A note from Amateur Softball Association President Andy Dooley

Congratulations to all the teams that just completed Championship play over Labor Day weekend. We want to say thank you for your participation and hope that you enjoyed a great weekend.

Thanks to all our wonderful hosts across the nation as all of you do such a great job and I hope that you qualify for the James Farrell awards, which will be presented at the National Council Meeting in November in Shreveport, La.

For those teams that will be advancing to Oklahoma City for the Hooters Championship Series, it will be an experience that you will remember for a long time. The staff in Oklahoma City is looking forward to hosting a great event. I will be in attendance and I look forward to seeing all of you there.

Safe travels!

As we prepare for the Council Meeting, I hope all of you have or will be shortly making arrangements with Journey House. Journey House can be reached at 1-800-726-0051.

In other National Council Meeting news, remember to submit your playing rules or code changes by the deadline where they can be considered.

The ad hoc committee which I appointed for Register ASA has had several conference calls and we are moving along with suggested changes. I want to say thank you to those who accepted the appointment to better this great asset of ASA.

As you prepare for the fall season please give the teams every opportunity to play ASA as possible. The fall season is where the teams prepare for a 2011 championships so let’s do our part to provide a great environment to train.

Thanks for all you do each and every day for ASA.
A note from The Inside Pitch editor
Jamie Blanchard

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

Congratulations to all of the newly crowned National Champions. And good luck to all of the teams vying for the ASA Fast Pitch Men’s Senior 50-Over, Men’s Slow Pitch Class A, Women’s Open and Hooters Championship Series (HCS) National Championships over the next couple weeks.

Not only does it take the athletes and coaches to have a great tournament, it also takes the local Tournament Directors as well their staff, from the field crew to the scorers and everyone in between. Thank you to everyone, including the local volunteers, who help make the National Championships across the country a success.

With Championship play nearing an end for the 2010 season, our attention is turning toward the 79th National Council Meeting at the Shreveport Convention Center in Shreveport-Bossier, La., November 6-12. It looks to be another great event for our association.

Our National Softball Hall of Fame will induct 10 new members in Shreveport, five players and five non-players, all who have made tremendous contributions to ASA. If you are interested in attending the Hall of Fame Ceremony, please contact Debbie Ford at dford@softball.org.

Also on the national side of the organization, the USA Softball program has again been recognized by the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC). The Junior Women’s National Team finished second in the August 2010 Team of the Month balloting and third baseman Lauren Chamberlain took third place for Female Athlete of the Month.

It was another good month all around for the ASA. And I am looking forward to all of the exciting things to come for our organization.

REMINDER
The deadline for registrations for at-large tournament berths is October 15.

News & Notes from the National Office

Deadlines approaching for Council Meeting

Code and Rule Change Proposals due next week

Council Members can go on to the ASA Portal now to download the Proposed Code Change Form and Proposed Rule Change Form. The deadline to submit proposals is September 22.

October 1 the deadline for Trade Show registrations

More than 1,000 people are expected to attend the Annual Trade Show of the 79th Annual Meeting of the Amateur Softball Association. The Trade Show will be held Saturday, November 6. Exhibit hours are 5-9 p.m. Saturday (5-7 p.m. for Council Members only). The Trade Show will be held at the Shreveport Convention Center connected to the Hilton Shreveport.

If interested in exhibiting, contact Jamie Blanchard at jblanchard@softball.org. Deadline for registering is October 1.

Book rooms at the overflow hotels by October 6

Meetings will be held at the Shreveport Convention Center while the Hilton Shreveport will serve as the host hotel. For those who will be staying at one of the three overflow hotels, the Best Western (201 Lake Street), Holiday Inn (102 Lake Street) or Sam’s Town (315 Clyde Fant Parkway), please book by October 6 to receive the ASA rate.

Rooms at the Best Western start $101.78 with the group code “ASA Conference”. The Holiday Inn rooms start at $111.97 with the code “ASA Block”. Sam’s Town starts at $132.33 with the code “S11ASA”.

