

Publisher's Comments...

The USSSA has never been sheepish about pioneering radical playing rule changes to the game of slow pitch softball. The eleven inch softball for women's and mixed play, 65' bases, 300' fences, home run restrictions and the three ball-two strike count are just a few of the innovative changes the association introduced to softball that have become foundational to the game.

Last fall, the USSSA was at it again. In an effort to bring more safety to the pitching position, they adopted a new pitching area, which is now the width of the 24" pitcher's plate and up to six feet behind it.

As with many other progressive rules that have been adopted by USSSA down through the years, there were many predictions of doom and gloom. Would the rule be interpreted the same from one area to another, or even from one umpire to another? If umpires were already struggling to tell whether a pitcher was on the rubber, how are they going to determine whether he or she is in an imaginary pitching area? After pausing once, would pitchers be able to run up through the box and release the ball without pausing again? And do we really need to add additional game management stress on our umpires?

Areas of the country where the rule had been adopted on a local level, like Tennessee and South Carolina, told the rest of the nation not to worry. They had used this rule for years and it had gained wide acceptance by both teams and umpires.

But after nearly two months of tournament play and four weeks of league action, the prevailing sentiment among some area park directors and teams is that while the game is now safer, it is also much more confusing.

"Doing anything to give the pitcher an advantage is a good thing," remarks Pastime Park manager David Herbert. "But the rule is poorly written in the book and open to a lot of interpretation. And while the complaining hasn't been that bad, it is just another rule to argue and complain about."

"I'm for any rule that promotes safety in the game," echoes Bill Chard, manager of Riverstar Park. "Initially, I was concerned that the change left a lot of pitcher's actions up to interpretation. And when USSSA headquarters sent out their interpretation of the rule, it was different from what was written in the book."

"Pitchers needed something to help protect them," says Troy Ison, manager of the DeHaan & Bach/Trailblazers USSSA "D" team. Ison says he was concerned about how umpires were going to be able to enforce the pitching area when there were no lines to go by. And while pitchers haven't gotten "comfortable" yet throwing from the farther distance, when they do, Ison predicts they will "start challenging the rule."

Sentry Fire/APEX/LBYC manager Kevin Henn shares Ison's concerns. "Some pitchers are using the rule, but most are not as far as changing the game a whole lot. That hasn't come to pass...yet. But I think it will continue to gain in popularity once pitchers see how they can work it into their arsenal," says Henn.

"I was all for the rule when I first heard about it because of the safety issue. It gives pitchers the chance to take advantage of the extra room behind them. But the biggest concern in my mind is the interpretation of the rule from park to park and from umpire to umpire. I think it is unclear whether you need to pause after ceasing all motion, whether you can walk up and just release the ball, and how an umpire can determine if a pitcher is in an imaginary box. It adds more subjectivity to umpiring, and I think they have already had enough of that. Teams are starting to say, 'he has to pause,' or 'he's not in the box.' So it's adding pressure and intensity to the umpire's job," argues Henn. "I really do not think there has been enough clear instruction given to the umpires and park managers, and that is something that will need to be addressed so the rule can be enforced consistently.

"I still love the idea of safety," continues Henn. "I only hope pitchers use the rule for its original purpose rather than trying to use it as a way to try and trick batters and keep them off-guard. The main thing is that safety prevails, and as long as the game is safer, I think the rule is doing its job."

Riverstar's Bill Chard says that the rule "could be a good rule if we revise how it is written in the book.

"I was in South Carolina for a world tournament, and I liked how they used it there," recalls Chard. "They had a second pitching rubber and it took all the guess work out of it for the umpire and it was not a hazard at all. It worked really good."

Bob Owens, manager of Expressway Park, believes that "if the interpretations were in black and white in the rule book, it could be a good rule."

But right now, he says, confusion reigns among the players.

"We have no problem with our park teams, but teams from other areas are being told all different interpretations of when the presentation of the ball is required, which is stirring up controversy at the beginning of the game. That's never good, especially when you are doing what you've been told by the National Umpire-In-Chief."

Adding to the confusion, says Owens, are differing interpretations of the rule at the state and national level.

"The national interpretation of when the pause and presentation by the pitcher before releasing the ball is different than our state director's interpretation, and nothing is spelled out in black in white in the rule book."

The State Director is Scott Kuhnen of Dayton, who may be the biggest opponent to the rule in southern Ohio.

“My position is that pitcher safety is increased by changing the pitching distance from 50’ to 53’,” says Kuhnen. “In my opinion, the new rule introduces new challenges for umpires that are unwarranted. We have warned umpires that this is a game management issue more than anything else. They will need to ‘tune in’ just a little quicker and pay a little more attention to a variety of details than they had to worry about previously. And they already had plenty to worry about.”

Kuhnen believes this rule may go the way of another rule: the unlimited arc adopted by the ASA in the mid-seventies.

“It lasted just one year because because of the amount of stress and contention that it caused on the diamond,” says Kuhnen. “I believe we have the possibility that this new pitching rule will also last one year and then be abandoned for a rule which returns the pitching distance to a fixed point, but moves that distance to a safer position.

“The rule is uniquely difficult to both teach and to explain,” he continues. “We have had more questions than we should for a rule change. In my opinion, a good rule is one which is easy to understand, easy to explain, easy to interpret and easy to enforce. The more subjective judgment we bring into a rule, the more both the umpires and the players will complain about it.”

What’s Your Gripe by Ron Jeffers

For years Mark Linnemann has provided me with the same list of topics for me to choose to write my article from, and in my own hard-headed way I have always ignored the list and wrote about whatever was on my mind at the time. Well, after being in intensive care two different times, and having long stays in the hospital for over four weeks in the past few months, I have decided to at least try and write about the topics on his list. It is now or never, because I am smart enough to know my time on this earth is very limited now.

My blood pressure was 43 over 20 when I went into a coma the last time, and they had to cut my neck open to get to my heart through my carotid artery. I have blood clots in every vein in my body, including three in my lungs now. My Greenfield Filter is totally clogged with blood clots, and I struggle to breathe, so I either write about the subjects on Mark’s list now or forget them.

Well, here is his first topic that has been on his monthly correspondence to me for far too many years to remember.

Ten Tips To Make You a Better Umpire

1. Never call a runner out until the fielder shows you the ball, and he or she voluntarily removes the ball from their glove. This will prevent the stupid Out/Safe call many umpires make.
2. Position yourself whenever possible to where you have the ball, the runner, and the base he is trying to reach all in front of you, and never, ever turn your back on a live ball.
3. Study the playing rules every year, and read the rule book in its entirety before every season. This will give you tremendous confidence in yourself as an umpire.
4. When running out on fly balls hit near a foul line, always come to a complete stop, then immediately indicate if the ball is fair or foul. Only after this has been determined would you then make the out call after the ball has been voluntarily removed from the glove. The correct signal for a foul ball not caught is the dead ball signal of both hands held high above the head.
5. If you think a runner missed a base, he didn't. If you think a runner left a base too soon, he didn't. You must know the runner missed the base or left it too soon to call the runner out on appeal.
6. Never allow yourself to get in a position where you have to look across a base to see if the fielder's foot is in contact with the base. Only one of the four sides of a base are going to be important to you making your decision, so position yourself to where you can actually see the tag made or the fielders foot in contact with the base.
7. If after you take your position behind the catcher you cannot see all of home plate, move to where you can see all of the plate. Many umpires have to guess at many pitches because they set up too deep or too far behind the catcher. Umpires often need to set up in the slot or area between the batter and the catcher so they can see the entire plate area.
8. Do not humiliate a player with your calls or actions. If a batter swings and misses a pitch, simply make a quiet strike signal. Umpires need to know when to be emphatic with a call to sell it, and they need to know when to relax in the saddle, when everyone in the park knows the result of a play. Good umpires need to go unnoticed for the most part.
9. Do not talk to the spectators at any time prior to the game, during the game, or definitely not after the game. You can exchange pleasantries such as saying hello, but otherwise just shut up and umpire. The same rule applies to the umpire's conduct with the players. You are hired and placed there to umpire the game, and if you think trying to buddy up to the players will make them any nicer when a tumultuous situation arises, You are a fool!
10. Hustle, hustle, hustle every moment the ball is in play. When you can't hustle anymore, stop umpiring and get out of the game. Any umpire who does not hustle is a disgrace to the game he represents, and an embarrassment to himself.

That's my opinion, what's yours?

What's Your Gripe? By Ron Jeffers

Q. We played in one of the first tournaments of the year and the winds were unusually strong, even for early spring. The tournament director moved us to another park, and started the game over. We were in the 2nd inning when he decided to move the games. Shouldn't we have picked up from the point where we left off?

A. When the losing team has completed five times at bat, and a game is halted because of rain, lightning or a field too wet and unsafe to play on, the game is considered to be suspended. If it cannot be resumed in a reasonable time that day or night it is considered to be a complete game and the game is over with the winning team awarded the win.

If the same thing happens and the losing team has not completed five times at bat the game is simply washed out, and rescheduled to start again for the first pitch.

I have never ever heard of a game being moved from one field to another because the wind was too strong, but if you did, you would resume the game exactly where it was when you stopped play. You would not start the game over. This is a suspended game.

Q. Mr. Jeffers, in our final league game last October, we were tied for first place with another team and were playing them for the league title. Our team had the bases loaded with two outs in the top of the 7th and we were trailing by a run. Our batter hit a grounder deep in the hole between 2nd and 3rd, and the shortstop made a beautiful, backhanded stab and attempted to throw the batter out at 1st. The umpire called the batter safe, allowing the tying run to score. But then the other team appealed that he missed 1st base, and the umpire called him out! Worse, he ruled the run didn't score, which cost us the game and the league championship.

In the first place, how can the umpire call the batter safe if he missed 1st base? And once he calls him safe at 1st, how can the other team appeal. And secondly, why shouldn't the run count? That just made no sense to me since the run clearly crossed the plate and the umpire had called our batter safe.

A. When a batter-runner reaches first base before the ball reaches first base, the umpire is obliged to call the runner safe. Now if this batter-runner does in fact miss the base, and the defensive team makes a legal appeal, the umpire has to call the batter-runner out on appeal.

The batter-runner would then be ruled out, and the rules state NO run can score when the third out of any inning is the result of a force out or failure of the batter runner to reach first base safely.

I am sorry you had to lose your game in this manner, but the umpire was correct in his ruling.

Q. I was watching one of the Reds games on TV the other night when Adam Dunn was at bat. He clearly raised his hand in the air to signal he wanted time to be called, but the plate umpire either didn't see it or he elected to ignore it. The pitch was delivered, and fortunately for us the pitch was called a ball.

When a player asks or signals to any of the umpires for time to be called doesn't the umpire have an obligation to call time?

A. If a pitcher is taking an unreasonable time to deliver the pitch, after the batter is set to hit, or if some swirling wind or a hot dog wrapper would be blowing around home plate, the batter and umpire will agree to call time. You must remember, though, that players request time to be called, but only the umpire can grant time to be called.

Many times you will see the ball thrown into the infield, and some insecure infielder will immediately start waving his glove in the air and call "time." Just because he isn't confident in his ability to throw the ball to the pitcher does not mean I am going to help him and call "time" when it is not needed or appropriate for the situation.

Time cannot be called in a game when a player is hurt either. The umpire must wait till all action in the game has concluded, and then and only then can he stop action and call "time."

Remember, only the umpire can call time. Anyone can request it, but only the umpire can grant it.

Q. Ron, I was told that the Amateur Softball Association has now decided to start having baseball in their program in addition to softball. Is this true?

A. The ASA organization is always a few years behind the USSSA, and this has always driven me wild. USSSA's decision makers are light years ahead of the ASA brain trust, and ASA has suffered immensely for it.

Years ago USSSA saw softball was declining rapidly in team and umpire registrations in every association, so they did the intelligent thing and got into promoting a baseball tournament program. They started out last among the sixteen major baseball organizations, and now they are second in the world in baseball registrations. They now fill their complexes with huge baseball and softball tournaments using the same previously half filled facilities.

ASA stood by too bull-headed to make any change in their format, and now USSSA is light years ahead of them in what they like to do best. Make money for themselves.

Baseball was a perfect fit. They use the same facilities, and you can have a boys baseball tournament on half the fields and girls softball on the others, and the umpires are happy to work both.

ASA never wanted the word baseball brought up, even while they struggled to start a boys softball program, which incidentally has always been a big bust and money loser. Boys are never, ever going to play competitive softball in any numbers, so why would you not start a good baseball tournament for them. The USSSA organization was smart enough to see this, and now a decade later ASA says maybe we should do this too. Duh!

