Balls and Strikes
Softball Magazine
March 2010

8 rose queen

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23 2010 ASA COMPLEX SCHEDULE ANNOUNCED

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AND SOFTBALL PLAYERS EVERYWHERE
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GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT!

As you begin to start play for the 2010 season, let me say “Good Luck” to each and every team, player, coach and parent.

If you have already started league play and possibly played in some tournaments, I hope the results were what you had planned. If not, keep training each week and I am sure you will achieve your goals.

Please view your local association’s websites for the most up-to-date information about your programs. If you don’t have the address, go to www.asasoftware.com and click on local associations. You will find the information you need there.

Also don’t forget to get ACE certified by going through the ACE Certification program, which offers the best information available for youth coaches.

Again good luck and may you have the best season ever!

Your President,
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INTIMIDATION IS MORE THAN A STARE DOWN.
Dear Ms. Bartel,

This letter is late in coming, but by no means does that minimize the most wonderful time my daughter and I have experienced.

My daughter, Lorena, began playing softball in August 2008, for the 8U Chandler Girls Softball League in Chandler, Arizona, when she was 7. The coaches and umpires insisted that she’s “a natural and the best girl in the league.” They suggested moving her up to 10U, which we did in 2009. Since we had many people telling us how good she was, we decided to enter her in MLB’s Pitch, Hit, and Run Competition in May, just to see where she would rate. We were proud and surprised when she took first place in the Regional.

She then advanced to the Super Regional in late May, where she again took first place. We were told 9 other states were holding their Super Regional and if our daughter placed in the top 3 in the nation, we’d be sent, all expenses paid, to compete for the Nationals in St. Louis during All-Star week. Needless to say, we did indeed receive the call from a wonderful young lady named Abby to let us know Lorena would be going to St. Louis! My eyes are watering now just thinking of the experience.

From the moment we arrived, to the minute we left, everything and everyone involved made us feel like we were superstars! Lorena received many wonderful gifts at the initial welcoming dinner; we were driven, by bus, to enjoy a yummy breakfast across the street from the All Star Fan Fest Experience. We then attended the Experience where the kids were moved up to the front of every line! The tour of the Arch was also a great time, Lorena had actually learned about the Arch in school, so she really enjoyed that. We attended the Home Run Derby, where the kids were able to shag baseballs on the field of Busch Stadium! Then, as if that wasn’t enough, we watched the All Star Game from great seats!

By the way, my daughter, Lorena, took first place in the competition and became a National Champion at age 8! Watching her on the field of Busch Stadium, kneeling next to her trophy and waving at the thousands of fans, well, that was priceless!

What a wonderful opportunity for anyone to experience, especially my little 8 year old. We are so thankful that this program was available for us to participate in. Thank you, Thank you, Thank You!

Lorena is now playing for the 10U Lady Diablos Club Softball Team, where she’ll be able to learn more and improve her skills in the in game of softball. She loves it, although, she also loves basketball and was ready for club swimming!

Thank you, again, for this awesome program! We are now personal spokespeople, letting everyone know about how wonderful this experience was and to enter their child this year!

With warm regards,
Charlene (and Lorena) Vasquez-Inzunza
Natalie Innocenzi is used to being the center of the action. In November, the 17-year-old from Arcadia, Calif., named the 92nd Rose Queen for the 2010 Tournament of Roses, presided over the Pasadena parade on New Year’s Day.

"Since we were first announced, the Rose Princesses and I have done over 150 events throughout the community," she said. "We would visit nursing homes and children’s hospitals and other places in our community. In the days leading up to the Parade, we were doing six different events a day including interviews with everyone from ESPN to NBC."

At the Rose Parade, millions of spectators, both in person and on television, watched her every move. "When we turned on TV row, it was amazing because I wasn’t nervous at all. The committee thought it was funny that I was so excited about it," said Innocenzi, who beat out 1,100 other girls for the Rose Queen honor.

But nowadays, she is in the background, umpiring 8-Under games for the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) in Southern California. "It’s so different because the game is all about the players, it should never be about umpires," said Innocenzi,
who formerly played travel ball for ASA’s California Cruisers.

"I actually thought that I was going to play softball until college, or maybe even in college," she said, "but as I got older, it wasn’t as fun for me anymore so I stopped playing. I’m so glad that I got the opportunity to umpire though because it reminded me of why I love the sport so much. It is so much fun to be involved with softball in this new role."

She is currently in her second season of umpiring with no plans to stop. "Umpiring brought me back into this sport," she said.

"It was hard for me to imagine a life without softball after I stopped playing. I thought about maybe taking an assistant coaching job but then I got the call that umpires were needed," Innocenzi said. "I went to the trainings to see if it was something that I wanted to do. It turns out that I really loved it."

As a southpaw, who played both first base and in the outfield, turned umpire, Innocenzi knows both sides of the game. "I feel umpiring is a little more difficult than being on the field," she said. "When you’re umpiring, you have coaches asking you questions like ‘What’s the count?’ and then they’re also questioning your decisions."

"With 8-year-olds, it’s also like you’re a coach because they’re just starting to play," she said. "Some of them are on the wrong side of the plate when they come up or they don’t know if they should run. You have to give them guidance. It’s cute. It’s really fun to see them taking to the game like I did when I was younger."

Innocenzi thinks she found her niche in umpiring but could give playing another shot. "I’ve thought about playing intra-mural softball but I’m not sure. Between possibly playing again, maybe coaching and always having the option of umpiring, I don’t think I’ll ever be done with softball," she said.

Innocenzi plans to enroll in college next year, possibly at University of Redlands, and start towards her career in gerontology — the study of aging. "I think visiting the nursing homes and hospitals really reinforced my passion for it," she said.

**Becoming the Rose Queen**

Natalie Innocenzi was one of the 1,143 young women who tried out for Rose Queen. On the first day, the contestants had 15 seconds to tell a panel why they wanted to be on the court. Afterward, the group was narrowed down until finally one Rose Queen and six Princesses were selected for the 2010 Tournament of Roses Royal Court.

Innocenzi was shocked to learn that she was selected. "I just went into it thinking that it would be fun to try out so when I won, I was just speechless," she said.