Starting September 17, USA Softball will auction off the jerseys and other pink items used during the Women’s National Team and Futures National Team’s pink games at the 2010 KFC World Cup of Softball presented by Six Flags. Proceeds benefit Susan G. Komen for the Cure of Central Oklahoma. All items will be auctioned through eBay by user “SoftballOutlet”.

The Inside Pitch
Official newsletter of the Amateur Softball Association
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The teams qualified for the National Championship Finals in tournaments held over the Labor Day weekend in Tallahassee, Fla., Dallas, Texas, Salem, Va., Rochester, Minn., Tupelo, Miss., Prescott, Ariz., Columbus, Ohio, Liberty, Mo., and Fresno, Calif. All are now vying to be called an ASA National Champion.

“We play ASA because it is the cream of the crop when it comes to softball associations,” Millsaps added. “They do it right by providing teams an opportunity that no other association would even think about doing — flying all the teams to Oklahoma City, putting them up at a nice hotel, a team reception and the opportunity to play in a great facility.”

Tournament play begins October 1. To welcome the HCS teams as well as the Men’s Class A and Women’s Open competitors to Oklahoma City, Hooters at 3025 N.W. Expressway will also host a welcome party that evening.

Jennie Finch visits with Batters Up USA

Recently retired Olympic gold medal-winning pitcher Jennie Finch paid a promotional visit this September to one of our oldest Batters Up USA programs in Lancaster, PA. Finch appears at a Lancaster Barnstormers minor league game and supplies a jersey and pitching rubber for a raffle, the proceeds of which will benefit about 100 participants in the BUUSA Lancaster program this fall.

“You certainly are a strong, positive influence for the young ladies in the softball world,” said Steve Fornadel, ASA of PA District 2 commissioner and a former Batters Up USA chairman. “Thank you to On Deck Sports for sponsoring the event and the Lancaster Barnstormers for being a fantastic host!”

Batters Up USA has record year in 2010

It’s going to be a record year for Batters Up USA in 2010! We now have 31 new programs in addition to the aforementioned partnership with MLB’s “Jr. RBI” program. For the 29 programs reporting to date, we have added 4,400 more kids and 10 new states — a sizeable uptick for a movement that had totaled 10,400 kids in 43 programs across 20 states in its first four years.

Batters Up USA recently joined up with Major League Baseball in contributing 40 aluminum ball bats in support of the rapidly growing MLB “Jr. RBI” program, an initiative designed to create new playing divisions that provide baseball and softball opportunities for children ages 6-12.

In 2009, 16 cities served as “Jr. RBI” pilot programs to provide feedback on playing rules, field dimensions, and other participation trends. The program is going worldwide in 2010, with a goal of nearly 300 leagues and 200,000 participants. The emphasis is on teaching the fundamentals of baseball and making it fun for ages 6-10, whereas 11- and 12-year-olds get an introduction to baseball and softball.

Because of an improved financial situation this year, Batters Up USA was able to purchase this equipment at a nice discount from Easton Sports. Our bats will be distributed to several cities involved in starting up new programs.

ASA hosting first ever Fall National Championship

Panama City Beach is the place to be in October as Florida ASA will be hosting the first ever Amateur Softball Association (ASA) Fall National Championship October 16-17, 2010, at the Frank Brown Complex. Teams in six divisions will be competing on six fields for over $36,000 in prizes.

To register for the tournament, go to the Florida ASA website (www.playasa.org) and fill out the online form. The deadline to register is October 8. Entry fees range from $275-$500.

The classifications contested:
• Men’s Class A/B Division (six home runs then one up);
• Men’s Class C (four home runs then an out);
• Men’s Class D (two home runs then an out);
• Men’s Class E/Rec (zero home runs then a half inning ending out);
• Women’s and Co-Ed Class D.
Minnesota Hall to induct 14 in October 2010

The 26th Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame Banquet will be held on Friday evening, October 22 at the Monterey Ballroom in Owatonna, Minnesota. The Hall of Fame biennially recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the sport of softball.

Softball is the largest team participant sport in Minnesota and the nation with over 6,000 teams participating in the local Amateur Softball Association (USA Softball) program.