Some years ago when Pat Adkison was president of ASA there was not a single USSSA team in the state of Alabama, but on a recent trip I took to his home town I saw the city complex with four USSSA games going on at one time. Two were boys baseball and two were men's softball.

CRC News

CRC Summer Softball League Registration Begins May 7th; Fall Season Registration Begins In July by Ron Odenbeck

The Cincinnati Recreation Commission begins registration for the 2007 Summer Softball season on May 7th. Registration will continue until leagues are filled. Leagues will begin on Sunday, June 10th, or as soon as spring leagues are completed. Leagues are offered for Co-Rec and Men's teams, and all games in the summer season will be played at Schmidt fields.

The league fee for an eight game season is \$285 for the Sunday unlighted league and \$350 for all other leagues. The league fee includes umpire fees, bases and balls. The league fee is due at the time of registration. Your registration is not complete without the payment.

Applications And Payments

Applications and payments will be accepted at the CRC Athletic Office Monday through Friday from 8:00 a. m. until 4:30 p. m. Payment may be made with cash (in person only), check, money order or Visa/MasterCard. Credit card payments for applications that are faxed (352-1605) or submitted online (www.cincyrec.org) require that you phone the Athletic Division with the credit card number and expiration date to complete the registration process.

Refunds

No entry fees will be re-funded after league schedules have been completed unless the league supervisor is unable to place your team in one of the leagues. Teams withdrawing prior to completion of league schedules will be assessed a \$25 service charge for clerical and material fees.

Rosters

Rosters are due in the Athletics office before the first played game. Rosters and rule books are available on the web site.

League Packets

Packets must be picked up at the CRC Athletic of-fice prior to your first game. Schedules and rosters will be emailed out.

Advisory Committee

Anyone interested in serving on the email Advisory Committee please contact Ron Odenbeck at 352-1627. This is your chance to help CRC improve the softball program.

Fall Season

Fall season registration will begin in July.

Recreation programs and facilities are open to all citizens regardless of race, sex, color, religion, nationality or disability. CRC is an Equal Opportunity Employer and is committed to supporting the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please call if you require any special accommodations.

CRC Leagues To Offer USSSA World, National, State Tournament Berths

All Cincinnati Recreation Commission men's, women's, mixed couples and Black American leagues will again offer berths into USSSA championship tournaments in 2007.

Men's, women's and mix-ed leagues will offer berths into both State Champion-ship and Great Lakes Division National Championship Tournaments. Black American teams will be awarded World Tournament berths from the Sunday Salway leagues.

In men's, women's and mixed leagues, a berth into the Ohio USSSA State Championship will be a-warded to the first, second and third place teams in each league. A berth to the USSSA Great Lakes Division National Championship Tournament will be awarded to the first place team in each league.

A berth to the USSSA Black American World Tournament will be award-ed to the first place finishers in the Salway (Sunday) league.

Teams accepting berths are responsible for paying their own entry fee. The CRC League Supervisor and USSSA officials will determine the proper team classification. Tournament packages for Great Lakes Division National Tournaments and Ohio State

Tournaments will be mailed to eligible teams by the USSSA. Teams must meet USSSA eligibility requirements to advance.

March 24-25 Tournaments...

Begley Powers Beef O'Brady's/Bruster's Real Ice Cream Romp In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "C-D-E" Qualifier At Riverstar

Jeff Begley batted .812 (13-for-16), belted six home runs and collected 22 rbi's to power Beef O'Brady's/Bruster's Real Ice Cream to a five game sweep of a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "C-D-E" State-National qualifier on Saturday, March 24th at Riverstar Park.

Beef O'Brady's/Bruster's won via a 7-0 forfeit in the championship game to wrap up the title. The winners were never challenged as they outscored their opponents 65-18, averaging 16 runs per game while never yielding more than 6.

The victory gave Beef O'Brady's/Bruster's a berth into the USSSA Great Lakes "C" National Tournament Labor Day weekend in Ft. Knox, Ky. They must also compete in the Kentucky USSSA "C" State Tournament to retain their berth.

JB's was awarded a berth to the USSSA "E" Nationals September 1-2 in Milford, and to the U-Trip "E" State August 18-19 in Dayton.

Defense carried Beef O'Brady's/Bruster's to the title, said manager Brad Hildebran.

"In our second game against Northern Kentucky Thunder, they had the bases loaded and no outs," said Hildebran. "Steve Tatum caught a one-hopper at 3rd base and stepped on 3rd and threw the guy out at home, and the next guy flew out. So they scored no runs after having the bases loaded and no outs, and that broke 'em. It was the 4th inning and the score was only 5-0.

"We held four opponents to a total of only 18 runs. That's pretty good defense," added Hildebran.

Tatum, centerfielder Lee Pertuset, shortstop Shane Ogden and middle infielder Bill Byrne were Beef O'Brady's/Bruster's defensive standouts for the day, said Hildebran.

"Lee was incredible in centerfield, and Steve turned two double plays in our second game. Shane made several key outs, including on a ball that ricocheted off of Steve, and Shane picked it up and still threw the guy out. And Bill grabbed everything up the middle. He made three diving catches that should have been base hits and snagged them," said Hildebran.

Following Begley's sizzling .812 performance wee Aaron Haslim at .769, Lee Pertusit at .642, Shane Ogden at .625, and Hildebran at .615. Hildebran was also second on the team in rbi's with 11.

Hildebran said that Begley's stats "said it all.

"Every time he got up, he just hit the ball really hard," said Hildebran. "He used his home runs wisely. Every home run he hit was at least a two or three run shot. Of his six home runs, four were three run shots. If they had awarded an MVP, he would have won it hands down."

Beef O'Brady's/Bruster's mowed down JB's 15-4, Northern Kentucky Thunder 18-4 and Accurate Masonry/Queen City Accoustics 14-4 in round robin play. Ogden banged out four hits, and Begley homered, drove in six runs and went 3-for-4 along with Lee Pertuset against JB's. Begley homered again versus Thunder and shared four hits with Aaron Haslam. Pertuset and Steve Tatum chipped in with three hits each. Then against Accurate, Begley collected three more hits, including a pair of round trippers and six rbi's. Brad Hildebran and Mark Daniel contributed two hits apiece.

In the elimination round, Accurate Masonry/Queen City Accoustics took an early 3-2 lead in the bottom of the 1st. But Beef O'Brady's/Bruster's grabbed the lead for good with three runs in the top of the 2nd on a Luke Ogden inside-the-park home run, then tacked on two in the 3rd, and three in the 4th before blowing the game open with a seven run 7th. Jeff Begley connected on a three run shot in the 4th. Aaron Haslam and Brad Hillenbran each delivered a two run double in Beef O'Brady's big 7th.

Begley smacked two more home runs and drove in seven, and combined with Aaron Haslam and Shane Ogden for nine hits, to help pace the offense. Brad Hildebran had two hits and four rbi's.

Finalist JB's then forfeited out of the tournament to give Beef O'Brady's/Bruster's the title.

The addition of Shane Ogden and Steve Tatum have taken Beef O'Brady's/Bruster's to the next level, said manager Brad Hildebran.

"We picked up Shane and Steve and those two have completely upgraded our defense," said Hildebran. "There's no comparison to last year. The job those two is incredible."

Hildebran promised his opponents would see more of Beef O'Brady's/Bruster's style of play in 2007.

"We won the tournament the way we're going to play all year," said Hildebran. "We don't walk people, we play good defense and we get base hits."

Final Standings: 1. Beef O'Brady's/Bruster's Ice Cream 5-0; 2. JB's 3-2; 3. NKY Thunder 1-3; Accurate Masonry/Queen City Accoustics 0-4.

Defense Carries JB's In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" World Qualifier At Riverstar Park

JB's allowed only 13 runs in four games, and used a late rally to overcome a 5-4 deficit and dispose of D & S/Greenies 14-5 in the championship game, en route to a four game sweep of a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" State-National-World qualifier on Sunday, March 25th at Riverstar Park.

JB's held all four of their opponents to five runs or less, including an opening round 10-0, five inning shutout of Hammertime. In between the victories over D & S/Greenies and Hammertime, JB's sandwiched wins over Cincy Sizzle (5-4) and Oblee's/Liar's Club (13-4.)

The victory gave JB's a paid berth to the USSSA "E" World Tournament September 13-16 in Lake Buena Vista, Fl. They had previously qualified for state and national play. D & S, Oblee's and Sizzle each qualified for the USSSA Great Lakes "E" National Labor Day Weekend in Milford. D & S and Sizzle also earned a berth to the Ohio USSSA Men's "E" State August 18-19 in Dayton.

JB's manager Matt Hutchinson credited his club's title to defense and timely hitting.

"Overall we played defense very well throughout the day," said Hutchinson. "We also had some timely hitting in the last two games, which allowed us to take the lead, and our defense was able to hold those teams scoreless as we added to our lead."

Newcomers Anthony Hargett (rf) and Fred Schroeder (3b) anchored the defense, said Hutchinson.

"Anthony did a very good job for us. He's a younger individual we picked up to give him more experience, and he's doing a very good job," said Hutchinson. "He's added some speed to our outfield, and he was able to track down quite a few fly balls to stop any potentially large innings for our opponents."

Hutchison said Schroeder "has the mobility to cover both the line and the five-hole.

"He made several diving plays," said Hutchinson. "He's a very aggressive individual who allows you a lot of flexibility. He did an excellent job this weekend. He's a transition player for us this year and he stepped into the role we've asked him to fill and we think we'll be very successful with him. He helps us out tremendously."

Offensively, Hutchinson led his club in hitting with a sizzling .695 day. Schroeder followed at .643, Bob Young batted .571, and Brian Croley, Matt Hines and Jim Hargett each hit .545.

“I was seeing the ball well Sunday and made solid contact,” remarked Hutchinson. “We actually had several individuals on our team making good contact. Some fell in and some didn’t.”

JB’s broke on top of Hammertime 3-0 in the bottom of the 1st, then added four runs in the 3rd to build a 7-0 lead and never looked back in a 10-0, five inning shutout victory. Brian Croley’s rbi double put his club on the board in the 1st. Matt Hines’ rbi single capped off the 3rd. Hines, Gene Conner and Fred Schroeder were each perfect in three trips to the plate.

Next JB’s built a 5-0 lead over Cincy Sizzle with four runs in the bottom of the 2nd and one in the 3rd, then held on as Sizzle answered with three in the 4th and one in the 5th. Neither team was able to generate any runs over the final two innings, as JB’s prevailed 5-4. Matt Hutchinson’s two run single capped off the four run 1st for JB’s. Freddie Schroeder and Matt Hines each went 2-for-3 to pace the offense.

Obleeo’s took an early 4-1 lead over JB’s after four innings in the winners’ bracket finals, but failed to score over the final three innings, while JB’s rallied for four runs in the 5th to take the lead, then blew the game open with five in the 6th. Fred Schroeder singled home the go ahead run in the 5th, and Bob Young delivered a key two run triple in the 6th.

Matt Hutchinson pounded out four hits, and Young chipped in with three for the winners.

The 5th inning proved pivotal for JB’s again in the finals. Trailing D & S/Greenies 5-4 after four and a half, JB’s exploded for seven runs to take an 11-5 lead and went on to dispose of D & S handily, 14-5. Matt Hutchinson’s rbi double knotted the score at 5-5 in the 5th, then Gene Conner singled home Hutchinson to put his team ahead for good.

Hutchinson and Fred Schroeder banged out three hits each, and Anthony Hargett and Dan “Miami Vice” Stenger went 2-for-3.

“The guys enjoyed themselves,” summed up JB’s Matt Hutchinson. “It was a lot of fun. Having ten teams show up for an “E” world qualifier made it a very successful tournament as a whole. It was competitive, and competition is what you want to see in qualifiers so you can get an idea where you stand.

“We had some good weather and were able to benefit from getting some swings in and win our world berth. We’re looking forward to the rest of the season and getting ready for Florida.”

Final Standings: 1. JB’s 4-0; 2. D & S/Greenies 4-2; 3. Obleeo’s/Liar’s Club 3-2; 4. Cincy Sizzle 3-2; 5. Hangovers 2-2, Fader 1-2; 7. UAW/Xplosion 1-2, Dirty Dawgs 0-2; 9. Hammertime 0-2, Longhorn 0-2.

Hawks, Secret Service, Ribs City Perfect At Queen City

West Chester, Oh.--The Hawks, Secret Service and Ribs City each swept undefeated past three opponents en route to a first place finish in their respective divisions in a twelve team, three division Sunday round robin March 18th at Queen City Sports Complex.