"After we were announced, the entire court went through a boot camp of etiquette training," she said. "It was just learning how to be a lady. They taught us how to eat pasta properly. We learned how to correctly get out of a car when we are wearing a skirt, how to speak in public and those sorts of things. What we learned will definitely come in handy in time for college interviews."
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International softball returns to the Amateur Softball Association of America (ASA) Hall of Fame Complex in Oklahoma City when the 2010 USA Softball Women’s National Team takes on Canada, Japan and the USA Futures Team at the 5th World Cup of Softball, July 22-26.

“There is nothing like the World Cup,” said two-time Olympian Jennie Finch. “It is the best environment and my favorite event each year. I look forward to competing at the greatest softball complex in the World and in front of the World’s Greatest Fans. I get chills just thinking about it again and am really looking forward to returning to Oklahoma City.”

“We are proud to welcome world-class softball back to Oklahoma City for this premier event in International women’s fast pitch softball,” said ASA Executive Director Ron Radigonda. “The World Cup of Softball has proven to be one of the premier events in the softball community, attracting the highest level athletes from across the country and the world. For our athletes, the World Cup provides one of the only opportunities to play before a home crowd with ‘USA’ written across their chests so we hope people come out to the stadium to make this experience special for them.”

Expected to represent Team USA are two-time Olympians Jennie Finch, Jessica Mendoza, Cat Osterman and Natasha Watley, who helped lead the U.S. to the Gold Medal in Athens and Silver Medal in Beijing. Members of 2008 Olympic Silver Medal winning team also scheduled to play in the 5th World Cup of Softball are Olympic silver medalists Monica Abbott, Andrea Duran, Vicky Galindo, Lauren Lappin and Caitlin Lowe.

“The USA Futures team will be a great way to identify the future pipeline of our National team program,” added Radigonda.

All session reserved ($75) and all session general admission ($40) tickets are on sale now by calling 1-800-654-8337 or by visiting www.softballoutlet.com/shop_tickets.asp. Also on sale now is the Ultimate Fan Zone package ($275), which includes a meal with Team USA on Sunday as well as an autograph session with the team that is only open to Ultimate Fan Zone ticket holders. The Ultimate Fan Zone also includes an all-session reserved seat in the premier section of ASA Hall of Fame Stadium for every game of the World Cup, a personalized replica USA jersey, and free parking. Single session tickets will go on sale at a later date.

“The World Cup of Softball gets more exciting each and every year and 2010 is no exception,” said two-time Olympian Jessica Mendoza. “Where else can you see the best softball in the World and see the U.S. face off on home soil? Only at the World Cup in Oklahoma City. The fans have always been outstanding and we hope to put on quite a show come July.”

Canada, Japan and the USA played in the 2009 KFC World Cup of Softball 4 with the Americans taking the Gold Medal. Canada defeated Japan to take the Bronze Medal. After the World Cup in July 2009, Japan faced Team USA again at the Japan Cup Sendai City, Japan. In the championship, Finch drove in the game’s only two runs in the first inning, and held a no hitter into the seventh inning. The Americans also faced Canada twice at the 2009 Pan American Championship Qualifier in Maracay, Venezuela, in August 2009. In the first match-up, Team USA suffered their only loss of the 2009 season, but came back to upset Canada in the Gold Medal Game.

The 5th World Cup of Softball is sanctioned by the International Softball Federation, the governing body of softball internationally as recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF).

Tickets can be purchased through the ASA merchandise website at http://www.softballoutlet.com/shop_tickets.asp or by calling 1-800-654-8337.
MASS. ASA: ASSOCIATION PROFILE

Mass. ASA Commissioner Joe Alfonse is yet another great leader in our organization who has worn many hats, helping him become an invaluable asset. He was a player, umpire, District Commissioner, Junior Olympic Umpire-in-Chief and is currently the Commissioner of Mass. ASA. Alfonse took a couple of years off to raise his two sons after his wife passed away in 1996 but came back in 2000 to help promote ASA. He remarried in 2004 and welcomed two daughters to the family, calling themselves “2/3 of the Brady Bunch”. In his “off time” from ASA, Alfonse is a high school science teacher. Mass. ASA is a recently combined Association and the leaders have done a great time melding the two former Associations together. Check out what Alfonse had to say on facebook, Register ASA and how the new Association is doing.

B&S: What sets Massachusetts ASA apart from other Associations?
JA: Mass. ASA is recently combined organization incorporating the old Metro Boston ASA as well as the former Mass. ASA. They were merged in Sept. of 2009 by the direction of the ASA Board of Directors. Since the merger, we have strived to assimilate as much current internet technology as possible to assist in our operations. Not only do we use Social Networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, we have added to our web-site such things as PayPal, I’m and online registrations for teams and umpires. We have incorporated the use of internet phone systems using 1-800 numbers for voice and fax so they’re always saved and accessible from any nearby computer for our staff.

B&S: You are one of our most active Associations in regards Social media ex. Twitter, facebook, etc. What do you do to make sure they are successful? Any tips you want to share?
JA: The plain and simple truth of using Facebook and Twitter is to be online all the time. No one person can do it, but fortunately Mass. ASA has some great individuals like Brad Tittrington among others who takes the time to follow things online and keep things moving. It’s important to keep an active newsworthy account and making sure you take the time to insert recent events as well as upcoming ones. People like to see their names mentioned for the work they do and these two social networking sites allow people to be thanked publicly (and quickly) for their efforts. We have posted the links very prominently on our main web-site for people to see and click on to see (hopefully) up-to-the minute events.

In terms of tips, we have made a point of mentioning in all our e-mails, postal mailings, as well as league meetings we’ve attended of making sure that everyone is aware of our accounts and taking the time to ‘friend’ people as quickly as possible within our local area.