A total of 14 individuals in the player, manager, umpire, sponsor, promoter, administrator, organizer, volunteer or media categories have been selected for induction this year. Includees for 2010: Joe Alexander (posthumously); Jim “Corky” Ebeling; Tim Egan; Mervin Eischens; Bryn Suzanne Geerdes; Phil Hilgeman; Bill Hills; Richard “Dick” Holdorf; Harlan Jacobson; Stan Noren (posthumously); John Seamans; Bob Szublewski; Rolf Synoground; Ken Vierling; and Mark “Norton” Zweber.

The cost of the banquet is $35.00. Tickets may be obtained from the Minnesota Sports Federation or at www.msf1.org. Phone (763) 263-9993. Deadline for tickets is Friday, October 15.

International umpires work ASA Nationals

Three ASA National Championship finals were settled in Columbus, Ohio, Labor Day weekend and there was an international flavor as the umpire staff included representation from three countries. In addition to umpires from across the United States (14 states and nine ASA regions were included), four umpires came from the US Armed Forces in Germany and two umpires were assigned by Softball Canada.

Umpires Charles Williams, Duane Peden, Angel Vasquez and Lee Johnson all have worked National Championships in the past as part of a five year old program where ASA works with the Department of Defense and its European Sports Commissioner Tony Lee. Lee, who coordinates over 45 sports in Europe, also was in Columbus and has worked with the ASA on umpire training in Europe for over 25 years. He selects umpires for several Labor Day championship sites on a “host exchange” basis. For the past three years he has traveled to the U.S. to observe National Championships in Georgia and Ohio (twice).

According to Jerry Fick, East Central Region UIC, “Tony not only works closely with ASA providing an opportunity for us to welcome these umpires to our championships but he also has been coming here to learn more about how our tournaments work. In fact he has been a regular at our National UIC Clinic and will be coming to Oklahoma City in October for our Hooters’ Championships. He is always looking to take ideas back to Europe to further improve the events offered to our military personnel overseas.”

In addition, umpires Lance Davidson and Les Yuen were selected by Softball Canada and traveled from Calgary, Alberta to Columbus for the championships.

Both are veterans of many Canadian championships and they are the first two umpires to represent Softball Canada at an ASA National Championship.

Ohio Commissioner and East Territory Vice President Warren Jones said “We are very proud to welcome umpires from both the US Armed Forces and Softball Canada to Ohio and these three East Territory National Championships. We have already asked to participate in these in exchange programs for 2011 and beyond. We want to bring umpires from across the country and around the world to Ohio as it adds to our events, provides a chance for others to participate, and is also a great opportunity for our umpires and staff to work with and learn from outstanding people in the umpire profession.”
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The USA Softball program continued an impressive streak of recognition from the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) with the 2010-11 USA Softball Junior Women’s National Team placing second in the August 2010 Team of the Month contest, the USOC announced today. The team’s third baseman Lauren Chamberlain (Trabuco Canyon, Calif.) also placed third in the Female Athlete of the Month category.

The August 2010 honors are in addition to USA Softball outfielder Alissa Haber (Newark, Calif.) winning the June 2010 Female Athlete of the Month award, the Women’s National Team winning the June 2010 Team of the Month award, shortstop Natasha Watley (Irvine, Calif.) winning the July 2010 Female Athlete of the Month award and the Women’s National Team placing third in the July 2010 Team of the Month voting.

“The future of USA Softball has never been brighter than it is today. We are incredibly proud of everything that our program has done throughout the summer and congratulate our athletes for their accomplishments,” said Amateur Softball Association Executive Director Ron Radigonda. “In June, our Women’s National Team won an unprecedented ninth World Championship and took their fourth World Cup of Softball title in July. The 17 members of our Junior Women’s National Team, each wearing the uniform for the first time, continued that display of excellence by going undefeated in the Junior Women’s World Championship Qualifier last month. Their victories along with the recognition from the fans and the U.S. Olympic Committee proves that even without the Olympic Games, softball continues to be the marquee summer sport. We’re already looking forward to 2011.”

The nominees from USA Softball were the only junior level athletes to place in the top three for the month. The USA Water Polo’s goalkeeper Betsey Armstrong (Ann Arbor, Mich.), who had 58 saves at the World Cup.