The Hawks escaped first round play with a narrow 9-8 victory over Pitt Ohio (1-2), then overpowered Bill Stein (1-2) 20-2 and Le Saint (1-2) 17-2 to wrap up the division one title.

Secret Service also held three opponents to single digit scoring, mowing down Bays & Sons (1-2) 22-4, Stagg's Saloon (0-3) 17-2 and division two runner-up Adora (2-1) 13-9 in the deciding game.

While in division three, Ribs City slugged their way past Kahoots (2-1) 18-7 in a key first round match-up with the eventual runner-up, ATE (1-2) 16-14 and Bad Company (0-3) 18-6.

March 31-April 1 Stories...

In Louisville Slugger-USSSA "B-C" NIT...

Mike Foulks/Team Insanity/Easton Battles Past Blitz/Easton, Mercies M & S Drywall At Pastime Park

Harrison, Oh.--Mike Foulks Auto Body/Team Insanity/Easton battled past Blitz/Watanabe/TTP/Wessel/A & K/Easton 18-15 in the semi-finals, then mercy-ruled M & S Drywall 27-16 in the championship game to capture first place in the Louisville Slugger-USSSA Men's "B-C" National Invitational Tournament March 30th at Pastime Park.

Mike Foulks/Easton went 5-1 on the weekend, compiling a 2-1 mark in round robin play, then mowing down Dawg Pack/Wessel Sports/A-1 Fabricators 19-13, Blitz/Easton 18-15 and M & S Drywall 27-12.

Brock Restoration slapped the lone loss on Mike Foulks in a 6-2 setback in the third round of pool play.

The victory gave Mike Foulks/Easton a paid berth into the USSSA "B" World September 21-23 in Lake Buena Vista, Fl. Mike Foulks must also play in the U-Trip Great Lakes "B" Nationals Labor Day Weekend in Sterling Heights, Mi., and the Kentucky State Tournament to retain their berth.

Runner-up M & S qualified for the USSSA "C" World September 20-23 in Lake Buena Vista, the "C" Nationals Labor Day Weekend in Ft. Knox, Ky., and the Ohio "C" State Tournament August 18-19 in Milford.

“It feels really good to qualify for the World this early,” said Mike Foulks/Easton coach Mike Barnes. “Last year we struggled coming out of the gate for the first two months, and now we’ve gotten it out of the way so we can relax and have fun the rest of the year.”

Mike Foulks/Easton averaged just under 22 runs per game en route to the title in their five victories behind an offense that boasted seven .600-plus hitters. Chuck Wagner paced his team with a blistering .857 day, Jason Murphy batted .818, Brandon Johnson .727, Eddie Weinberg .681, Andrew McGowan .640, Craig Johnson .625 and Trent Thompson .615. Seth Tracy chipped in with a .590 mark.

“Chuck came off the bench for us all tournament and every time we needed a hit, he got it,” remarked Barnes. “He always came through for us. He always seemed to come up in a difficult situation when the score was tied and somehow was able to come up with a big hit for us.”

MVP honors went to pitcher Trent Thompson.

“He pitched well all weekend, but especially in the Blitz game,” noted Barnes. “He kept everybody off balance, closed off the middle and turned a couple of double plays. He also hit the ball well, batting .615. And he came up with a few clutch hits.”

The defense was anchored by shortstop Brad Louallen, said Barnes.

“He played short for us in every inning and made no errors and covered a lot of ground and turned a couple of key double plays,” said Barnes. “He’s been steady all year. It’s his first year with us, and he enables us to move our shortstop from last year to the outfield, allowing Roger Drake to play the middle and right field.”

The championship was Mike Foulks/Easton’s second in as many outings for 2007. And team chemistry, said Barnes, has been the key.

“Our team is so close,” said Barnes. “Everybody knows their role. Whenever we needed a big hit, somebody came up with it. The bottom of our order has been exceptional all year. Our bottom four hitters came up with clutch hits time and time again. Everybody has been hitting the ball really well. We all get along. Nobody gets down on anybody. When one player isn’t hitting, somebody picks up the slack for them.”

Mike Foulks/Easton knocked off Sentry Fire/APEX/LBYC 22-10 as Roger Drake collected four hits, a home run and five rbi’s. Jason Murphy also homered and shared eighteen hits with Craig Johnson, Jim Burt, Eddie Weinberg, Trent Thompson and Roger Boles. Brandon Johnson chipped in with a homer and four rbi’s.

Next Mike Foulks routed Dwyer Concrete 22-7 in five on the strength of a four hit game from Weinberg and Brad Louallen. Jason Murphy homered for the second straight game and drove in six runs, and combined with Seth Tracy and Chuck Wagner for nine hits. Brandon Johnson contributed another home run and four more rbi’s.

Brock Restoration ambushed Mike Foulks 6-2 in their final round robin contest, but the eventual champions rallied from an 8-2 deficit to eliminate the Dawg Pack 19-13 in the first elimination round game. Mike Foulks outscored the Dawg Pack 17-5 over the final five innings. After chipping away at an 8-2 deficit with two in the 3rd and five in the 4th, Mike Foulks took the lead for good with two runs in the top of the 5th, then exploded for eight runs in the 7th to seal the win. Jason Murphy's two run shot broke the tie in the 5th. Craig Johnson sparked the 7th with a leadoff solo. Brad Louallen delivered a three run double.

Murphy had two home runs and four rbi's and went 4-for-4 along with Brandon Johnson. Seth Tracy, Jim Burt and Craig Johnson had three hits each.

Mike Foulks fell behind again in the semi-finals as Blitz/Easton jumped on top with five runs in the top of the 1st. But Pitcher Trent Thompson held Blitz scoreless over the next three innings as his club scored 16 unanswered runs. After tying the game at 5-5 in the bottom of the 2nd, Mike Foulks plated seven in the 3rd and four in the 4th to forge a 16-5 advantage. Brandon Johnson connected for a two run shot to break the tie in the 3rd, and Seth Tracy followed with a slammer. Brandon Johnson's leadoff solo ignited the scoring in the 4th. The Blitz outscored Mike Foulks 10-2 over the final two innings to cut the lead to 18-15, but it was too little, too late.

Roger Drake banged out four hits, and Seth Tracy and Brandon Johnson each homered twice and went 3-for-4 along with Andrew McGowan and Jason Murphy.

Finalist M & S stayed with Mike Foulks through three and a half innings, as they went into the bottom of the 4th with the game deadlocked at 8-8. But the wheels fell off the wagon after that, as Mike Foulks erupted for 19 runs over the next three innings to invoke the mercy rule. Jim Burt's two run swat put Mike Foulks ahead to stay at 10-8. Brandon Johnson added a three run blast as the lead swelled to 13-8. Jason Murphy's two run tater highlighted the seven run 5th.

Andrew McGowan pounded out five hits, and Jason Murphy and Brandon and Craigh Johnson four each to power the offense. Brandon Johnson also had a team high seven rbi's. Jim Burt and Roger Drake each went 3-for-4, and Seth Tracy cracked a pair of home runs.

"We'd like to thank our sponsors, Easton and Mike and Angie Foulks for everything they've done for us," said team spokesman Mike Barnes. "Without them we wouldn't be able to play as much as we do."

BUD LIGHT-LOUISVILLE SLUGGER-USSSA EARLY BIRD ROUND ROBIN MEN'S B-C NIT

1. Mike Foulks/Tm. Insanity/Easton, Union, KY 5 1
2. M & S Drywall/Easton, Cincinnati, OH 4 2

- 3. Blitz/Watanabe/TTP/Wessel/A & K, Lawr., IN 4 1
Design Concepts, New Richmond, OH 3 2
- 5. Brock Restoration, Cincinnati, OH 3 1
Dawg Pack/Wessel Sports, Cincinnati, OH 3 1
Chico's/Fox Premier Hardwood, Cincinnati, OH 2 2
K. A. Softball, Chicago, IL 2 2
- 9. Loveless Hardwood, Cleves, OH 1 2
Pure Romance/Easton, Milford, OH 1 2
Sentry Fire/Apex, Erlanger, KY 1 2
Taylor Flooring/Max Softball, Cincinnati, OH 1 2
Two-N-Out.com, Florence, KY 1 2
- 14. Dwyer Concrete, Aurora, IN 0 3
JLC/Legends/Country Wide, Elsemere, KY 0 3
Middle's Open, Florence, KY 0 3

**BUD LIGHT-LOUISVILLE SLUGGER USSSA
EARLY BIRD RD. ROBIN NIT ALL-TOURNAMENT TEAM**

Todd Rousch Design Concepts
 Mike Snider Design Concepts
 Kevin Langdon Design Concepts
 Bobby Abbott Blitz/Watanabe/TTP/Wessel/A & K
 Kelley Haiber Blitz/Watanabe/TTP/Wessel/A & K
 Jeff Edington Blitz/Watanabe/TTP/Wessel/A & K
 C. R. Robinson M & S Drywall/Easton
 Jason Spaulding M & S Drywall/Easton
 Donnie Lewis M & S Drywall/Easton
 Troy Slayback M & S Drywall/Easton
 Andrew McGowan Mike Foulks/Team Insanity/Easton
 Jason Murphy Mike Foulks/Team Insanity/Easton
 Brad Louallen Mike Foulks/Team Insanity/Easton
 Seth Tracy Mike Foulks/Team Insanity/Easton
 Chuck Wagner Mike Foulks/Team Insanity/Easton
 Brandon Johnson - HR Leader (9) Mike Foulks/Easton
 Brandon Slade - ODP M & S Drywall/Easton
 T. J. Thompson - MVP Mike Foulks/Easton

Broxterman, Brinkman Lead Lights Out To Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" Title At Queen City

West Chester, Oh.--Dave Broxterman batted .643, and Troy Brinkman collected eleven rbi's, to lead Lights Out to a first place finish in a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" State-National Qualifier March 31st at Queen City Sports Complex.

Lights Out went 3-1 in the three-team, double round robin affair, knocking off the Diamond Cutters 11-2 in their opener, then spanking the Hound Dogs 14-5 before mercy-

ruling the Diamond Cutters 14-3 in five for their final victory. The Hound Dogs spoiled Lights Out's perfect record with a 10-9 setback.

The Hound Dogs went 2-2 and the Diamond Cutters 1-3.

The championship gave Lights Out a berth into the Indiana USSSA "E" state tournament and to the U-Trip Great Lakes "E" Nationals Labor Day Weekend in Milford, Ohio.

Dave Broxterman and Joe Scully paced the offense with a .643 and .636 mark, respectively. Troy Brinkman led the team in rbi's with eleven.

"You can't win if your leadoff man doesn't get on, and Dave got on a lot," remarked Lights Out manager John Miller.

Miller said rbi leader Troy Brinkman "has been rock solid for us since the start of the season.

"He was a great off-season pick up - a silent leader who just gets it done," said Miller.

Overall, "timely hitting and good defense served us well," summed up Miller. "It was our first tournament of the year, and our bats were kind of shaky to start out. But our defense kept us going and we got hits when we needed to."

Defensively, Miller said his club "got solid play from Jeremy Jeffries (lc), Jeff Iker (rc) and Troy Brinkman (lf)."

A five run 1st proved to be all Lights Out needed in an 11-2 rout of the Diamond Cutters in game one. Troy Brinkman's two run single highlighted the inning. Lights Out added three runs in the 3rd to forge an 8-0 lead and seal the win. Brinkman went 3-for-3 with three rbi's to lead the winners.

The Hound Dogs fell next 14-5. After yielding two runs in the top of the 1st, Lights Out answered with six, then added three in the 4th, one in the 5th and three in the 6th to put the game away. Bill Brinkman's two out, two run double capped off the six run 1st. Troy Brinkman delivered a big two out, two run single in the 4th, and Joe Scully's two run double was the big blow in the 7th.

Troy Brinkman led his club with two hits and four rbi's.

A nine run 3rd blew open a 3-2 contest and carried Lights Out past the Diamond Cutters 14-3 in five innings in game three. Alan Brigmon's two run single capped off the inning. Dave Broxterman banged out three hits, and Joe Scully added two.

The Hound Dogs then ambushed Lights Out 10-9 to spoil their perfect record.

“We lost our momentum after we knew we had already won the tournament,” noted Lights Out’s John Miller.

Miller said his club’s next outing would be the Big 64 on April 28th.

“We hope to have a good showing there,” said Miller.

Wade Relief Stint Lifts Secret Service In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D-E” Qualifier At Eggleston Park

Colerain Township, Oh. – When Secret Service pitcher Ed Popp couldn’t find the strike zone against the first three batters in the top of the 1st inning in the second round of a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D-E” State National Qualifier on Sunday, April 1st at Eggleston Park, manager David Wade had the perfect antidote.

