of play. We umpires, on the other hand, focus on interacting with players in ways that are unheard of on classic diamonds. We’re encouraged to talk with Athletes, to recognize effort and achievement with a pat on the back or a word of praise and to always be approachable and friendly.

That first day, an athlete from Illinois approached me and said, “Umpire lady, I remember you!” He recalled, as did I, that I umpired his unified division Gold Medal game in Princeton, New Jersey two years ago. I told him he looked great. He said he hoped I would umpire his games this year too. Later in the tournament, I would trade my Connecticut Special Olympics shirt for one of his team warm-up jerseys.

My second day, I worked with a Michigan umpire named Don Newsted in unified division play. Rules require an even split of athletes and partners, with equal numbers of each in the infield and outfield. I’ve learned never to underestimate the players’ speed, athletic ability or competitive spirit - whether athlete or partner.

While the games were great, the players’ personalities and warmth won the day for me. Working one game as the plate umpire, I enjoyed one athlete in particular who turned and smiled at me each time he stepped up to the batter’s box. When I complimented a first baseman on a great catch, he flashed a smile as big as the field. Base hits were cause for celebration, while outfield catches often sparked joyful dancing. Having played against one another for years, in some cases, athletes often encouraged opposing team members. One catcher said, “Good eye” when the batter in front of him refused to swing at a bad pitch. Coaches even tirelessly encouraged athletes if effort fell short of success. They also closely monitored the physical and emotional status of each athlete during play.

On the third and last day of play, Brad and I were assigned to the unified East Division medal round. Our final game was between the Oklahoma Razorbacks and the Cobb County Georgia Warriors and the outcome would crown the Gold Medal winner. I knew it would be a fight to the finish. Indeed, there was great hitting, super defense and shirt-drenching effort in the 82 degree Kansas heat. It was intense competition with a smattering of gamesmanship. The coaches and partners pled their cases fervently when a call didn’t go their way. Tied at the end of regulation play, the Razorbacks ultimately hit their way to victory.

As we are encouraged to do, Brad and I lingered around the field exit after the Championship to congratulate all the Athletes and wish them well. As we mingled, I saw the Warriors left centerfielder standing with his team, dirty from diving, drenched in sweat and still breathing hard. His team had lost. Brad and I congratulated this outstanding outfielder. “You did a great job,” I told him. Utterly spent, he couldn’t answer. “You played great and you left it all on the field. Wow!”

The Athlete nodded at us and smiled. Without a word, he hugged Brad - a big man’s full embrace. The athlete next came up beside me. He wrapped his arm around my shoulder, squeezed, and briefly lowered his sweaty face to rest on the top of my head. Then he turned back to join his partner and his team.

This is why I volunteer to umpire Special Olympics softball. God willing, I’ll be where they are next year.
‘Nick’s pics’
Photos from around the country during October

Submit your favorite photos to Nick Dorety, ndorety@softball.org
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Cincinnati ASA/USA Softball and Mid America Ballyard teamed up with other sponsors to bring the Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team to Cincinnati to play a doubleheader on Friday October 9, 2015. This is the second year Cincinnati ASA/USA has brought them into the Queen City.

The Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team is comprised of veterans and active duty soldiers who have lost limbs. The team includes individuals with a variety of amputations - of the arm, above and below the knee, bilateral below knee and foot. Some of the teammates are still in the service and others are attending college while some have moved on to new careers. The team travels the country playing in competitive, celebrity and exhibition slow pitch softball games.

It’s not just game for the National Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team, it’s motivation, power and perseverance.

As brothers they play the game giving each other strength. Army Staff Sgt. Leonard Anderson has been a member of the team for two years. On August 28, 2012 he was injured in Afghanistan leaving him with a partial right hand and an his left arm amputated below the elbow. Overcoming adversity through sports is what works for him.

“Sports thrive us and push us through the things we were thinking in the hospital,” said Anderson. “Am I going to walk again? Do this again? We use sports to prove that we can do whatever we want to do.”