B&S: One story that came to the National Office is that you found a bunch of umpires through Craigslist. Explain how you did that and the success you had.
JA: Craigslist has been a real boost to our umpire recruiting efforts these last two years. Jim Fanning, (At-Large-Player Rep) came up with the idea last year and we gave it a try. We posted an ad titled “Looking for a few good umpires” in three different target areas within the state, and within a few days, we had over 100 e-mails or phone calls expressing interest. Still the Metro Boston association at the time, we were able to register over 75 new umpires just from this one advertising campaign. Seeing the success we had last year, and a much larger geographic territory to cover this year, we decided to do it again. We advertised on Craigslist again, targeting a different portion of the state (but the whole state is covered), and this year we had over 100 replies within the first three hours. In the last month, we’ve had over 200 inquiries and we’ve already completed new umpire training for over 80 new candidates statewide. The best part of this type of umpire recruiting is that Craigslist is fairly inexpensive, $25 per area. Last year’s cost was $75 and the same for this year as well. The math is simple in terms of $150 investment and a return of over 150 new umpires.

As a side note, we spent last year almost $3000 on print media with not one actual umpire registered. This year, we didn’t even attempt to spend money on print media and we are excited by the results we generated from Craigslist.

B&S: What is your biggest asset as an association?
JA: Communication is our biggest asset. Social Media aside, our focus has been to conduct as many face-to-face meetings as possible. Phil McElroy (our JO Commissioner) and I have driven a few thousand miles since the merger attending league meetings, umpire board meetings, and recreation planning meetings letting folks know about the merger. As we build a bigger, better, leadership team within the state, our expectations will be to have our local staff make every attempt to meet annually with all of the leagues in Massachusetts.

B&S: I know this is a sensitive topic but how have your members reacted to Register ASA?
JA: I realize your question tends lightly on the subject of Register ASA, but people need to understand something clearly. While Register ASA is not working optimally, it IS working and teams, players, and umpires ARE being registered. We’re very proud in Mass. to be one of the first states to go ‘live’ with Register ASA and we’re very fortunate in an odd way. Our softball season is considerably shorter than our neighbors in the warmer climates to the south. The only teams we’ve had any rush to register was our travel teams up until 3 weeks ago and Phil McElroy with nothing short of Herculean efforts with the ASA staff and answer all client questions. The recreation teams have just started in earnest to register this last month and Phil continues to work hard meeting their needs as well.

Will this be good for the ASA? With no hesitation, ABSOLUTELY! With the ability to build a static database that can be used year after year, leagues and teams will be able to register faster and more efficiently minimizing the efforts of the local ASA staffs in the next few years. I sincerely understand that people who haven’t used the old system or the new Register ASA may have some doubts because of our ‘startup’ problems, but I am certain that with time, people will appreciate the efforts of the JO community and the National Staff.

B&S: Any best practices you would like to share?
JA: This is more directed at the abundance of new commissioners recently appointed. “Be a pain in the neck.” There’s way too many people within our National ASA who have ‘been there and done that’ to not take advantage of their knowledge. I’d like to take a moment to publicly thank Bill Cary (Maine Commissioner), Jack Mowatt (Maryland Commissioner), Warren Jones (Ohio Commissioner), Norm Davis (Region 1 UIC) and a cast of thousands for their patience in answering my hundreds of questions these past two years. With that being said, Andy Dooley, Joey Rich, Ron Radigonda, Craig Cress, and the entire ASA staff have provided me invaluable guidance on how to get Mass. ASA on the right track and working to the good of all of our clients. Ask questions, it gets everyone thinking!
Every day, millions of lives are shaped with a softball and a little open space.

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For more information, visit ResponsibleSports.com/Softball and the join the movement today!
The roster and schedule for the 2010 USA Softball Women’s National Team, which will kick off the season with exhibition games in Ohio, June 16-17, is now set! The team consists of 14 members from the 2009 USA Softball National Team who helped capture the Canada Cup and World Cup of Softball Gold Medals during 2009.

In addition to the 14 returnees, 2004 Olympic Champion and 2008 Olympic Silver Medalist Jessica Mendoza (Camarillo, Calif.) makes her return to USA Softball after taking a year off for the birth of her child. Eileen Canney (Paradise, Calif.) makes her first-ever appearance on a USA Softball roster while Tammy Williams (Roscoe, Mo.) is in her first year as a National Team member after representing the USA at the Pan American Qualifier last year.

The schedule of events starts with two exhibition games, June 16 at Thurman Munson Stadium in Canton, Ohio and June 17 at Brookside Park in Ashland, Ohio. The two exhibition games will feature a matchup of the USA Softball Women’s National Team and the USA Futures Team (roster to be announced at a later date). Go to http://www.ohioasasoftball.org for more information on the exhibition games.

Less than a year after winning the Pan American Qualifier in Maracay, Venezuela, USA Softball will head back to Venezuela to defend their World Championship at the ISP World Championships in Caracas, Venezuela. The World Championship is June 21-July 3 with USA looking for their ninth Gold Medal.

Canada will next play host to the USA at the Canadian Open Fast Pitch International Championship, July 7-11, in Surrey, B.C. and exhibition games in Whitehorse, Yukon, July 13-14.

The USA will bring it home for its fans, July 22-26, with the World Cup of Softball 5. See next page for more info! The World Cup is one of the premier events in International Softball and will bring together 2008 Olympic Gold Medalist Japan, Canada, USA Futures and three-time Olympic Gold Medalists USA. A complete schedule of events can be found at http://www.usasoftball.com/news.asp?uid=5415.

The final event on the schedule will be the Japan Cup, August 3-9, in Sendai City, Japan. The USA will look to defend their title after defeating Japan 2-0 in last year’s Japan Cup Championship Game.

For the most up to date information on the USA Softball 2010 Women’s National Team and all teams competing for the USA, log on to www.usasoftball.com. Fans can also keep up with the action by becoming a fan on Facebook at www.facebook.com/asausasoftball/ and Twitter at www.twitter.com/asausasoftball/.
ST. JOSEPH’S HERITAGE PARK NAMED 2009 ASA SOFTBALL COMPLEX OF THE YEAR

The Heritage Park Softball Complex in St. Joseph, Mo., was selected as the 2009 ASA Complex of the Year presented by Stabilizer Solutions Ballyard Products by the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America. In addition to receiving the award, the Heritage Park Softball Complex received approximately $2,000 in field maintenance products from Stabilizer Solutions.

“Congratulations to Heritage Park for receiving the 2009 ASA Complex of the Year Award,” said Stabilizer Solutions President Jon Hubbs. “Stabilizer Solutions is proud to partner with the ASA on this award for the fourth consecutive year. It is an honor to be able to recognize one of the top ASA softball facilities in the nation and encourage others to strive for this award.”