Himself.

Wade took over mound duties with the bases loaded and no outs and limited Balls Deep to two runs, then held the eventual runners-up to a lone run over the final six innings to lead his club to a key 10-3 victory in the four team round robin.

The victory gave Secret Service a 2-0 record, and even though they dropped their final decision to Buckeye Lawmen #1 9-8, the win over Balls Deep proved critical to capturing the title.

The championship gave Secret Service a berth to the Ohio USSSA “D” State Tournament August 18-19 in Harrison, and to the “D” Nationals Labor Day Weekend in Indianapolis.

Where Popp was lacking on the mound, he more than made up for it at the plate, where he led his team in hitting with an .800 mark.

“I was feeling good,” Popp said after the tournament. “It was just one of those things. I was just trying to make contact. I was spraying the ball and able to find the holes. I love hitting behind Tony Huber. He’s one of the best leadoff hitters I’ve played with. We have a rhythm between the two of us.”

Huber and Dave Durkin followed right behind Popp with a .750 average. David Wade batted .636, and Eric Lucking .625.

But it was Wade’s relief stint that saved the day, underscored Popp, Secret Service’s assistant manager.

“His ability to come in and pitch those last two games was the key,” said Popp. “He’s normally our starting shortstop, but he did one heckuva job when he came in and relieved.”

Popp also credited Secret Service's outfield of Tony Huber (l), Dave Durkin (lc), Eric Lucking (rc) and Jason Veech (r).

"The other teams were frustrated that they couldn't burn us or hit the gaps," said Popp. "Our four outfielders just played a great tournament. It was impossible to burn them."

Secret Service scored in every inning as they mercy-ruled Kubota Crush 16-4 in five in game one. A two run double by David Wade broke a 1-1 tie in the bottom of the 1st and Secret Service never looked back. Tony Huber and Ed Popp combined for eight hits, and Joe Schmuck, whose two run single capped off a five run 4th that boosted his club's lead to 16-2, went 3-for-4 along with David Wade.

Balls Deep took a 2-0 lead with the help of three walks issued by Secret Service in the top of the 1st, but Secret Service grabbed a 3-2 lead in the bottom of the 1st and never trailed again. Dave Durkin's two run single put his club ahead to stay at 3-2. Durkin came through big again with a two run double to cap off a three run 4th as Secret Service built a 7-3 lead. Secret Service added three more runs while pitcher David Wade help Balls Deep at bay over the final four innings in a 10-3 rout.

Durkin collected four hits in the contest. Bryan Jones, Tony Huber and Ed Popp shared nine.

Buckeye Lawmen then ambushed Secret Service 9-8 to blemish their record, but the one run margin helped secure the title for Secret Service over runner-up Balls Deep.

Assistant manager Ed Popp credited his club's chemistry with producing the championship.

"We're a very seasoned team," said Popp. "We've been playing together for a long time. We're never down on each other. Even when I was struggling on the mound, the team picked me up as far as my hitting. A lot of times teams will jump on players. We never do anything like that. We have tremendous chemistry. We're good friends off the field as well as on the field.

"It's very nice to be qualified on April 1st for the national tournament," concluded Popp. "It's nice to get that out of the way."

Final Standings: 1. Secret Service 2-1, 2. Balls Deep 2-1, 3. Buckeye Lawmen 2-1, 4. Kubota Crush 0-3.

Chalfant Homer Lifts Justin Howard In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D-E" Qualifier At Eggleston Park

Colerain Township, Oh. -Gary Chalfant's inside-the-park home run broke a 3-3 tie in the top of the 7th and helped lift Justin Howard Enterprises to an eventual 5-3 victory over

Community Cab in the championship game of a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA Men's Class "D-E" State-National qualifier on Saturday, March 31st at Eggleston Park.

The victory wrapped up a five game sweep of the ten team affair for the winners, who mercy-ruled three round robin opponents prior to easing past Rib City Grill 5-1 and Community Cab 5-3 in the elimination round.

Both finalists earned berths to the USSSA Great Lakes "D" National Tournament Labor Day Weekend in Indianapolis, In. Both teams also qualified for state tournament play along with third place finishers Ante Up and Rib City Softball.

Justin Howard, an Indiana club, must play in their home state tournament. Community Cab, Ante Up and Rib City will compete in the Ohio State Tournament August 18-19 in Harrison.

Ballin Bombers, the highest finishing "E" team in the tournament, won a paid berth to the U-Trip Great Lakes "E" National Labor Day Weekend in Milford, and to the Ohio "E" State in Dayton.

Andy Swift led Justin Howard in hitting with a sizzling .723 day. Gary Chalfant followed at .667, and Brian Mattingly and Mike Morgan batted .643.

Justin Howard manager Terry Alfrey called Swift "the perfect number two hitter.

"He comes up and hits it to the right side every time," said Alfrey. "He's just a little guy who knows how to hit. Defensively he plays shortstop for us, and he only had one error for the whole tournament. He's just really consistent."

Overall, said Alfrey, the pitching and defense of Gary Chalfant, who only allowed 13 runs in five games, carried the day.

"He fielded everything that was hit at him up the middle and started several double plays," said Alfrey. "He allows us to play a four man outfield. Since we're not that fast we play a conventional outfield, and with Gary pitching, it allows us to do that because anything that's hit up the middle, he's going to stop.

"We've learned in USSSA that you better be able to field the middle, because they'll come up the middle on you," said Alfrey.

Alfrey said the tournament was his team's first U-Trip event ever.

Chalfant proved to be a "tough old fart," continued Alfrey.

"He took a shot on his glove hand in the second game and pitched the last three games with a broken thumb," said Chalfant.

In addition to Chalfant's defensive contributions on the mound, Justin Howard got strong support from 1st baseman Monte Gaddis and outfielder Justin Harrison.

"Monte made three diving stops in one game, and twice in one game he dove and tagged the runner and stood up and went to first for the double play," said Alfrey. "In those close games, that's so important. In our last game, if one of those balls got by it's a double."

Alfrey said that his team's young left fielder, 18-year old Justin Harrison, "made two or three incredible plays in the last game, including one in the bottom of the 7th with runners on 2nd and 3rd.

"He's incredible for his age," said Alfrey.

Justin Howard mercy-ruled their first three opponents, romping past Dixon Softball 21-5 in six, A1 Fabricators 13-2 in five, and Players Softball 13-2 in six.

Mike Morgan and Andy Swift banged out five hits each, and Steve Osborn added four against Dixon. Brian Mattingly and Jeff Masters shared six safeties versus A1, and Chalfant and Kody Daniels went 3-for-3, and Mike Kennedy drove in four runs, to help dispose of Players.

Justin Howard jumped out to a 5-0 lead with two runs in the bottom of the 1st and three in the 5th, then gave up a lone run to Rib City Grill to earn a berth into the championship game with a 5-1 victory. Brad Hicks' two run double accounted for his club's two runs in the 1st. Justin Harrison singled home two of Justin Howard's three tallies in the 5th. Mike Morgan swatted out three hits to pace the offense.

In the finals Justin Howard battled to a 3-3 stalemate with Community Cab through six, but in the top of the 7th, Gary Chalfant delivered a clutch inside-the-park leadoff home run to put his team ahead for good. David Reece followed with a single, advance to third on two ground-outs, then rode home with an insurance run on Monte Gaddis' rbi single.

Justin Howard manager Terry Alfrey said that Community Cab "played the best five-man I've ever seen," and that his team's game with semi-finalist Rib City was a classic "pitcher's dual.

"Gary Chalfant was just tremendous. He fielded everything up the middle. And their pitcher was very good. He kept us off-balance the whole game and fielded the middle tremendously.

"We want to thank Eggleston Park and Dave Maury (park manager) for a tremendous tournament," concluded Alfrey. "The officiating was the best in any tournament we've ever been to. It was just top notch.

“We also want to thank our sponsor, Justin Howard. He’s just a dear friend from Dayton who goes out of his way to make sure we can play some softball,” said Alfrey.

Final Standings: 1. Justin Howard Enterprises 5-0; 2. Community Cab 4-1; 3. Ante Up 3-1, Rib City Grill 2-2; 5. A1 Fabricators 2-1, Players Softball 1-2; 7. Ballin’ Bombers 1-2, Dixon Softball 0-3, Porter Advertising 0-3, Softball Pigs 0-3.

Patterson Sac Lifts Team Midnight Past Barn Stormers 16-15 At Kolping Park

Mt. Healthy, Oh.--Matt Patterson’s sac fly in the bottom of the 8th plated Eric Riley with the game winner to give Team Midnight a dramatic 16-15, extra innings, come-from-behind victory over the Barnstormers in the championship game of a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA Men’s “E” State-National-World qualifier March 30th at Kolping Park.

Riley, Matt Patterson and Jeremy Blair singled to load the bases with no outs, setting the stage for Patterson sac fly in the bottom of the 8th.

The victory wrapped up a four game sweep of the eight team affair for Team Midnight, who will now advance to the USSSA Men’s “E” World Tournament September 13-16 in Lake Buena Vista, Fl. Team Midnight also qualified for the Ohio USSSA “E” State August 18-19 in Dayton, and for the U-Trip Great Lakes “E” National Labor Day Weekend in Milford, Oh., along with the Barnstormers.

Third place Bad Habits and Sibcy Cline also won a berth to Dayton.

Team Midnight used a staunch defense to dispose of three round robin opponents and earn a berth into the finals against the Barnstormers. The Washington Court House club eked out a 2-1 victory over the Angry Beavers in game one, blanked Yeager Sports 10-0, then rallied from a 5-0 deficit, scoring five runs in the top of the 7th, to stun the Hawks 10-6.

Patterson, the championship game hero, led Team Midnight in hitting with a .583 mark. Player-manager Josh Justice followed at .538, Eric Riley and Jason Collins hit .533 and Scott Kitchen chipped in with a .500 mark.

“Larry was very clutch,” observed Justice. “When we needed a hit or a run driven in, he came through for us.”

Overall, Justice said hit team’s “defense was fantastic and our hitting was clutch, and we never hung our heads when we were down. We played great.

“Von Gray was magnificent at shortstop,” added Justice. “He was amazing. He turned two double plays by himself and made no errors in any of our games. He fielded every ball hit to him.”

Justice said his offense got off to a sluggish start in the 2-1 win over Angry Beavers in game one. “But in our second game, we played Yeager Sports, and this is where we would start to get our sticks going. And we played very solid defense.”

Against the Beavers, both teams went scoreless for five innings, then each exchanged a lone run in the 6th. Finally in the 7th Jeremy Blair singled, went to 3rd on Larry Patterson’s double, then rode home with the game winner after the Beavers had issued an intentional pass to Josh Justice to load the bases.

Blair and Eric Riley each went 2-for-3 to pace the offense.

Game two was the Jason Collins’ show. All Collins did was go 4-for-4 and pitch a 10-0 shutout as Team Midnight mercy-ruled Yeager Sports in six. The winners plated three runs in the top of the 1st and never looked back. Josh Justice and Jared Morris were perfect in three trips to the plate.

Game featured a match-up between the division’s two undefeated teams, Team Midnight and the Hawks. At stake was a berth into the finals. The Hawks held a commanding 5-0 lead after four, but Team Midnight battled back to knot the score at 5-5 in the 6th, then erupted for five runs in the top of the 7th to earn a hard-fought 10-6 victory. Larry Patterson, Eric Riley, Jason Collins, Matt Patterson and Jeremy Blair combined for ten hits.

In the finals Team Midnight was faced with digging out of a hole once more, as the Barnstormers jumped out to a 12-3 advantage after three and a half innings. But Team Midnight roared back, scoring five in the 4th, one in the 5th, four in the 6th and two in the 7th to knot the score at 15-15 and force extra innings. Finally in the bottom of the 8th, consecutive singles by Eric Riley, Matt Patterson and Jeremy Blair set the table for Larry Patterson, who calmly delivered a sac fly into right field to plate Riley with the game winner.

Matt Patterson pounded out four hits, and Josh Justice, Larry Patterson and Bill Pressler contributed three hits apiece.

Final Standings: 1. Team Midnight 4-0; 2. Barnstormers 3-1; 3. Bad Habits/Cincy Scorpions 2-1, Sibcy-Cline 2-1; 5. Pitt Ohio 1-2; Hawks 1-2; 7. Dino’s/Young Guns 0-3, Angry Beavers 0-3.

Rucker Pitches Dirty Dozen Past Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D-E” Field At Eggleston Park

Colerain Township, Oh. – Pitcher Jim Rucker held four teams to nine runs to lead the Dirty Dozen to a four game sweep of a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA Men’s Class “D-E” State-National qualifier on Sunday, April 1st at Eggleston Park.