Playing approximately 30 games a year, the National Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Team travels across the United States playing and inspiring the fans who come to watch them and the players they usually beat.

“The ball is hit deep and I’m tracking it down and I make the catch and make my little glove flip and people go nuts,” said Army Staff Sgt. Greg Reynolds. “It’s just very powerful and rewarding to know I can still play a sport I once loved.”

On Friday night, in the first game they took on Veterans and First Responders from across Cincinnati and in the second game they took on a softball all-star team from across the Queen with a fireworks show after the second game.

Brian Wegman, a member of Team USA and the owner of Mid America Ballyard, joined the Wounded Warriors as a member of their team for the evening.

“(It’s) a humbling experience. They don’t feel sorry for themselves and there is no remorse. It is just, ‘I want to play ball,’” Brian Wegman said.
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Slow Pitch Champs Crowned

The 2015 season comes to an end at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex in OKC

Champions were crowned in each of the Men’s Super, Class A, Class D and Women’s Open divisions at the 2015 Slow Pitch Championship Series in Oklahoma City at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex in October.

Men’s Super Slow Pitch National Championship

For the first time since 2012, there is a new National Champion in the Men’s Super Slow Pitch division. BBS/Mr. Ds/Rip City stole the show as they defeated Long Haul/H. Auto/Easton in a close 28-26 game.

Long Haul made their presence known early as they jumped out to a big lead in the third inning. The explosive inning resulted in eleven runs, highlighted by a Kevin Filby grand slam. BBS confidence never wavered even though they gave up 11 home runs. From that point on, they only allowed five more runs the rest of the way and out-scored Long Haul 16-5. Long Haul came to the plate at the top of the seventh down one run. Brett Helmer’s leadoff home run tied the game at 26. Several clutch defensive plays from Jeremy Yates in left field preserved the tie entering the bottom of the seventh and gave BBS a chance to close out the game. The game ended with a walk-off two run shot from Greg Connell. Connell showed his strength all game, clubbing three home and racking up eight RBI on six hits.

This marked the first time that BBS has won the ASA/USA Softball Men’s Super Slow Pitch National Championship. They went 4-0 en route to the Championship, as they outscored opponents 120-93.

First Team All-Americans

IF- Chente Granados – West Coast Monsta/The Scene
IF- Orlando Castillo – BBS/Mr. Ds/Rip City
IF- Brad Reckart – Longhaul/H. Auto/Easton
IF- Dennis Rulli – BBS/Mr. Ds/Rip City
IF- Bubba Mack – ASPNation.com/A&A Utility/KV Weld
OF- Andrew Collins – BBS/Mr. Ds/Rip City
OF- Jeremy Yates - BBS/Mr. Ds/Rip City
OF- Ryan Parfitt – Long Haul/ H. Auto/Easton
OF- Mike Unshied – Long Haul/ H. Auto/Easton
UT- Chris Larsen – Ts 13/ DeMarini
UT- Ryan Harvey – West Coast Monsta/The Scene
UT- Brett Helmer – Long Haul/H. Auto/Easton
UT- Greg Connell – BBS/Mr. Ds/Rip City
UT- Dale Brungardt – Long Haul/H. Auto/Easton
P- Travis Clark – Long Haul/ H. Auto/Easton

Men’s Class A Slow Pitch National Championship

A magnificent effort by Tournament MVP Kyle Pearson lifted ASPNation.com/A&A Utility/KV Weld to a 35-32 win over Precision/Easton/DO in the Men’s Class A Championship Game. Pearson racked up 10 RBI on five hits for ASPNation.com, singling in the fourth and sixth innings while sending out two long balls.

ASPNation.com never trailed after scoring 12 runs in the first inning on three, three-run home runs, an RBI single by Matt Vern, and a two-run triple by Brian McBryde. Precision would score three runs in the bottom of the second to cut its deficit to nine before ASPNation.com increased its lead with five runs in the fourth.