The Junior Women’s National Team went 9-0 at the III Pan American Championship (18-Under) in Bogota, Colombia. After waiting at the stadium through a rain delay of more than seven hours, the Americans topped Canada 3-1 in the Championship Game, earning the Gold Medal and a berth to the International Softball Federation (ISF) Junior Women’s World Championship, December 2011, in Cape Town, South Africa. Earlier on Championship Day, the team topped Puerto Rico 6-1 in the semifinals to advance.

Overall, six of the nine games were run rule victories. Four victories were shutouts. Team USA outscored opponents 77-7, while outfitting competitors 91-19. The team, comprised of mostly high school seniors, combined for a .672 slugging percentage with 23 doubles, seven triples and three home runs. The Red, White and Blue batters were walked 25 times while striking out only 21 times. The team was 38 for 43 in stolen bases, led by Madison Shipman (Valencia, Calif.) with nine.

The five member pitching staff had a combined ERA of .73. Dallas Escobedo (Glendale, Ariz.) and Lauren Haeger (Phoenix, Ariz.) led in the circle, both reaching a 3-0 record. Escobedo struck out 23 and allowed five hits and a run in her 14.1 innings played across five games. Haeger, who had 20 of the team’s 71 strikeouts, pitched 18 innings in five games. She gave up nine hits and two earned runs.

While a team effort led to Team USA’s success in Bogota, Chamberlain was one of the standout players, earning USA Softball’s nomination for Female Athlete of the Month. She played in each of the nine games, starting eight times at third base. In her first game wearing the Red, White and Blue, she a home run, laying the groundwork for an outstanding offensive performance in the tournament.

“The game against Colombia was the first time it really hit me that I was wearing USA across my chest,” Chamberlain said. “Stepping on the field with all my friends that I’ve either played with or against was a feeling I can’t really describe. We were no longer playing for ourselves. We were playing for something so much bigger. Winning the Gold Medal was something I’ve dreamed of since I was little. The medal I was wearing around my neck represented the millions of girls around the country. I had never felt so grateful.”

She went 16 for 25 (.640) at the plate with 11 runs scored and 13 RBI. With her 11 extra base hits (seven doubles, two triples and two home runs), she accumulated a slugging percentage of 1.320, by far the highest in Bogota. She went a perfect 6 for 6 in stolen bases, tying Hallie Wilson (North Tustin, Calif.) for second most on the team.

Members of the team are Ally Carda (Elk Grove, Calif.); Chamberlain; Cheyenne Cordes (Fairfield, Calif.); Escobedo; Amber Freeman (Lakewood, Calif.); Erin Gabriel (Poland, Ohio); Chelsea Goodacre (Temecula, Calif.); Haeger; Kylee Lahners (Laguna Hills, Calif.); Destinee Martinez (Corona, Calif.); Shelby Pendley (Albuquerque, N.M.); Kourtney Salvato-R (Arnold, Md.); Shipman; Cheyanne Tarango (Anaheim Hills, Calif.); Nyree White (Eugene, Ore.); Wilson; and Chelsea Zgrabik (Nokomis, Fla.).

“Congratulations to the Junior Women’s National Team, including Lauren Chamberlain, for being recognized by the U.S. Olympic Committee as some of the top athletes in the country. The honors are truly deserved,” coach Karen Johns (Starkville, Miss.) said. “I am excited to see what this team will accomplish next year at the Junior Women’s World Championship and beyond. They are incredible young women.”

Suzy Brazney (Huntington Beach, Calif./head coach Golden West College), Stacy Iveson (Prescott, Ariz./head coach Yavapai College) and Pat Murphy (Northport, Ala./head coach Alabama) joined Johns in Colombia as assistant coaches. Joe Salvatore (Monroe Township, N.J./coach New Jersey Breakers) is the volunteer assistant coach for the Junior Women’s National Team.
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Listen to the Jennie Finch podcast

In his newest episode, Positive Coaching Alliance Founder and Executive Director Jim Thompson welcomes Olympic Gold Medalist and USA Softball Women’s National Team pitching All-Star Jennie Finch. Borrowing a line from Billie Jean King, Finch talks about the “privilege of pressure,” encouraging youth athletes to enjoy the moment and to Honor The Game by honoring themselves, their teammates, the history of the sport, and the opportunity to learn life lessons through sports. Listen >>

Positive Coaching Alliance helps foster Responsible Sports

Every week, ASASoftball.com and USASoftball.com publish an article from Liberty Mutual Responsible Sports. Check out these two articles from the Responsible Sports archive.