The Dirty Dozen pushed across a run in the top of the 7th to trim Best Way Frame/Nasty Boys 6-5 in the championship game and wrap up the title. Chuck Dennis scored what turned out to be the game winner on a Mike Hedger double.

The victory qualified Dirty Dozen for the Ohio USSSA "D" State Tournament August 18-19 in Harrison, and for the U-Trip "D" Nationals Labor Day Weekend in Indianapolis.

A berth to the state tournament also passed down to the Buckeye Lawmen II.

Corey Riddell went 9-for-13 to pace the offense with a .643 mark. Mike Hedger followed with a .614 effort.

"Corey did a great job for us and drove in the runs when we needed them," commented Dirty Dozen manager Chuck Kenney.

"We didn't have a big hitting day," observed Kenney. "We just had key hits in key situations. We just did a lot of little things and got guys in when we needed to."

The big story, said Kenney, was the pitching of Jim Rucker.

"The main thing for us was Jim's pitching performance," said Kenney. "He only allowed nine runs all day. He pitched one of the best tournaments I've ever played in, especially against some of the teams we played."

The Dirty Dozen mercy-ruled their first three opponents, mowing down Dirty Dawgs 14-3 in six, C. O. F. Gonzaga 11-0 in five, and the Buckeye Lawmen II 13-1 in six.

Corey Riddell banged out four hits, and Jimmy Loveless and Chuck Dennis each went 3-for-4 against the Dirty Dawgs. The Dirty Dozen used a seven run 4th to break open a 4-3 contest. A pair of two-run doubles - one by Riddell and another by Dave Loveless - highlighted the inning.

Jim Rucker took matters into his own hands in game two, tossing the 11-0 shutout over C. O. F. Gonzaga. Phil Washburn ignited a four run 1st with an rbi single. Don Bradley delivered a big two run double as the Dirty Dozen erupted for five runs in the 3rd to take a commanding 9-0 lead. Washburn, Bradley and Mike Hedger were all perfect in three at bats for the winners.

The Dirty Dozen exploded for eight runs in the top of the 6th to seal a 13-1 victory over the Buckeye Lawmen in game three. Chuck Dennis, Mike Hedger and Gordy Messmer each contributed a two run single in the inning. Dennis, Corey Riddell and Danny Loveless combined for nine hits.

That set up a showdown with the tournament's only other undefeated team - Best Way Frame/Nasty Boys - for the title. The two clubs battled to a 5-5 stalemate through six, but in the top of the 7th, Chuck Dennis singled, went to second on a Chuck Kenney base

hit, then rode home with the eventual game winner on Mike Hedger's double. Pitcher Jim Rucker shut the Nasty Boys down in the bottom of the 7th to preserve the win.

Dennis, Don Bradley and Dave Loveless shared six hits to power the champions.

Eight Sweep Pre-Season Divisions At Expressway Park

Milford, Oh.--Goof Troop/Jet, Airtight Plumbing, Sports Page, Showa Bad Boys, Pipefitters Blue 392, Team Punishment, Slicers, and Tri-State Air Filters went undefeated to claim their respective division titles in a 31-team, eight division Pre-Season Round Robin on Sunday, April 1st at Expressway Park.

Goof Troop/Jet overpowered division one opponents CB Sportswear (2-1) 21-8, Swingers (0-3) 15-1 and Machine (1-2) 19-2.

Airtight Plumbing romped past Panama Reds (1-2) 19-10, Team Punishment (0-3) 9-5 and John Sauber (2-1) 26-11 for the division two crown.

In division three, Sportspage squeezed out a 9-8 win over D. J. Home Improvement (0-3), then pounded Siler's Drive Thru (2-1) 20-8 before outslugging Green Dot (20-17) in the championship game.

Showa Bad Boys used a staunch defense to take the division four title, holding all three victims to single digit scoring. The Bad Boys drilled Gamerz (0-3) 13-2 and Brew Crew/Bad Habits (1-2) 15-2 before fending off Meatball Revenge (2-1) 11-9 in a showdown for first place.

U. A. Local #392 Blue averaged just under 20 runs per game as they slugged their way past U. A. Local #392 Red (1-3) 25-23 and 14-3, and Dairy Queen/Navy (1-3) 18-8 and 22-16 in division five.

In division five, Team Punishment got past eventual runner-up Jacob's Mechanical (2-1) 12-9 in a key first round match-up, then bombed Ballbusters (0-3) 16-6 and Cleaning Authority (1-2) 28-19.

The Slicers survived a pair of one-run contests en route to the division seven crown, as they outdueled Gamerz (1-2) 29-28, spanked Showtime Softball (0-3) 16-6, then escaped with a 12-11 victory over Brady's Bunch (2-1) in the deciding game.

While in division eight, Tri-State Air Filters mowed down Dirty Birds (1-2) 13-7, Superior Flooring (1-2) 12-1, and Backyard Boys (1-2) 26-10.

Seven Claim Pre-Season Titles At Expressway Park

Milford, Oh.--Seven teams claimed their respective division titles in a 30 team, seven division Pre-Season Round Robin on Saturday, March 31st at Expressway Park.

In a key first round match-up, Tom Brate Trucking clipped eventual division one runner-up Old School (2-1) 8-7, then spanked Hackney Custom Carpentry (1-2) 21-9 and Hitman (0-3) 11-1.

Buckeye Lawmen #1 disposed of Hap's Irish Pub (1-2) 11-8 and Most Wanted (2-1) 14-4 to seal the division two title before dropping an 8-2 decision to the Titans (1-2) in their finale.

In division three, Buckeye Lawmen #2 survived three, two-run contests, as they battled past D & S/Greenies (1-2) 13-11, Putter's Tavern (2-1) 12-10, and RE Digital (0-3) 17-15.

The Intimidators used a smothering defense to sweep through division four, overpowering Creekside (0-3) 12-1, Pelle's (2-1), and the Underdogs (1-2) 19-1.

Cincy Sizzle split two games with Cincinnati Diamondbacks in division five (3-1), winning 18-8, then dropping an 11-5 contest in the third round. A pair of victories over Jones' Boys (0-4) - 11-2 and 12-9 - rounded out their 3-1 mark.

Pitt Ohio held three opponents to single digit scoring en route to the division six crown, drilling Hi Rollers (1-2) 16-6 and Carlisle Fench (0-3) 13-7 before trimming Withamsville Church (8-7) in the deciding contest.

While in division seven, Team Chaos averaged just under 18 runs per game as they romped past the Young Guns (1-2) 19-9, Green Machine (0-3) 15-2 and 669 Mafia I (1-2) 19-4.

Seven Run 7th Lifts M & M Connection/Saints Past Accurate Masonry/Queen City Accoustics In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D" At Queen City

West Chester, Oh.--M & M Connection/Saints rallied for seven runs in the top of the 7th to overcome a 7-4 deficit and best Accurate Masonry/Queen City Accoustics 11-7 in the championship game of a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA State-National Qualifier March 31st at Queen City Sports Complex.

The title was the second of the month won by M & M/Saints.

The victory over Accurate wrapped up a 5-0 weekend for the champions, who romped past three round robin opponents and Northern Kentucky Thunder 22-3 in the semi-finals of the elimination round before polishing off Accurate in the finals.

Berths to the USSSA Great Lakes "D" National Tournament Labor Day Weekend in Indianapolis were awarded to Accurate and third place Northern Kentucky Thunder and Dirty Birds. Accurate, Dirty Birds, Team Kahoots and MVP's also qualified for the Ohio U-Trip "D" State Tournament August 18-19 in Harrison.

M & M/Saints manager John Tomlinson credited his team's title to experience.

"We have a lot of veteran leadership," said Tomlinson. "That's was the key to winning that last game against Accurate. We never get down, even when we're losing, because we know we still have a chance to win."

Pitcher Mike Lamb, who led M & M with an .850 performance, was the team's unofficial MVP.

"He didn't make an out until the last game," observed Tomlinson. "He was a little tired then. But he still pitched a great game against Accurate Masonry and didn't walk a batter the whole day."

Following Lamb's .850 effort were John Erdman at .833, Mike Ditmer at .715, Kelly Sledge at .667, Mike Barone and Tim Duffey at .650 and John Tomlinson at .648.

"John (Erdman) was actually a sub," remarked Tomlinson. "He came out just in case we needed somebody and got some chances to really contribute. We put him in in some clutch situations."

Ron Williams and Mike Ditmer anchored the defense, said Tomlinson.

"Nothing got by Ron at 3rd base, and Mike showed a lot of range at middle infield. That's a new position for him. He's only been playing for a couple of years."

M & M/Saints used a nine run 2nd to blow open a 3-0 contest and went on to mercy rule the MVP's 18-8 in five innings in game one. A three run double by Mike Lamb and a two run triple by John Tomlinson highlighted the inning. Lamb collected four hits, and Tomlinson, Kelly Sledge, Brian McDonald and Mike Ditmer combined for a dozen.

Packaged Home Solutions fell next 10-5 in game two. M & M broke a 2-2 stalemate with four runs in the top of the 3rd, and PHS never recovered. Mike Lamb's rbi single put his club ahead to stay. Kelly Sledge had a two run single to cap off the inning.

Mike Ditmer banged out four hits, and Lamb and John Tomlinson each went 3-for-4.

M & M/Saints needed only six innings to dispose of the Dirty Birds 14-4 in game three. After falling behind 2-1 in the bottom of the 1st, the Saints plated three in the top of the 2nd, then blew an 8-4 game open with six runs in the top of the 6th to invoke the run rule. John Erdman's two run single and a two run double by Kelly Sledge were the big blows in the inning.

Mike Lamb, Brian McDonald and Darrin Block were all perfect in four trips to the plate.

M & M clung to a 5-3 advantage over Northern Kentucky Thunder through four innings in the elimination round semi-finals, but sealed an eventual 22-3 victory with a six run 5th and a nine run 7th. John Tomlinson delivered a two run double, and Justin Charlton a two run single in the 5th. Mike Lamb drove in two runs in the 7th.

Lamb pounded out five hits, and Tomlinson, Mike Ditmer and Tim Duffey added four each to pace the offense.

Accurate Masonry, which had pounded the Dirty Birds 16-4 in the other semi-final, was poised for a sweep after taking a 11-7 lead into the top of the 7th against M & M in the championship game. But the Saints erupted for seven unanswered runs, taking a 12-11 lead on Mike Ditmer's rbi single. Mike Barone followed with a two run double to close out the scoring. Mike Lamb shut down Accurate in the bottom of the 7th to preserve the win.

Barone swatted out four hits for the champions. Tim Duffey, Ron Williams and Kelly Sledge chipped in with three apiece.

Caribbean Storm, Dixon Softball, Putter's Claim Queen City Round Robin Titles

West Chester, Oh.--Caribbean Storm and Dixon Softball went 2-1, while Putter's swept undefeated past three opponent, to claim first place metal in their respective divisions in a twelve team, three division Sunday round robin March 25th at Queen City Sports Complex.

Caribbean Storm battled past Softballs of Steel (1-2) 11-9 and Railers (2-1) 8-7 to nail down the division one title before Family Tradition (1-2) blemished their record in a 6-5 setback.

Dixon Softball bounced back from a 16-5 spanking at the hands of Sibcy Cline (1-2) to best TNT (2-1) 10-7 before polishing off K & K Precision (1-2) 17-2 to take the division two crown.

While in division three, Putter's knocked off Luwigi's (1-2) and Lindenwald's Finest (1-2) by identical 10-7 scores prior to a 14-6 rout of Cincinnati Hurricanes (1-2) in the finale.

April 7th Stories...

DeHaan & Bach/Trailblazers Romps Past Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "Super D" Field At Expressway Park

Milford, Oh.--DeHaan & Bach/Trailblazers mercy-ruled four out of six opponents, spanking TPE/Backstabbers 19-9 in the finals, en route to a first place finish in a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "Super D" State-National qualifier April 7th at Expressway Park.

Riding the hot bat of Toby Gilliam and the pitching of Tony Fiscus, DeHaan & Bach/Trailblazers outscored their victims 106-43. Gilliam hit a red-hot .875 to lead an offense that boasted nine plus-.600 hitters, while Fiscus held five of six teams to single digit scoring.

Although Gilliam spearheaded the offense and Fiscus anchored the defense, the entire DeHaan & Bach team participated in the thorough thrashing of the 24-team field at Expressway Park.

Other hitting leaders included Matt Ellington at .850, Steve Boone at .800, Brian Hanlon at .720, Ryan Gladwell at .706, Nate Fite at .700, Ray Johnson at .696, Clint Moore at .667 and Brian Seibert at .732. Fiscus chipped in with a .526 mark, and Mike Patoi and Bill Ison batted .500.