Previous award winners are the Twin Creeks Softball Complex in Woodstock, Ga., in 2008, and Freedom Ridge Park Complex in Ridgeland, Miss., in 2007. The Field of Dreams Complex in Las Cruces, N.M., won the inaugural 2006 award.

“This prestigious award from the ASA and Stabilizer Solutions validates the efforts of the staff which operates the Heritage Park Softball Complex,” St. Joseph’s Senior Recreation Supervisor Mike Halloran said. “This park which has hosted numerous state, regional and national championship events will use this designation to attract and retain quality championship events. Each and every person associated with Heritage Park, from the maintenance, concession, administration and volunteer staffs will cherish this award.”

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

“One of the original goals of Heritage Park since its opening in 2003, is to try to make it better each day, each month and especially each year,” Halloran said. “The staff prides itself on keeping the facility, especially the playing fields in great shape on a daily basis. Along with the manicured grounds, treating each and every visitor to the complex with the utmost in kindness, courtesy and respect is of the utmost importance to each and every staff person and volunteer.”

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

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

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

ABOUT ASA

The Amateur Softball Association, founded in 1933, is the National Governing Body of softball in the United States and a member of the United States Olympic Committee. The ASA has become one of the nation’s largest sports organizations and now sanctions competition in every state through a network of 77 local associations. The ASA has grown from a few hundred teams in the early days to over 210,000 teams today, representing a membership of more than three million. For more information on the ASA, visit www.asasoftball.com.
Raymon Sheppard never played softball or even sports growing up. However he has two daughters who mean the world to him and wanted something better for them in the realm of softball. So in 2006, he put up $10,000 of his own money and with an abandoned city park and lots of help from friends and sponsors, Sheppard began a league that would help girls become not only better softball players, but also better people creating the Tennessee’s Clarksville Girls Softball Association (CGSA), an ASA fast pitch league.

“Our overall goal has been to spread the word about ASA fast pitch and to help other leagues incorporate the values that we possess,” said Sheppard on what his league is based on. “1.) It’s all about the girls. 2.) Learn first, win later! 3.) Fairness in teams 4.) Give back!!”

Softball in Clarksville, which is in middle Tennessee, was ran by Little League, USFA and USSSA, all of which Sheppard felt weren’t best for girls softball. Sheppard’s goal was to help girls, in the local community, to gain more knowledge of the game of softball with a league specially designed just for girls.

It wasn’t an easy task as there was a lot of opposition by supporters of Little League, which was all some people knew at the time. They overcame these challenges and started the first year with 24 teams that ranged in age from 5-18.

The league is designed around learning and competition. Every year there is a draft where players are ranked and assigned to teams in a balanced way so that teams are not “stacked” therefore creating fair competition.

“When we started the league, we wanted to do what was best for the girls. The league they were playing in wasn’t set up for girl’s. Everyone was against us at first, but once we got the word out we were doing this for the betterment of the girls, more people got involved,” said Sheppard who is now the District 7 Junior Olympic Commissioner.

“Once we got the first year “bugs” out, we emerged into a league that people come from adjoining counties to play. We have girls driving 75 miles daily to both practices and games. In this economy, that means a lot to us and I think shows that we have a product that people will spend their time on.”

The league partners with Austin Peay State University in order to get clinics and coaching from college players and staff. Season standings are eliminated at the end of the season in order for the season scholarship was named after a young ball player, who many in the league had played with in years past, and passed away from a rare form of cancer.

“She was an inspiration to us all because she never gave up and had a positive attitude until the day she passed. We followed her lead and didn’t give up in order to make the league what it is today,” said Sheppard. “There are some girls who will go on and play softball in college but there are also those who will be done in high school. We want to make sure both are honored.”

Sheppard is currently coaching several softball teams and continuing to represent ASA as he is a firm believer that it is the best organization for softball. Through his efforts and those around him, he has taken an area that formerly had no ASA presence to now hundreds of girls playing ASA, and even more importantly playing the right way.

For more information on the league, log onto www.clarksvillegirlsoftball.clubs.com.
MEMBER SPOTLIGHT STORY

One of the greatest perks of working at the ASA National Office is hearing the inspiring stories from our players, coaches, umpires and fans. We received an email from 16-year-old Jessica LoBianco (Kings Park, N.Y.) who has been playing softball almost her entire life and currently plays centerfield for the Long Island Bandits 18U Gold, as well as the Kings Park Varsity Softball team. She hopes to play Division I Softball upon graduation in 2011 and shared with us an essay she wrote for her English class. We have a feeling our readers will relate!

You step out of your car, onto the damp cement. You hear a car door slam here and there in the distance. Then you slam your own. You get your bag out of the trunk and you see the rest of your teammates pulling up in their Toyotas and Hondas, getting their stuff out of their cars like you just did.

You all line up at the gate to enter the park. Everyone is talking, not quietly, but not loud enough to hear what’s being said. You giggle with your friends about some guy you just saw walk by. The team starts walking as you get butterflies in your stomach. No matter how many times you’ve done this or played here or seen these people, you still get a little nervous at the beginning.

You finally get to the dirt diamond; the outfield grass is still a little damp from the morning dew. The lines are fresh, perfect in fact. Everyone makes sure to hang their bags on the fence, take their bats and helmets out. They lay out all their equipment perfectly on the chipping wood bench, just for everything to get dirty in the next 2 hours.

You hear the coaches talking, making sure to be quiet so no one else can hear what they’re saying. They glance and point a few times at two or three players. You try to read their lips, but you can’t quite make them out. You turn your head to your team who has already started stretching. Sprinting to join them, you stretch quickly. You hear voices and laughs, insults and compliments.

You can’t help but look at the other team on the opposite side of the field, doing almost the exact things you are. You’ve finished warming up and the team is just fooling around now. You hear the ump yell “coaches, bring ’em in!” The sound of cleats on the dirt, now in the dugout. Everyone’s huddled in, listening to the coach shout out the lineup.

It’s funny how some people know the line up already, and start preparing to get up to bat or go out in the field. “Home or away?” one girl yells. “AWAY!” shouts the coach back at her, meaning for the whole team to hear him.