Keep a balance in mind (September 13, 2010): Responsible coaches and responsible parents understand there is more at stake for youth athletes than just competitive results. How can you stay balanced? Read More >>

Team rituals versus hazing (August 30, 2010): Experts at the Positive Coaching Alliance outline a series of guidelines that can help you set a responsible sports environment filled with positive traditions for your youth athletes. Read More >>
Softball league scores with balanced schedules published in real time

The Challenge
Phil Freeman is a longtime volunteer with the Prince Williams Girls Fastpitch Softball League. He coached his daughters through high school and now that they’re grown, coaches several teams of younger players. For the past four years Phil has also taken on the role of scheduler. Twice a year he would create a large grid with a matrix on a spreadsheet, and just start plugging in games, hoping it all worked out.

The biggest problem was he couldn’t quite a good balance in the schedule with the tedious manual process. “I’d constantly have to plug things in, get feedback from people, then go back and move things around,” said Phil.

When scheduling was finally completed, Phil would send an email with the team’s schedule to each coach, and then coaches would send an email to parents. The webmaster would manually post the schedules on the league’s website.

Whenever there was a change to the schedule, Phil would email or even call the coaches, who in turn would contact parents. The webmaster would go back and update the website.

Because the schedule published on the website couldn’t reflect changes in real time, parents just relied on the coaches for any updates.

The Solution
Phil tried the Clubspaces Scheduler and found it made the entire process much easier. He simply had to enter teams, fields, dates, times between games, and hit ‘Generate.’ The system automatically generated the entire season’s schedule.

The time savings were immediately apparent, and Phil discovered two additional benefits. “The biggest plus is because it’s integrated into our league and team websites, we can publish updates to those sites immediately,” Phil said. “Now instead of waiting to hear from coaches, parents and players go right to the website knowing that the information is reliable because it’s updated in real time.”

A second benefit was a feeling of relief knowing the schedules were truly balanced. Phil no longer worried that he had overscheduled or underscheduled any team. “Now I know the schedules are balanced,” said Phil.

Using the Clubspaces Scheduler, Phil eliminated the need for each webmaster to upload schedules. “It was a hassle for the webmaster,” Phil said. “Now the webmaster doesn’t even need to deal with it.”

Club Win
Since the Clubspaces Automatic Game Scheduler is completely integrated with the league’s public website and its network of team sites, schedules are immediately published to the entire league. Any schedule changes are available in real time. “Everyone knows to go to the website for the latest information,” said Phil.

“It’s important for us to handle schedule through our website. Everything is perfectly integrated – and done right away.”
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Nissen wins Cedar Rapids HR Derby

On July 1, the Cedar Rapids, Iowa Parks and Recreation Dept held a Home Run Derby at Kernels Stadium for five of the best home run hitters in the area. The objective was to hit as many Home Run’s as possible with the allotted 10 swings and they did not disappoint the fans in attendance that night.

Nick Nissen, third baseman for The Chrome Horse, put on a lights out show by hitting eight out of 10 home runs with several going in the range of 400-430 feet. Eric Green, of DC’s Riverwalk, had the shot of the night with a ball going in excess of 450 feet.

Other participants: Blake Brockhohn, DC’s Riverwalk; Billy Stalkfleet, Stadium Lounge; and Bryce Schweitzer, Rip City.

Nissen picked the perfect night to win the Home Run Derby as that was the same night The Chrome Horse team was honored for staying together for 21 years.

“Before the Home Run Derby we were talking to some of the Kernels players, farm team for the Anaheim Angels, and they were in complete doubt we had anybody with the ability to hit a ball out of the stadium,” Robert White said in an e-mail. “I assured them that every single participant would hit at least one home run and that several would leave the stadium all together. Needless to say, during the event the Kernel’s players were jumping up and down with excitement at the raw power and ability that our slowpitch players were putting on that night.”