“We simply outhit everyone,” summed up Trailblazer manager Troy Ison. “We hit consistently throughout the line-up, and scored 106 runs in only 27 innings. We took early leads and put a lot of pressure on the other teams.”

Ison said offensive leader Toby Gilliam “has been our catalyst all year.

“He’s our number two hitter and ever since he joined the team this year, he’s been consistent. When you get the top of the line-up on base for the middle, it makes it easier to score runs,” said Ison.

The defensive standouts were outfielders Clint Moore and Brian Seibert and pitcher Tony Fiscus, said Ison.

“Clint made several diving catches in right field throughout the tournament, including one over-the-shoulder diving catch,” said Ison. “We play a three man outfield, and Brian played an excellent centfield for us. He was flawless - he didn’t make a single error.”

Ison said Fiscus “was able to place his pitches throughout the whole tournament.

“He pitched every inning of every game, and his knuckle ball was moving extremely well,” said Ison.

“As a team we made a total of only four errors, so our whole team was strong defensively,” added Ison.

The Trailblazers dusted aside the Skull Busters 10-6 and Caribbean Jerks 24-4 in five innings in round robin play. Matt Ellington banged out three hits against the Skull Busters, then combined with Brian Hanlon for eight hits versus the Jerks. Toby Gilliam, Nate Fite, Steve Boone, Tony Fiscus and Brian Seibert shared fifteen hits.

In game one of the elimination round, DeHaan & Bach used a ten run 4th to blow open an 8-4 game and rout Cincy Sizzle 18-5 in five innings. A pair of two-run singles - one

by Matt Ellington and another by Nate Fite, and a three run bomb by Ryan Gladwell highlighted the inning.

Brian Hanlon and Toby Gilliam were both perfect in four trips to the plate, and Steve Boone, Cline Moore and Ray Johnson added three hits each.

Next the Trailblazers mercy-ruled Putters 16-6 in five, once again using a big inning - this time an eight run 2nd - to help overpower their opponent. After taking a 3-0 lead in the top of the 1st, DeHaan & Back erupted for eight runs to grab an 11-0 advantage and never looked back. Toby Gilliam had a two run single and Matt Ellington delivered a three run blast to do most of the damage.

Gilliam collected four more hits, and Ellington, Steve Boone and Ray Johnson chipped in three apiece.

The Trailblazers fell behind Team Chaos 3-2 after two and a half innings in the semi-finals, but in the bottom of the 3rd they struck for six runs, then added four in the 4th, three in the 5th and four in the 6th to take a commanding 19-10 lead and nail down an eventual 19-13 victory. Nate Fite put his club ahead to stay at 5-3 with a two run single in the 3rd. Ryan Gladwell followed with a two run triple.

Gilliam, who gave DeHaan & Bach a brief lead with a two run homer in the bottom of the 1st, pounded out five hits, Brian Hanlon added four, and Fite, Gladwell, Mike Patoi and Clint Moore each went 3-for-4.

TPE/Backstabbers drew first blood with a run in the top of the 1st in the finals, but the lead was short-lived. The Trailblazers answered with six, then poured it on with four in the 2nd, five in the 3rd and four in the 5th en route to a 19-9, five inning whooping. Matt Ellington, who paced the offense with four hits, singled in the go-ahead run in the bottom of the 1st to put his club on top for good. Ryan Gladwell's two run double capped off the inning.

Clint Moore, whose three run shot capped off the five run 3rd and gave the Blazers a commanding 15-6 lead, shared twenty one hits with Gladwell, Brian Seibert, Toby Gilliam, Ray Johnson, Nate Fite and Steve Boone.

DeHaan & Bach's Troy Ison said his team has been "hot all year.

"It seems like in the cold weather we've been hitting really well as a team," said Ison. "We've played three tournaments in the cold and we've hit well in all three of them."

Ison had high praise for the field conditions at Expressway Park.

"The infields were in perfect condition. We were there from 9 AM in the morning until 11:30 PM at night, and Bobby (Park Manager Bob Owens) did everything in his power to make us comfortable," said Ison. "And he did an excellent job running the tournament."

Ison said his team took home \$1,000 in cash and a set of t-shirts for winning the event. \$300 was awarded to the Backstabbers, and \$150 to D-Town. The Backstabbers also received a paid berth to the Great Lakes Division USSSA "D" National Tournament Labor Day Weekend in Indianapolis. D-Town received an unpaid berth. Both teams also qualified for the Ohio U-Trip "D" State Tournament August 18-19 in Harrison.

The Skullbusters and Dixon Softball received paid berths to the USSSA "E" World Tournament September 13-16 in Lake Buena Vista, Fl. Both teams will also advance to the Great Lakes "E" Nationals back in Milford, and to the Ohio "E" State August 18-19 in Dayton.

M & M/Saints Outlast Hitmen 18-17 In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D" Qualifier At Pastime Park

Harrison, Oh.--M & M Connection/Saints scored three runs in the top of the 5th to break a 15-15 deadlock with the Hitmen, then held on for an 18-17 victory in the championship game of a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D" State-National Qualifier April 7th at Pastime Park.

M & M/Saints wound up with a 5-1 mark for the day, finishing second in round robin play to the Hitmen before disposing of three elimination round opponents.

Mike Ditmer's rbi double put the eventual champions ahead to stay at 16-15 against the Hitmen in the finals. John Tomlinson followed with a clutch, two run double to drive in a pair of insurance runs. Both runs were needed, as the Hitmen answered with two runs in the bottom of the 6th before bowing out.

The title was M & M's third of the year and second in as many weekends. A berth to the USSSA Great Lakes "D" National Tournament on September 1-2 in Indianapolis passed down to the Hitmen and third place Dwyer Concrete. Both teams also qualified for the Ohio U-Trip "D" State August 18-19 back in Harrison. A berth to the USSSA Great Lakes "E" National Tournament September 1-2 in Milford, and to the Ohio USSSA "E" State August 18-19 in Dayton, was awarded to the Ballin Bombers, the highest finishing "E" team in the tournament. Bernard Concrete Cutting also qualified for the "E" State.

Brian McDonald turned in a blistering .822 performance for the winners, who average just under 19 runs per game. Mike Lamb followed with a .750 day, Mike Ditmer batted .741, John Erdman .682, John Tomlinson .653, Brian Duncan .609 and Mike Barone .600.

"That's why he leads off," remarked Saints manager John Tomlinson regarding McDonald's .822 effort. "We call him 'Sony Walkman' because he draws a lot of walks, but when he does swing, he's got a great shot."

The key to winning the tournament?

“I took a kerosene heater,” joked Tomlinson. “It was freezing cold. There was a 20 mph wind and it was 22 degrees all day.

“Honestly, we played really good defense,” said Tomlinson. “We had a few people out of position and their ability to play other positions was key - particularly Mike Lamb, who normally pitches and who played right field, and Brian McDonald, our regular 2nd baseman who layed left field.”

M & M’s defensive standouts, though, were Mike Barone (cf) and Mike Ditmer (mif), said Tomlinson.

“Mike covers a lot of ground and was the only true outfielder we had out there. He just took control,” said Tomlinson. “Mike Ditmer is still young. He doesn’t realize his potential yet, but he’s going to be a great ball player.

“It’s reassuring when you’re pitching and you don’t have to field everything up the middle because you have players with that kind of athletic ability behind you,” said Tomlinson, who pitched for the Saints. “You just get out of the way.”

M & M went 2-1 in round robin play, mercy-ruling D’s Restoration 20-7 and Dwyer Concrete 22-10 - each in five innings - before being ambushed by the Hitmen 19-18. Mike Lamb collected five hits, and Kelly Sledge, Brian McDonald and Mike Ditmer chipped in with four each against D’s. Lamb, McDonald and Brian Duncan were each 5-for-5 versus Dwyer.

M & M jumped out to a 6-0 lead in the bottom of the 1st and never looked back in a 15-1, five inning rout of Bernard Concrete Cutting in game two. A two run double by Greg Riddle capped off the 1st. The lead swelled to 13-1 with the help of a four run 3rd. John Tomlinson delivered the big blow of the inning with a two run double. Brian Duncan, Brian McDonald, Mike Ditmer and Mike Lamb combined for a dozen hits.

Next the Saints blew open a 2-1 contest with fifteen runs in the bottom of the 2nd and went on to spank the Ballin Bombers 19-6 in five. Mike Lamb’s three run double and a two run Brian Duncan single highlighted the inning. Brian McDonald banged out four hits, and Lamb and Greg Riddle chipped in with three apiece.

That lifted M & M into the championship game against the Hitmen, who had saddled the Saints with their lone loss of the day. The two finalists battled to a 15-15 stalemate through four, but in the top of the 5th M & M struck for three runs to take the lead for good. Mike Ditmer doubled in the go-ahead run, and John Tomlinson followed with a big two run single to cap off the inning. The Hitmen scored the final two runs of the game in the bottom of the 6th, but pitcher John Tomlinson held them scoreless in the 7th to preserve the win. Tomlinson, who came in to relieve with his team trailing 13-10 after three, held the Hitmen to four runs over the last four frames.

Ditmer and Brian McDonald shared eight hits, and John Erdman and Brian Duncan each went 3-for-4 for the champions.

Saints manager John Tomlinson said his team got a big boost from its bench.

“We used every one of our subs and still won,” said Tomlinson. “That means a lot when you can call on somebody and fill somebody’s shoes.”

Tomlinson said his team had “renewed our fire” with their third tournament title of the year.

“We lost to two teams in an NIT in March that we shouldn’t have and we came out and renewed our fire,” said Tomlinson. “We’ve won two tournaments since then.”

Finally, said Tomlinson, “Pastime Park ran a good tournament.

“We enjoy playing there because of the management. They’re very player oriented.”

April 14-15 Stories...

Tolliver, Cox Lead Hitmen In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D-E” State-National Qualifier At Expressway Park

Milford, Oh.--Brian Tolliver batted .727 and Wally Cox collected sixteen rbi’s to lead the Hitmen to a first place finish in a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D-E” State-National Qualifier April 15th at Expressway Park.

The Hitmen knocked off three opponents en route to the title, polishing off Win-Place-Show 17-10 in the deciding contest.

The championship netted the Hitmen a berth to the Ohio USSSA Men’s “D” State Tournament August 18-19 in Harrison, and to the U-Trip Great Lakes “D” Nationals Labor Day Weekend in Indianapolis.

A berth to the Ohio USSSA Men’s “E” State August 18-19 in Dayton, and to the Great Lakes “E” Nationals September 1-2 in Milford was awarded to Win-Place-Show.

Following Tolliver’s team leading .727 performance were Cox and Tim Marshall at .667, and Greg Carson and Gordon Cordell at .600. Cox led the Hitmen in rbi’s with sixteen, and Carson in runs scored with nine.

Player-manager Greg Carson said Tolliver was simply “a real good base hitter.

“He’s one of our leading hitters every year. We can always count on him to get a hit.”

Carson credited his club's success to a big offensive effort and an infield defense that stepped to stop opponent's rallies all day long.

"That's the best we've hit the ball so far this year," said Cardon. "And we turned eight double plays in our three games. That got us out of a lot of jams and a lot of innings."

Maning the infield for the Hitmen are Roger Fields at 3rd, Brian Tolliver at short, middle infielder Wally Cox, 2nd baseman Joe Downing and Carson at 1st.

Cox proved to be the team's standout at middle infield.

"He turns the double play real quick and has a real strong arm," observed Carson. "That helps.

"The outfield also did a great job," remarked Carson. "We play a three-man. Those guys always cover a lot of ground."

The Hitmen's outfield consisted of left fielder Pat Rarick, center-fielder Gordon Cordell, and right fielder Tim Marshall.

Three, three-run innings carried the Hitmen past the Cincy Scorpions 10-1 in game one. After the Scorpions answered a solo shot by Cox in the top of the 1st by knotting the score in the bottom of the inning, Tim Marshall put his club ahead to stay with a two run single in the top of the 2nd. The Hitmen added three in the 3rd and three in the 6th to put the game out of reach.

Cox banged out three hits and Ron Sterling and Gordon Cordell each went 2-for-3.

Next the Hitmen overcame a 12-11 3rd inning deficit by outscoring JB's 11-0 over the next three innings to seal an eventual 22-16 victory. Greg Carson's two run single put his team ahead for good at 13-12 in the top of the 4th. Pat Rarick made it 15-12 with a two run double in the 5th. The floodgates opened in the 6th as the Hitmen erupted for seven runs, the first four coming on back-to-back two-run singles by Gordon Cordell and Wally Cox, followed by Pat Rarick's two-run double.