The home team takes the field, as the pitcher throws her first warm up pitches. You hear a few pops of the catcher’s glove, with a few seconds inbetween.

“BALLS IN, COMIN’ DOWN!” the catcher yells to her teammates. The ball is thrown around the horn and then back to the pitcher. They huddle at the mound saying words that no one is meant to hear except them. You see a few smiles in there somewhere.

“BATTER UP!” yells the ump to the leadoff batter already walking towards the plate...

— By Jessica LoBianco
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# 2010 ASA COMPLEX SCHEDULE

It's another jammed packed schedule as the ASA Hall of Fame Complex will play host to over 25 events during the 2010 season. The season kicked off on March 6th with the Preview which featured collegiate teams Louisville, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State and Nevada and will close the weekend of Oct. 14-16 with the OSSAA 5A-6A Fast Pitch State Championships. Those returning visitors will notice a new addition to the complex as a building in the outfield is currently in construction. The building will feature meeting space, ranging from one large room to four smaller rooms, as well as an umpire room. There will also be restrooms for the spectators that sit in the outfield. Check out our website at www.asasoftball.com for schedule information and we look forward to seeing you at the ball park!

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<th>March</th>
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2/11/2010 Schedule subject to change at any time during the season. Call (405) 424-5266 to check on events.
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**What do you on a daily basis?**

I implement maintenance practices for our four-field facility. I also schedule cultural practices around events, devise maintenance strategies to accommodate for a demanding schedule (demanding on the turf) and maintain the turf equipment that provides for our turf.

**What is your favorite part of your job?**

My favorite part is working beside a great nucleus of field crew staff who are dedicated to doing the best job they can.

**What has been your favorite experience with the ASA?**

My favorite experience was watching Jonathon Winston dance in the pitching circle before a "pink out" game just a few days after his mother Cynthia was declared free of cancer. (Cynthia works at ASA in accounting and was honored for being cancer free at the 2009 World Cup of Softball pink game.)

**Were you involved with softball before joining the National Office staff?**

I was a high school softball Coach for 10 years and was the Sports Turf Superintendent at the Olympic Softball Stadium in Athens, Greece for the 2004 Olympic Games.

**What do you on a daily basis?**

My main job is processing payments. I invoice work orders and do the reconciliation of credit card settlement report. Right now, I’m mailing out ACE packets.

**What is your favorite part of your job?**

My favorite part on my job is the people I work with. They make coming to work a joy.

**What has been your favorite experience with the ASA?**

One of my good memories at ASA is one year when we had a office softball team that played in a league here in the city. It was a lot of fun. And yes, we won a few games.

**Were you involved with softball before joining the National Office staff?**

We didn’t have softball at my high school so I started playing softball with some ladies at my church. We joined a church league. I later played co-ed ball with my husband.

**What do you like to do when you’re not working?**

Playing with my grandbaby is No. 1. I like hanging out with my family playing games, riding horses, watching movies and fishing. But I live on a farm and that take’s most of my time.
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ASA REPRESENTS AT A'G

With all the hours spent on softball, it would be hard to imagine an ASA member volunteering a week out of their time to volunteer somewhere else. However, for four ASA members, they take a week out of their busy schedules each year to volunteer at the AT&T National Pro-Am in Pebble Beach, Calif. One of the volunteers is even within one year of earning his 40-year service award.

Sam Ducato, Dick Gulmon, John Miller and Mick Renneisen have volunteered a combined 65 years at the Pro-Am with Miller leading the pack with 39 years. Miller, Commissioner of NorCal ASA from 1999-2008, is currently the Assistant Director of Membership Services at the National Office. A native of Pacific Grove, Calif., Miller began working the Pro-Am in high school. The sense of community service that he possesses, evident through his time working for the city of Pacific Grove, was what got him into volunteering.

“There was always a sense of community service that I had growing up in Pacific Grove. One of my father’s good friends knew that my father had been a volunteer at the Bing Crosby Tournament (which eventually changed its name to the AT&T Pro-Am). My father passed away when I was a year and a half so I never really knew him. Not knowing your father, you try and emulate him and this was a way I could do that. I have a money clip that my dad received from working the Bing Crosby and I knew working the tournament was something we could have in common.”

Miller’s first task was carrying the leader boards, of which he did two years in high school. In fact those two years he was paid $10 a day to carry the boards which is why he only has 39 years of service and not 41, since he received compensation. From that first tournament where he carried the leader boards to 2010 where he was the “Captain of Admissions”, Miller has not missed one single year totaling 41 years of volunteering at the AT&T Pro-Am. He is now responsible for on-site ticket sales and is responsible for selling tickets to the spectators who arrive via a bus to the event. Having spent time in many roles, he jokes that of all the people he has assisted in getting volunteer jobs at the event, he is still the most unglamorous.

“I have all my friends set up in great jobs. They get to work the hospitality rooms, see all the golfers while I am usually so far away, I don’t even get to see the event,” joked Miller, who also happens to be an avid golfer. “Last year my boss Craig Cress was texting me every morning letting me know who the leader was. He was on the east coast and would get up and watch Sportscenter then text me and let me know how everyone was doing. I usually don’t get to see much golf.”

His first recruit was ASA Board of Directors representative from Bloomington, Ind. Renneisen, who had volunteered at the Kemper Open in Maryland and enjoyed it so much he was looking for another opportunity to volunteer. In 2001 at the ASA National Council Meeting, Miller or “Mr. Logo” as Renneisen referred to him was wearing a golf shirt with the AT&T event logo on it. Renneisen mentioned that he would be interested and a week after the Council Meeting called Miller to see if it would still be possible for him and his wife Brenda to volunteer. Miller made a call and the Renneisens left Indiana and headed to California in February of 2002 to volunteer at their first of what would be nine tournaments worked. As a benefit of knowing the “Captain of the Pacific Grove admissions gate crew”, Renneisen and Brenda were hooked up with one
of the best volunteer jobs, working in “contestant hospitality.” They work the tents on the Spyglass Golf Course, where players, caddies and celebrities can get a beverage, snack or sandwich while they are waiting to tee off.