An 11-run sixth inning helped seal the eventual win for ASPNation.com. Down to their final at-bat and trailing by 17, Precision made the game interesting as the team launched six home runs to mount a comeback. With one out and trailing by three, ASPNation.com turned a double play to end the game. ASPNation.com went undefeated to claim the title with a perfect 5-0 record while hitting .682 as a team.

Precision/Easton/DO earned a spot in the Championship Game after defeating T’s 13/DeMarini 38-22 (five innings).

First Team All-Americans

IF- Kyle Pearson - ASPNation.com
IF- Keith Laski - Precision/Easton
IF- Chris Potts - ASPNation.com
IF- Matt Vern - ASPNation.com
IF- Jeff Keske - Precision/Easton
OF- Matt Schrage - T’s 13/DeMarini
OF- Dan Kirkwood - Precision/Easton
OF- Davis Bilardello - Precision/Easton
OF- Jason Branch - Reds Astros
UT- Denny Crine - Heartland Investors
UT- Tim Bowser - ASPNation.com
UT- Chris Greinert - Team Combat
UT- Shannon Smith - T’s 13/DeMarini
UT- Cooper Vittitow - ASPNation.com
P- Mike Brown - All American Athletics
Slow Pitch Champs Crowned
Continued From Previous Page...

Men’s Class D Pitch National Championship
Tournament MVP Chad Erickson was the hero of the game as he spurred ClasSick Sports/Monsta Athletics to an 11-8 win over Meredith Digital after his team forced the if-necessary game at the Men’s Class D Slow Pitch National Championship. Erickson rocked Meredith Digital with two home runs, going 3-for-4 in the deciding game with five RBI and three runs scored.

Meredith Digital was ahead early but ultimately surrendered the lead for good in the fifth inning as ClasSick Sports took the lead back on a two-run double by Darin Campos. ClasSick Sports finished the tournament with a 6-1 record and a team batting average of .535.

ClasSick Sports earned a spot in the Championship Game after defeating Shinetime/Pitstop 10-7.

First Team All-Americans
IF- April Ortenzo - U.S. Armed Forces
IF- Kami Marrott - Derby Girls/Combat
IF- Marjorie Mills - U.S. Armed Forces
IF- Erika Citron - U.S. Armed Forces
IF- Victoria Pzsyk - U.S. Armed Forces
OF- Stefanie Watt - Derby Girls/Combat
OF- Miranda Sanderson - U.S. Armed Forces
OF- Holly Leiter - Derby Girls/Combat
OF- Teresa Herring - U.S. Armed Forces
UT- Tara Salcedo - Derby Girls/Combat
UT- Abby Beach - Askarben Skers
UT- Bri Benesh - Derby Girls/Combat
UT- Christian Dowling - Derby Girls/Combat
UT- Ashley Tarver - Lady MVP
P- Krystal Cavette - U.S. Armed Forces

Women’s Open Slow Pitch National Championship
A 10-run explosion in the second inning helped land the U.S. Armed Forces the Women’s Open Slow Pitch National title. In a 16-6 win (five innings) over Derby Girls/Combat/Softball.com, each member of the Armed Forces recorded a hit as the team totaled for 18 hits during their offensive fueled victory in the Championship Game. The Armed Forces finished the tournament with a perfect 3-0 record while hitting .573 as a team.

The Armed Forces struck big in the second inning, plating 10 runs in the second on a three triples, two singles and a sac fly. Tournament MVP April Ortenzo was red hot for the Armed Forces, racking up three RBI on two hits for the Armed Forces. She doubled in the first inning and tripled in the third inning.

Derby Girls looked to mount a comeback in the third inning as three runs would cross the plate, but the Armed Forces would tack on another five runs in the bottom half of the frame to extend their lead. Down to their final at-bat, Derby Girls loaded the bases with no outs in the top of the fifth, but the Armed Forces defense held strong to get a double play before a ground-out to the third baseman brought the game to a close.

Derby Girls earned a spot in the Championship Game after defeating the Askarben Skers 15-4 (six innings).
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