Brian Tolliver pounded out five hits, Cox added four, and Carson, Rarick, Cordell and Roger Fields combined for twelve.

The Hitmen had to rally from behind again in their finale, using a six run explosion in the bottom of the 4th to overcome a 7-5 Win-Place-Show advantage. A walk to Brian Tolliver forced in the go-ahead run. Wally Cox, who had delivered a key slammer in the bottom of the 3rd to knot the score at 5-5, followed with a two run single. The Hitmen added two in the bottom of the 5th and four in the 6th to nail down a 17-10 victory and the title.

Roger Fields paced the offense with four hits, Wally Cox drove in half of his team-high sixteen rbi's with eight, and Greg Carson chipped in with two hits.

Final Standings: 1. Hitmen 3-0, 2. JB's 2-1, Win-Place-Show 1-2; Cincy Scorpions 0-4.

Jet/G-Troop Overpowers Team Hangover 23-9 In Expressway Park Round Robin

Milford, Oh.--Jet/G-Troop swept past three opponents, overpowering Team Hangover 23-9 in the championship game, en route to a first place finish in a three team round robin on Sunday, April 15th at Expressway Park.

After blanking Nighthawks (0-3) 8-0 and easing past Team Hangover (2-2) 8-6 in a position round, Jet/G-Troop crushed Team Hangover 23-9 in the elimination round.

April 21-22 Stories...

Three-Man Outfield Helps M & M/Saints Bag Fourth In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D" Qualifier At Queen City

West Chester, Oh.--M & M Connection/Saints rolled to their fourth tournament title of the year by sweeping past three opponents in a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D" State-National Qualifier April 21st at Queen City Sports Complex.

M & M sandwiched a tough 7-4 victory over runner-up Ice in between a 19-1 rout of B & B Productions and an 18-8, six inning spanking of Cincy Home Loans.

A berth to the Ohio USSSA Men's "D" State Tournament August 18-19 in Harrison, and to the Great Lakes U-Trip "D" Nationals Labor Day Weekend in Indianapolis passed down to Ice. The Saints had previously qualified.

M & M won behind the strong defensive play turned in by the team's three man outfield and the hitting of Mike Barone, said manager John Tomlinson.

"We have a fairly new left fielder - it's only his second or third year playing - and he's just starting to break on the ball better and starting to pick up the ball," said Tomlinson.

Justin Charlton was the subject of Tomlinson's remark.

"We play a three man outfield, which allows us to plug the hole in the infield, and that was the key to beating these teams," said Tomlinson. "Every single one of them played a four man outfield."

Mike Barone led M & M in hitting with a red-hot .786 mark.

“He’s always been solid for us, but he hasn’t been hitting the ball yet this year like he’s capable of,” said Tomlinson. “He’s been hitting the ball right at people. But now he’s hitting the gaps. He’s a great hitter.”

The infield defense was anchored by middle infielder Mike Ditmer and shortstop Tim Duffey, said Tomlinson.

“Mike has so much range he can make plays on the other side of the bag. He’s really quick and has a really good arm. And Tim has caught everything hit at him this year at short. He’d get our gold glove for sure if we were naming one right now,” said Tomlinson.

The Saints scored three runs in the top of the 2nd and added three in the 5th to build an 8-1 lead over B & B Productions in game one, then blew the game open with an eleven run outburst to blast B & B 19-1. Ron Williams delivered a pair of big blows in the game, including a two run single in the 2nd and a three run triple double in the 7th. John Tomlinson capped off the three run 5th with a two run single.

John Erdman and Mike Barone pounded out five hits each and Scott Barber added four to pace the offense.

After falling behind 2-0 in the bottom of the 1st, M & M put up four runs in the top of the 2nd to grab a 4-2 lead, then added one in the 4th and two in the 5th to ease past Ice 7-4 in a key match-up with the eventual tournament runner-up. Darren Block’s sac fly put his club ahead to stay at 3-2 in the 2nd. Brian Duncan and John Erdman each contributed an rbi single as the Saints improved their lead to 7-3 in the 5th.

Mike Barone collected three more hits, and Kelly Sledge and Ron Williams went 2-for-3.

M & M exploded for eight runs in the top of the 2nd to knock Cincy Home Loans on their heels, but CHL roared back with seven runs of their own in the bottom of the inning to cut the deficit to one at 8-7. Unfazed, M & M answered with five runs in the top of the 3rd, and this time CHL didn’t have an answer, and the Saints went on to polish off CHL 18-8 in six. A two ru single by John Erdman highlighted the eight run 2nd. Darren Block had a two run double in the five run 3rd, and Mike Barone a two run triple to close out the scoring in the top of the 3rd.

Scott Barber banged out four hits, and Erdman, Block, Tim Duffey and Brian Duncan combined for a dozen hits to help power the champions.

M & M’s John Tomlinson said it “feels nice” to have racked up four tournament wins through mid-April.

“We’ve been accused of ducking the competition by playing in qualifiers. That’s what the message boards say, but we go where we have the personnel to play,” said Tomlinson. “We make our schedule out in February and stick to that. We’re a first year

team with only five guys from last year. It's nice to be jelling with our new guys already."

Final Standings: 1. M & M Connection/Saints 3-0, 2. Ice 2-1, 3. Cincy Home Loans 1-2, 4. B & B Productions 0-3.

Patient TPE/Backstabbers Earn Revenge, \$500 In Kolping Kashic Sweep

Mt. Healthy, Oh.--TPE/Backstabbers got even and got rich as they swept undefeated past five opponents to capture first place in the Kolping Kashic April 21st at Kolping Park.

TPE used a solid defense to hold three round robin opponents to single digit scoring, as they mowed down Cincinnati Scorpions (2-2) 17-7, Riptide Softball (0-3) 12-7 and Extreme/-Turner Properties (1-2) 11-4. Then in the semi-finals they held off Rib City Grill/TP Mechanical 18-17 after squandering a 15-1 lead. That turned out to be the championship game, as finalist Cheviot Savings walked out, leaving the \$500 cash first place prize to the Backstabbers.

Averaging seventeen runs per game and patience were the keys to winning the tournament, said TPE manager Creg Storer.

"The fact that they allowed us to use home runs helped us put up a lot of runs," commented Storer. "We were missing a couple of key fielders, so we knew we were going to have to hit.

"Also we were patient and waited for our big inning to come," noted Storer. "Every game we had a big inning. We scored nine against the Scorpions in the 6th, eight against Rip Tide in the 5th, nine against Extreme in the 5th and eleven against Rib City in the 2nd."

Storer said his team had a little extra motivation against third round opponent Extreme/Turner Properties.

"We were pumped up to play them. We played them four times last year and lost to them all four times, including in an NIT finals at RiverShore," recalled Storer. "Having beaten them earlier this year at Pastime, this gave us a chance to get closer to evening the score."

Steve Schroeder spearheaded the offense for the champions going 12-for-13 (.923), scoring ten runs and driving in a dozen with three home runs.

"He's the newest guy on our team and the youngest," observed Storer. "And with a couple of guys missing, he got to play every game and proved why we picked him up.

"We know he's got a rocket arm and can hit the ball a ton, but his mind is his biggest enemy, so confidence was key," added Storer.

Floyd Turner (.769), Kyle Holmes (.765), and Rusty Beatty (.625) also turned in a big day for TPE.

Schroeder and Rusty Beatty combined for eight hits, and Holmes and Matt Feathers chipped in three each in a 17-7, six-inning rout of the Cincinnati Scorpions in game one.

Next John Nicely banged out four hits, and Beatty and Jeremy Vandever added three apiece versus Riptide.

Then Holmes, Feathers and Floyd Turner shared a dozen hits, and John Nicely cracked two home runs and collected three hits along with Steve Schroeder as the Backstabbers punished Extreme/Turner 22-6 in five.

Meanwhile in division two of the eight-team, two-division affair, Cheviot Savings took first place with a 2-1 mark. Cheviot narrowly escaped Rib City Grill/TP Mechanical in their opener, then suffered a 20-19 setback versus D. W. Softball before knocking off Franchise 15-14 in the finale.

In the semi-finals, the division winners squared off against the runners-up from the other division, and the Backstabbers outslugged Rib City Grill/TP Mechanical 18-17, while Cheviot Savings overpowered the Cincinnati Scorpions 24-7.

TPE jumped out to a 15-1 lead over Rib City after two and a half innings, but Rib City put a scare into the eventual champions with eight runs in the bottom of the 6th and four in the 7th before, and put the tying run on 3rd before pitcher Floyd Turner induced the next batter to ground out to middle infielder Jeremy Vandever. The Backstabbers did most of their damage in an eleven run 2nd. Mike Harris' three run double and a Steve Schroeder three run blast highlighted the inning.

Schroeder and Kyle Holmes pounded out four hits each. Harris also homered for the champions.

The title was a confidence booster for the Backstabbers, said manager Creg Storer.

“We know we have the talent this year. Where we were lacking is with confidence having lost two championship finals this year,” said Storer.

Storer concluded by saluting Kolping manager Kevin Sims on a well-run tournament.

TPE/Backstabbers Fend Off Dino's 17-16 In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D" Finale At Pastime Park

Harrison, Oh.--After building a 17-5 lead in the bottom of the 4th inning in the championship game, TPE/Backstabbers held off a furious rally by Dino's/T & T Freightways to preserve a 17-16 victory and emerge with a first place finish in a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "D" State-National Qualifier on Sunday, April 22nd at Pastime Park.

TPE/Backstabbers had trampled three round robin opponents en route to the finals, leveling Chimney Doctors 20-3 in five, Northern Kentucky Thunder 16-6 in six and Young Guns/Dino's 15-6 to set up a showdown with Dino's/T & T Freightways.

TPE/Backstabbers picked up \$180 in cash, while a berth to the USSSA Great Lakes "D" National Tournament Labor Day Weekend in Indianapolis passed down to Dino's/T & T.

Backstabbers' manager Creg Storer credited the championship to "big innings and playing relaxed.

"We had already won \$500 for the weekend," noted Storer. "Also, for our first three tournaments we had fourteen guys in attendance. And while that's good, it's also difficult to give everyone playing time since you can't put fourteen people on the field. So this weekend was a great opportunity to play all eleven guys each day and nobody had to worry about coming out of any of the games.

"We were without Greg Kinsella, Adam Shepherd and Matt Flynn, so the other guys had to step up to help in our victories," continued Storer. "Brian George did a great job in left field replacing Greg Kinsella. He's fresh off having twin boys two weeks ago."

John Nicely paced the offense for TPE with an .867, nine rbi day.

"He's our four-hole hitter and we expect him to hit like that every weekend," said Storer. "He's got tons of power and hits the ball hard all day long."

Steve Schroeder followed with a .769 effort, Mike Harris batted .714 with a dozen rbi's and two home runs, and Matt Feathers chipped in with a .667 average, nine runs scored and ten rbi's.

Storer homered and went 3-for-3 along with Nicely, Schroeder, Floyd Turner and Brian George as the Backstabbers rocked Chimney Doctors 20-3 in five in their opener.

Then Mike Harris homered and drove in six runs, and shared eight hits with Nicely as TPE brushed aside Northern Kentucky Thunder 16-6 in six. Kyle Holmes, Matt Feathers and Mike O'Day each went 3-for-4.

Next TPE steamrolled Young Guns/Dino's 15-6 as Matt Feathers and Rusty Beatty combined for six hits. Matt Flynn contributed a key pinch-hit single.

That set the stage for a showdown with Dino's/T & T Freightways. Dino's drew first blood with a run in the top of the 1st. The Backstabbers knotted the score in the bottom of the 2nd, but Dino's answered with four in the 3rd to grab a 5-1 advantage. TPE then exploded for fourteen runs in the bottom of the inning, and padded their lead with two more in the 4th to forge a commanding 17-5 lead.

But T & T refused to quit, outscoring the Backstabbers 11-0 over the final three frames before succumbing 17-16. The tying run was at 3rd when pitcher Floyd Turner induced the next batter to ground out to Matt Feathers at 1st base to end the game.

John Nicely, Creg Storer, Steve Schroeder and Jeremy Vandever combined for twelve hits to lead the champions.

TPE manager Creg Storer, whose team had won a tournament the previous day at Kolping Park, said he's hoping the back-to-back victories will serve as a springboard for his team to play well in a U-Trip NIT the following weekend.

"Overall between both days we went 9-0," said Storer. "That should get our confidence going to play next weekend in the D NIT at Expressway, where we know we'll face better competition and have to bring our 'A' game."