“We were assigned to Spyglass #5 our first couple of years. What a spot! It’s a par 3 parallel to the Pacific Ocean! You really can’t beat the view where we would sometimes see whales migrating down the coast,” said Renneisen. “There have been some memorable stories from various celebrity and player interactions over the years. Suffice it to say, we can tell you who is naughty and who is nice!”

Three years ago, Renneisen was promoted to “contestant refreshment captain” at Spyglass. A typical day includes taking inventory, distributing food and beverage to the four tents, maintaining the inventory throughout the tournament and doing it all again the next day. The new role as “captain” calls for longer days beginning at 6 a.m. and ending around 4 p.m. Despite the long hours, time away from family and work, the time volunteered is worth the camaraderie and experience.

“Having had much longer days conducting national softball tournaments, the golf gig doesn’t seem near as long or difficult! I guess you could say the ASA National Tournament experience prepares you for anything!” said Renneisen. “We all look forward to the opportunity to spend some time together, play some golf, see a beautiful part of the country, get out of the cold (Dick and I) and see some great golf each year at this event. None of this experience would have been possible if not for the relationships that have been formed through our ASA connection! It’s been a great experience for all of us. I know I look forward to it every year!”

North Dakota At-Large Player Rep and ASA Board of Directors representative Rep Gulmon just finished his seventh year as a volunteer at the Pro-Am. Gulmon helps Renneisen distribute product to the four volunteer tents then reflection.
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Virginia Moose Association To Host Special Olympics Softball Event

ASA President Andy Dooley wears many hats of which one includes being the Virginia Moose Association’s Sports Chairman / Int’l Sports Committee. If you know Dooley, you know his passion for softball is matched by his passion for the Moose organization along with Special Olympics and has done a wonderful job at bringing them all together.

The VMA is in its 17th year of hosting one of the most anticipated tournaments of the year for the Special Olympics, the Annual VMA Invitational Softball Tournament. The event will be held May 22-23 in Bedford, Va., and will include an unforgettable opening ceremony, great softball competition, food and a dance complete with paratroopers and fireworks! For more information on this event or to see how you can help go to http://www.specialolympicsva.org/.

JO Workshop A Success

More than 120 Junior Olympic commissioners and other representatives from local Amateur Softball Associations (ASA) across the country convened in Oklahoma City Feb. 5-6 for the 2010 Junior Olympic (JO) Workshop sponsored by Bollinger and Markel Insurance. Members of the 76 local ASA associations took part in a series of instructional and information sessions on youth softball hosted by the ASA National Office.

The sessions included presentations from Bollinger Insurance, the official insurance program of ASA, and Major League Baseball’s Pitch, Hit & Run (PHR), which recently partnered with the ASA to activate the National girls’ softball division of the PHR competition. There were also sessions on the new Register ASA system for administrators, coaches and tournament directors, a session on the Achieve, Certify, Educate (ACE) Coaching Certification program, a tour of the newly renovated National Softball Hall of Fame and Museum and the ASA Hall of Fame Stadium and the reception for the JO service awards.

Ten JO Commissioners were honored for their service including Don Smiley of the Greater San Joaquin ASA leading the way with a 20 year award.

Saturday concluded with a presentation on tournament bracketing for JO events, recognition of the 2009 ASA Complex of the Year presented by Stabilizer Solutions Ballyard Products winner Heritage Park Softball Complex in St. Joseph, Mo., regional breakouts and open discussion as well.

College Corner Underway

ASA/USA Softball is in its eighth season of releasing the ESPN.com/USA Softball Collegiate Top 25 Poll and this year the 2009 NCAA Champion Washington Huskies are staying at the top of their game as they have been the No. 1 team in all four polls so far this season as well as in the pre-season.

Also as a part of the College Corner, ASA/USA Softball selects its Player of the Week. Click here to find out all the winners of this prestigious honor.

This all leads up to the NCAAs Women’s College World Series, June 3-9, when the top eight teams in the Nation will battle it out for the National Championship title. At the Opening Ceremonies of the WCWS, ASA will announce its USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year, the highest honor in women’s softball. Follow College Corner throughout the season by clicking here!

Jennie Finch and Matt Palazzo Named USA Softball Athletes of the Year

Jennie Finch (La Mirada, Calif.) and Matt Palazzo (Des Moines, Iowa) were named the USA Softball Female and Male Athlete of the year, respectively, for their accomplishments during the 2009 season.

Finch saw time as both a pitcher and at first base on defense and made an impact at the plate on offense. Finch’s hits in the Championship Game of both the Japan Cup and Canada Cup secured the USA victory. She was voted the Japan Cup MVP after she not only threw a one-hitter to defending Olympic Gold Medalist Japan but also drove in the only two runs scored, with a double, to help lead the team to a 2-0 victory.

In the Championship game of the Canada Cup with two outs left in the seventh, Finch hit a walk-off single that would push a run across the plate and give the United States a 3-2 victory.

Offensively, Finch was in the Top five in all three events in batting average with
a summer average of .447. Her best event was at the World Cup of Softball where Finch hit .500 with a home run and three runs scored.

During the summer of 2009, she made an appearance in all 18 games with 17 starts with three home runs and hits. As a pitcher, she was 5-0 with a 0.54 ERA and 43 strikeouts. Finch allowed only two earned runs in 26.0 innings pitched.

Palazzo helped lead the USA Softball Men's National team to a fourth-place finish at the ISF Men's World Championships in Saskatoon, Canada, with a 7-3 record. He led the team with a .444 average (12-for-27) and was the only player to record more than one home run with four homers.

At the plate, he contributed 11 RBI, scoring nine runs. He was near perfect on defense, making only one error.

**Border Battle Set to Take Place July 24, 2010**

The return of the highly successful 'Border Battle' men’s slow pitch game featuring Team USA against the Canadian Men's Slow Pitch National team is slated for July 24, 2010 at 3 p.m. during the World Cup of Softball 5 at ASA's Hall of Fame Complex. This special event returns after making large strides in 2009.

Both teams will arrive in Oklahoma City on Wednesday, July 21 and have a series of exhibition games on Thursday and Friday before the Border Battle game returns on Saturday. A home run exhibition will also be held in conjunction with the planned World Cup of Softball 5 scheduled for July 22-26. Further announcements surrounding player and umpire selections along with playing rules and other event details will be announced at a later date.

In 2009, Team USA was down 16-8 against Canada going into the fourth inning but battled back to take home the victory 30-23. The inaugural Border Battle recorded a 0.7 as a standalone game reaching over 650,000 households on ESPN.

**Once a Softball Player, Always a Softball Player**

USA Softball Women's National Team Head Coach Jay Miller received an email and knew immediately he had to make it happen.

The email was about Jordyn Niemiec, a nine-year-old from California, who in late 2009 was paralyzed from the waist down in a car accident. An incredible athlete, student, daughter and friend, Niemiec was making improvements with some feeling in her feet but her spirits were still broken. Amanda Grable, who sent the letter, knew that a trip to the Olympic Training Center for USA Softball Tryouts would do the trick.

The team welcomed Jordyn with open arms. She watched practice, chatted with Olympians, met at home plate for a celebration and even got to dine at the Olympic Training Center's cafeteria surrounded by the best athletes in the World.

ASA/USA Softball wishes her the best of luck and hopes to see her again soon!
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As the National Governing Body of Softball, it is the ASA’s responsibility to ensure that our coaches achieve a certain level of understanding of what their duties are as coach of a youth softball team. The ACE Certification videos and the ACE Certification Manual are practical guides to the everyday situations you will encounter as a youth softball coach.

Looking for the Best in Softball Instruction?

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Q&A WITH EILEEN CANNEY

Right handed pitcher Eileen Canney is the newest member of the USA Softball program. Never having played in the USA uniform before, even on the junior level, the Northwestern alum received the call to duty following the January tryouts at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista, Calif. Canney, 25, sat down with Balls and Strikes on a break from action in Japan to talk about the National Team and more.

B&S: Congratulations on making the Women’s National Team. You have never played on a USA Softball team before, even as a junior. How exciting was it when you found out you made the team?
EC: Thank you. I am so excited. It truly is a dream come true. I remember sitting down with my mom and dad when I was 11 years old and talking to them about my dreams and what I wanted to accomplish with softball. Playing for the USA team was at the top of my list and I think I am still speechless about it all. When I read the list of USA players the morning it was published, I couldn’t take my eyes off it. It’s so gratifying to know that all the hard work and time, both myself and everyone around me put in throughout the years, has allowed my dream to come to fruition.

B&S: What are you looking forward to most?
EC: This is a hard question to answer. As corny as it sounds, my answer is that I am looking forward to everything. The moment it will probably all hit me will be when I put on my USA uniform for the first time. I remember watching the team when I was younger and hoping that one day I would be given this amazing opportunity. It is such a great honor to be on the field with so many great players and represent our country.

B&S: Do you have any idea of what to expect?
EC: Yes and no. With regards to the softball part of my expectations, I feel as though I have some grasp of what the competition will be like. I have been playing in the National Pro Fastpitch (NPF) league for three seasons now, and that league has some of the best players I have faced in my softball career. I’ll also have half of a Japanese season under my belt, so I’ll have a better sense of international competition as well. However, for the rest of it I am completely naive. I have heard stories from my teammates about what it was like to step on the field for the first time representing our country; hearing the National Anthem; and play with and against the best softball players in the world. I don’t know if it’s possible to prepare myself for these situations. And, to be honest, I don’t really want to try. I think this is one of those things that will be better if I live in the moment.

B&S: One of the big events that you’re participating in is the World Championship. We’ve heard that you’re actually leaving the event early. Can you tell us a little bit about that?
EC: The day after the World Championships in Venezuela, my older sister Heather will be getting married. It took a lot of planning and help with the travel arrangements, but we ended up working it out so I can attend both. I am flying from Venezuela to California on a red eye flight right after the championships end. I land in San Francisco around noon and will drive to the wedding which starts at 4 pm. It is going to be a crazy couple of days! Does anyone have any tips on how to change into a bridesmaid’s dress while driving?

B&S: Did you kind of laugh that you finally made the team—the one year your sister decides to have a summer wedding?
EC: Yeah, it’s a little funny how things unraveled this summer. It definitely complicated things having them a day apart, but everything worked out. I was lucky enough to find a flight that would allow me to experience both the wedding and the entirety of the World Championship. These are two things that I have dreamed about being a part of since I was little, and I am so excited that I get to do both. It is going to be one of the best summers of my life.

B&S: You’ve been invited to tryouts before but didn’t make the cut. Did you ever doubt yourself?
EC: While I will never doubt myself, it is never easy to face rejection. I have learned a lot about myself from those moments. They made me think about my weaknesses and what I could improve to be successful at the next level. I continued to work on my skills in the NPF, until I would get another chance to prove myself. I think that these challenging moments have put me in a position mentally and physically to work through adversity both in softball and in life.

B&S: What advice would you give to young players who hope to play USA Softball someday?
EC: The best advice I have for young girls who hope to play USA someday is to never stop trying to achieve your dream. There will be obstacles that come up throughout your life that will slow down and complicate the path to your dream. What you must realize is that there are many different paths that will take you to the same destination, and sometimes it just requires finding a different way there.

B&S: You’re currently in Japan. What are you over there for?
EC: I am in Japan right now playing for a company called Denso that plays in the Japanese Professional League. Each team is allowed two foreign players, and Tammy Williams and I are on Denso. We have been training hard every day, and sometimes twice a day for our season that starts April 10. It’s great having one of my best friends and long-time teammate here on Denso with me. So far, this has been a great experience to grow as both a softball player and a person. It’s an incredibly surreal experience to live in a foreign country, and I am so happy I have been given this opportunity.

B&S: How do you like Japan?
EC: Japan is such a beautiful place! We play in tournaments that are in the mountains and countryside, and love to go exploring when we aren’t playing games. Some other Americans that are playing in Japan this spring and fall are Monica Abbott, Natasha Watley, Katie Burkhart, Jenny Topping, Stacey Nelson, and Lauren Lupinetti. Some of us live close together and try to meet up and travel around Japan on our off days. Tammy and I are beginning to learn some basic Japanese and trying to communicate with our team, even though it normally ends up in a game of charades. I feel extremely lucky to be part of such a great team and to experience the Japanese culture for five months this year.
YOU ASKED, WE ANSWERED

Submitted by Amanda via Facebook
Where can we see the Women’s National Team play in 2010?
In the United States, there are two opportunities to see the 2010 USA Softball Women’s National Team. The first is during exhibition games June 16-17 in Ohio. Tickets are available for those games at www.ohioasasoftball.org. The second is at the World Cup of Softball 5 at the ASA Hall of Fame Stadium, July 22-26, in Oklahoma City, Okla. Tickets are now on sale at www.softballoutlet.com. Outside of the U.S., the team will be in Canada, Japan and Venezuela.