Pitching, Defense Carries D & S/Greenies In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" Qualifier At Expressway Park

Milford, Oh.--D & S/Greenies held four opponents to a combined 19 runs en route to a first place finish in a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA "E" State-National-World Qualifier April 21st at Expressway Park.

D & S/Greenies rallied from a 4-3 first round setback to knock off three straight teams, including the Ballin' Bombers 10-7 in the championship game.

An 8-2 victory over The Mound helped D & S even their record in pool play at 1-1, then a 16-6, five inning rout of the Backyard Boys in the semi-finals set the stage for showdown with the Bombers in the tournament finale.

The victory earned D & S/Greenies a berth into the Ohio USSSA "E" State Tournament August 17-18 in Dayton, to the Great Lakes U-Trip "E" Nationals back in Milford, and for the USSSA Men's "E" World September 13-16 in Lake Buena Vista, Fl.

A tight defense and clutch hitting proved to be the difference for the winners, said manager Greg Gerwe.

"We played really solid defense all day long and didn't give up many runs," said Gerwe. "And we hit fairly consistently, especially when we had to."

Kenny Jones hit a blistering .727 to lead no fewer than eight teammates who eclipsed the .500 mark. Those included Jeremy Billows at .692, Justin Sears at .636, Tony Brothers at .625, Mike Watkins and Juan Lewis at .555, Greg Gerwe at .545 and Jason Huebner at .538.

Gerwe said Jones "hit really well and played well on defense.

“And Justin Sears pitched well all day,” noted Gerwe. “He also fielded the middle well. A lot of guys were hitting the middle and he fielded balls pretty well there.”

Rich Williams, Kenny Jones and Rusty Garvin also played well defensively, said Gerwe.

“Rich played a pretty good shortstop and Ken played well in the middle, and they turned a couple of key double plays,” said Gerwe. “And Rusty Garvin made a big play in the 7th in the finals at 2nd base. He made a diving grab of a line drive. We had to beat them by two runs to win the tournament. If that ball had gone through, we might not have had the run differential we needed to win.”

After falling 4-3 to the Ballin’ Bombers in their opener, D & S’ offense finally came to life in the 5th and 6th innings as they erased the Mound 8-2. A two run 5th erased a 2-1 deficit and put D & S on top to stay. Kenny Jones singled in the go-ahead run. Tony Brothers’ rbi single capped off a big five run 6th that helped seal the win.

Todd Zimmerman had a pair of doubles and shared eight hits with Jones, Jeremy Billows and Juan Lewis.

In game three the Backyard Boys drew first blood with two runs in the top of the 1st. But D & S answered with eight in the bottom of the inning and went on to mercy rule the Backyard Boys 16-6 in five. Richie Williams’ rbi single put D & S ahead for good at 3-2. Jeremy Billows’ rbi single capped off the inning.

Jason Huebner collected four hits, and Billows and Greg Gerwe combined for six.

D & S never trailed in the finals after grabbing a 4-0 lead in the bottom of 1st. A two run double by Mike Watkins highlighted the inning. D & S padded their lead with three in the 2nd and three in the 4th to forge a 10-0 advantage, then fended off a late Bomber rally to emerge with a 10-7 victory.

Watkins pounded out four hits, and Kenny Jones, Jeremy Billows and Justin Sears chipped in with three each. Sears also drove in a team-high three runs.

“We want to thank our sponsors D & S Engineering and Greenies,” said manager Greg Gerwe. “Last year it took us to the middle of August to get our World berth, so it’s really nice (to qualify this early). All the pressure is off.”

M & M/Saints Escape Dixon Trucking, 8-7, In Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D-E” Finale At Expressway Park

Milford, Oh.--After outscoring their first two opponents by a combined 58-1 margin, M & M Connection/Saints escaped with an 8-7 victory over Dixon Trucking in the championship game of a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA “D-E” State-National Qualifier on Sunday, April 22nd at Expressway Park.

The Saints and Dixon clashed in the finals after both going 2-0 in pool play in the six team affair. The two clubs battled to a 7-7 stalemate through six and a half innings, but in the bottom of the 7th, Ron Williams singled, went to 2nd on a Kelly Sledge base hit, then advance to 3rd on a fly ball off the bat of Tim Duffey. Dixon issued an intentional pass to Brian McDonald to load the bases, but then Mike Lamb took a walk to force in Williams with the game winner.

Runner-up Dixon Trucking and lower bracket champion OC Softball were both awarded berths to the Ohio USSSA Men's "E" State Tournament August 18-19 in Dayton. Dixon also qualified for the USSSA Great Lakes "E" National on Labor Day Weekend to be held back at Expressway Park. The Saints had previously qualified.

An offense that put up an incredible 66 runs in three games, the hitting of player-manager John Tomlinson and a big day from sub Greg Riddle were three of the keys to winning the tournament, said Tomlinson.

"We definitely won behind our offense today. We started the day hitting well and it was enough to carry us into the championship game. Our last game was the only close game we had," noted Tomlinson.

Tomlinson hit a sizzling .924 to pace the offense.

"I expect to do that," he said. "I don't feel like it was anything too special. I expect to always hit well. I don't play very good defense so that's how I contribute."

No fewer than nine Saints hit .600 or over. Tim Duffey and Ron Williams followed Tomlinson with an .819 performance, Justin Charlton batted .700, Darren Block and Greg Riddle hit .667, Kelly Sledge .637, Mike Lamb .616 and Brian McDonald .600.

Riddle also played a big role for M & M defensively, said Tomlinson.

"He's a sub and he got to play the middle today. He plays wherever we need him to and does a good job at any position. He's a good athlete and he never complains about where he plays or how much he plays," observed Tomlinson.

A sixteen run 1st sealed an eventual 4-1, four inning laughter against OC Softball in game one. Two run singles by Mike Barone and Mike Lamb, and a two run double by John Erdman highlighted the inning. John Tomlinson and Darren Block pounded out six hits each, and Ron Williams added five.

Next the Saints used an eight run 2nd and a five run 5th to help blank L & C 17-0 in five on the strength of Mike Lamb's shutout pitching. John Tomlinson's slammer ignited his club's big 2nd inning. Justin Charlton pitched in with a two run double. Brian McDonald's two run single closed out the scoring in the 5th.

Tomlinson continued his torrid hitting, going 4-for-4. Tim Duffey and Greg Riddle were both perfect in three at bats.

That lifted M & M into the championship game, where they squared off with Dixon Trucking. The two finalists fought to a 7-7 deadlock through six and a half, but in the bottom of the 7th, a pair of singles by Ron Williams and Kelly Sledge, and a walk to Brian McDonald loaded the bases for Mike Lamb, who took a walk to force in Williams with the game winner.

Williams collected three hits, and Sledge, Tim Duffey and John Tomlinson each went 2-for-3.

The victory, the Saints' fifth, improved their record to 27-8 for the year.

"We're fortunate to be playing together and jelling together," said manager John Tomlinson. "And we're fortunate to have guys who like each other and like to play softball.

"We're like a family," he added. "Everybody gets along. We like to do things together outside of softball, too."

Early Scoring Propels Miken/No Doubt Past Worth-Bud Light-USSSA Mixed "C-D" Field At Expressway Park

Milford, Oh.--Miken/No Doubt rallied from a first round 12-2 setback to the Run Rulers to knock off three straight opponents en route to a first place finish in a Worth-Bud Light-USSSA Mixed "C-D" State-National-World Qualifier on Sunday, April 22nd at Expressway Park.

Miken/No Doubt used a nine run inning to help blow past their next three victims, as they mercy-ruled Sizzle Softball 15-3 and 19-4 in five, then avenged their loss to the Run Rulers 16-10 in the finale.

The champions exploded to a 9-0 lead in the top of the 1st in each game against Sizzle, then used a nine run 2nd to overcome a 3-2 deficit versus the Run Rulers in the title game.

The victory gave Miken/No Doubt a berth to the Ohio USSSA Mixed "C" State Tournament August 25-26 in Cincinnati, to the U-Trip Great Lakes Mixed "C" Nationals September 29-30 in Dayton, and to the Mixed "C" World October 19-21 in South Carolina.

Coaching and defense were the key ingredients to winning the tournament, said Miken/No Doubt manager Dennis Jenkins.

“Bill Dolby made decisions on where to pput certain players,” said Jenkins. “We have a lot of new people and he put them where he thought we needed them and it worked out from there.”

Dolby coaches and pitches for Miken/No Doubt.

“We also played excellent defense,” said Jenkins. “We didn’t make many errors.”

Anchoring the defense were shortstop Chris D’Augustino, first baseman Rachel Church and pitcher Bill Dolby, said Jenkins.

“Chris and Rachel made some big defensive plays in the championship game, and Rachel played excellent in all four games.”

Hurston Richmond paced the offense, turning in a sizzling .769 day.

“He had an excellent tournament both offensively and defensively,” observed Jenkins. “We started him out in left center and then moved to right field. Run Rulers had a lot of lefties, so we moved him to right field.”

Jenna Poppe also had a big day, batting .670. Trish Hudson followed right behind at .660 and Jeff Poppe batted .560.

“After that, the averages looked terrible,” remarked Jenkins. “It was just getting timely hits when we needed them to get the runs.”

Miken/No Doubt split two position round games, dropping their opener to Run Rulers 12-2 before evening their record against Sizzle Softball 15-3 in five. Hurston Richmond launched a three run bomb to help his club jump on top 9-0 in the top of the 1st. Richmond and Chris D’Augustino each went 3-for-3. Trish Hudson and Jenna Poppe added two hits each.

Miken/No Doubt used another nine run 1st to seal an eventual 19-4 rout of Sizzle in the first elimination round game. Jeff Poppe’s two run double was the big blow of the inning. Hurston Richmond pounded out four hits, Rachel Church was perfect in three at bats, and Bill Dolby and Trish Hudson chipped in two hits apiece.

In the finals, Miken/No Doubt used yet another nine run outburst to break open a 3-3 contest in the bottom of the 2nd. Chris D’Augustino’s rbi single put his team ahead for good at 4-3. Later in the inning, Bill Dolby contributed a two run single as the lead swelled to 8-3, and Jenna Poppe followed with a two run double to stretch Miken’s advantage to 10-3. The Run Rulers never recovered and succumbed 16-10.

Hurston Richmond, who clubbed a three run homer in the bottom of the 1st, banged out three hits. Dennis Jenkins and Jenna and Jeff Poppe combined for six hits.

Sibcy Cline, Kahoots Take Kolping Division Titles

Mt. Healthy, Oh.--Sibcy Cline went 2-1, while Kahoots disposed of all three of their opponents, to claim their respective division titles in an eight team, two division Saturday night round robin April 21st at Kolping Park.

Sibcy Cline survived a 7-5 duel in their opener against Bayes & Sons (0-3), then suffered a 14-7 setback to the Cardinals (2-1) before overpowering Master-batters (2-1) 22-9 to nail down the division one title.

While in division two, Kahoots spanked Mama's Boys (0-2) 15-7 and Nazdar (1-1) 17-2, then outslugged the Renegades (1-2) 17-15.

Angry Beavers 2-1, Blazers 3-0 To Claim Kolping Divisions

Mt. Healthy, Oh.--The Angry Beavers went 2-1, and the Blazers swept to a 3-0 record to claim their respective division titles in an eight team, two division round robin on Sunday, April 22nd at Kolping Park.

The Angry Beavers outdueled Wicked Ways (2-1) 15-13 in a key first round match-up with the eventual tournament runner-up, then flattened Fairfield Tavern (1-2) 18-3 before dropping a 14-11 decision to Green Machine (1-2) in their finale.

The Blazers overpowered Cincinnati Nationals (1-2) 17-7, then eased past runner-up Brookers/Ponce Creek (2-1) 8-5 prior to outslugging Boot Hill (0-3) 16-11 to complete the sweep.

A T Excavating, Caribbean Storm, TNT 3-0 At Queen City

West Chester, Oh.--A T Excavating, Caribbean Storm and TNT each posted a perfect 3-0 record en route to a first place finish in a 13-team, three division round robin on Sunday, April 22nd at Queen City Sports Complex.

In division one, A T Excavating overpowered Dayton Freight (0-3) 15-4 and Vengeance 23-7 (1-2) before polishing off Emanon (2-1) 13-10 in the championship game.

Caribbean Storm outslugged Master Blasters (2-1) 16-13 in a key first round match-up with the eventual division two runners-up, then slipped past CMT Investments (1-2) 5-3 before leveling Pacific Bombers (0-3) 20-7.

While in division three, TNT crushed Lee Inc. (1-2) 20-7, then squeezed past Ramrods/Barney's (2-1) 10-9 and Al Smith Roofing (0-3) 9-8.