Submitted by Rick via Facebook
Will there be a Border Battle in 2010?
Yes, there will be a 2010 Border Battle featuring the USA Softball Men’s Slow Pitch National Team and Canada. It is scheduled for July 24 at 3 p.m. between the World Cup of Softball games featuring USA Futures and Japan at noon and the USA and Japan at 7 p.m.

Submitted by Sara via Facebook
How do we get tickets to the World Cup of Softball?
All session reserved ($75) and all session general admission ($40) tickets are on sale now by calling 1-800-654-8337 or by visiting www.softballoutlet.com/shop_tickets.asp. Also on sale now is the Ultimate Fan Zone package ($275), which includes a meal with Team USA on Sunday evening as well as an autograph session with the team that is only open to Ultimate Fan Zone ticket holders. The Ultimate Fan Zone also includes an all-session reserved seat in the premier section of ASA Hall of Fame Stadium for every game of the World Cup, a personalized replica USA jersey, and free parking. Single session tickets will go on sale at a later date.

Submitted by Robert via Facebook
Why is there not more international softball on TV?
The World Cup of Softball, which is the only international event the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) of America/USA Softball oversees, has consistent television coverage. In 2010, all of the USA games and the Border Battle are expected to be shown on the ESPN family of networks. For international events held outside of the USA, please direct your question to the International Softball Federation (ISF) as they oversee television rights for those events.

Submitted by Claudia via Facebook
What can we, as a league and community, do to help get softball back in the Olympics? That is my 9-year-old’s dream. I want to do whatever I can to make it possible.
The most important thing is to keep having people play softball. Even though the Olympics are not an option at the present time, there are plenty of opportunities, including ASA Softball, collegiate softball and playing on the USA Softball Women’s National Team. If our sport continues to grow in the U.S. and around the world, inclusion into the Olympic Programme will be an easier case to make. For those who are not playing, it is important that they continue supporting softball by attending games and watching the sport when it is on TV.

Submitted by various
I am having trouble with the Register ASA system. Who can I contact for help?
To receive help with Register ASA, please first contact your local association with the information listed on http://www.asasoftball.com. Each of the local commissioners as well as other leaders within their organizations have received training on the new program. If they are unable to assist you, they will help you get into contact with someone at the National Office who can. It is important that you start at the local level as each local association as different fees and regulations.

Submitted by Tom via Facebook
Who votes for the USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Week?
USA Softball does not release the names or affiliations of the 25 voting members, even to other voting members, to preserve the integrity of the poll. However, 22 of the 25 members are Division I college coaches representing 10 conferences while three are individuals involved with softball oriented organizations or publications. The panel stays the same throughout the season but changes from year to year. For the Collegiate Player of the Week, we have a separate internal ASA panel.

Submitted by Joe via Facebook
Is there any chance that the ASA will start banning softballs, like they do bats? I know in our leagues there is lots of discussion from players about “doctored balls” and the differences between balls that are all stamped 44/375.
Yes, currently we are reviewing softballs that will be non-approved for ASA play beginning this season. We are also currently investigating reports that balls are being re-stitched. Please visit www.asasoftball.com for future updates.

Submitted by Stephen via Facebook
Why are some National Championships in the east held so late? They run through August 8 but usually finish a week earlier.
The time frame for ASA National Championships is voted on by the ASA Council and these date options are listed in the ASA Code under Article 509. The ASA Code can be found online under the ABOUT ASA tab on the left-hand side.

Submitted by John via Facebook
Is it true Softball Nation bought or trying to buy ASA? I would like to know for my softball leagues.
Any rumors that ASA will be purchased by another organization are untrue. Since 1933, the ASA has been the leader in the softball world, and that lead role is something we plan on continuing. The ASA is the only softball organization recognized by both the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and the International Softball Federation (ISF).
As a member of the Oklahoma City’s Adventure District, the Amateur Softball Association is pleased to join forces with other Adventure District partners for Live Earth Oklahoma, a two day eco-festival, when runners in the April 18 Dow Run for Water start the 6K race and cross the finish line at the ASA Hall of Fame Complex. The Live Earth Oklahoma – Run for Water festival, April 17-18, will be the largest eco-statement in Oklahoma’s history, and coincides with a worldwide event of the same name.

The Dow Run for Water, is a series of 6K run/walks (the average distance women and children walk everyday to secure water) taking place over the course of 24 hours in 192 countries, to ignite a massive global movement to help solve the water crisis. Registration for the Oklahoma City race, which starts at 9 a.m., is $25 online through Active.com until April 15 and $30 until thereafter. Each participant will receive an organic T-shirt and a virtual goodie bag, which eliminates waste. A kids 1 mile run/walk will also be held at the Oklahoma City Zoo at 1:30 p.m. Saturday with a registration cost of $10 (by April 15).

The race will begin outside the gates of ASA Hall of Fame Complex and conclude on the stadium field. The participants will finish the race running around the three fields before entering in the main stadium where they will be able to see themselves on the jumbotron.

The purpose of the Live Earth Oklahoma – Run for Water festival is to bring awareness of how precious our natural resources are, namely water. The educational and entertaining indoor/outdoor Eco-Village, held throughout the Oklahoma City Adventure District, will showcase companies and organizations that are involved in reducing waste and pollution, educate spectators on energy and alternative energy resources and supply eco-friendly products and services. The educational components are designed to bring focus and attention to issues that face both individuals and companies, as we pursue our lives. While water scarcity and resources are a focus, the weekend of events includes enlightening and entertaining conference sessions over a broad range of topics and a music festival featuring an evening concert, produced by the longest tenured and successful concert producer in Oklahoma, Howard Pollack.


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