

Softball Is A Team Sport: A Guest Editorial by Tom Taylor

Softball is a team sport and to play well in any team sport it is necessary to have a cohesive plan on how to organize and run the team. By definition softball is a team sport, rather than an individual sport because there are 10 players involved in the playing of the game. The totality of the team encompasses one or multiple sponsors, a manager, coaches, ten players actively involved in the game, and a number of players on the bench.

The goals of the sponsor are to field a winning team, to get his name known in the softball community, and hopefully to generate incremental revenue through greater recognition of his name. The sponsor, manager and coaches should collectively decide on the leagues and tournaments in which they will play in the upcoming season. This is, of course, commensurate with the money available and the classification of the team.

It is crucial to have a talented manager involved in the direction of the on-field operation of a softball team. The manager should have the outlook that "THIS IS A TEAM" and he should use any tools available to him to make sure his players adopt a team first attitude. Teaching his players about teamwork should go beyond the scope of hitting, fielding, and throwing. The skilled manager knows when things are proceeding smoothly and he then adopts a "hands-off" attitude. Conversely, when the equilibrium of the team is disrupted, the manager has to be a skilled facilitator and intervene appropriately.

The game of softball can be looked on as a metaphor for the game of life being played out on the field. What I mean is that many situations encountered in playing softball are applicable in our daily lives-hard work, sportsmanship, teamwork, supporting our friends and family, and learning to both win and lose with a modicum of grace. The team sport of softball can teach us to check our egos and to subjugate our individual goals to those of the team. A player should learn to share in the joy of the successes of his teammates as well as in his personal successes. A skilled manager can have a positive impact on the individuals on a softball team and form them into a cohesive unit.

The manager is in charge of the various strategies and tactics used during the course of a softball game. He makes substitutions and defensive changes as he sees fit, although he is often not personally present on the field as the game transpires. Generally there are additionally first and third base coaches on the field during the team's at bats. These coaches, as an extension of the manager, also strive to get the players to think and play as a team. Reed Hughes, the late great Hall of Fame manager of Century Tire/Eddie's Café (City Open Champs-1969, 1970, 1971) always chose to coach third base so he could personally inspire us by being on the field. Ask Red Ron Jones, Lee Sledge, Tommy Kasee, Denver Gabbard (or me) how much it meant to get a big kiss on the cheek for a key home run. Century Tire was a TEAM and the reason was the magnetic personality of our leader, Reed Hughes.

Reed Hughes considered the 9th, 10th, 1st, and 2nd positions in the batting order as interchangeable. Pat Wright might go 4 for 4 in the leadoff spot and get moved to ninth the next game. Shortstops and second basemen traded positions. We only carried about

thirteen players and nobody took vacations with our 120 game a year schedule. The late Charley Hensley was probably our best defensive outfielder but not a starter. He was always a fantastic contributor but never complained about lack of PT. He was the embodiment of team play, a concept which flourished under the facile direction of Reed Hughes.

My first encounter with softball as a true team sport was from 1966-1969 on the Stroh's Beer, Covington Sports Center team. This was previously the old Joe Gatliff Auto Sales, three-time ASA National Champion team. Under Al Brausch, ASA National Hall of Fame manager, our team would go into the outfield grass and say a pre-game prayer for the safety of our players and our opponents. There was no talk of individual aspirations. This team was a brotherhood of incredibly talented players who found sheer joy in competition and the play of the game of softball. Later Bill Witte managed us and the same team philosophy reigned. The definition of team will be forever etched in my mind by the memory of playing with the likes of Myron Reinhardt, Whitey Brown, and Hal Wiggins, all of whom became ASA National Hall of Fame inductees.

I have primarily dealt with softball as team sport due to the direction of a skilled manager and his coaches who are philosophically aligned with him. There is another piece to the puzzle of playing softball as a team. This involves how the individual actions and behaviors of players can either add to or detract from teamwork. Effective feedback about playing softball as a team sport can come from any of the individual players on the team. Each player must understand the value of thinking in terms of team first. When a player says something uncharitable about a teammate, it produces a divisive scenario. In the interest of harmony, the two players should be brought together to discuss their issues. Sometimes a third party moderator might bring about peace before an anti-team situation worsens. If this does not work, the manager should intervene and resolve the dispute, emphasizing softball team goals over individual goals.

In closing, I'll give a few suggestions on thinking in terms of softball as a team sport. Treat your teammate as you wish to be treated - as a fellow creature of God. Value your manager and coaches as caring mentors. If asked to pick the Most Valuable Player in a tournament, name your manager. Stay in peak physical condition - you owe it to your team. Treat the game as a microcosm of life - and learn your lessons well. Play the greatest sport ever and enjoy each game to the fullest.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Tom Taylor is a member of the Norwood Sorrento's Softball Hall of Fame and Greater Cincinnati All-Century Team. He was named the softball "Player of the Decade" for the seventies. He is also the first softball player to be inducted into the Hamilton County Sports Hall of Fame.

Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall Of Fame Profiles...

Dick Jones Won Six ASA Cincinnati Metro Titles In Twelve Years

James Richard "Dick" Jones had a relatively short softball career by today's standards.

But he made the most out of it.

After earning all-city honors twice as a member of the Sycamore High School basketball team, where he still holds the school single game scoring record of 41 points, Jones surprised everyone by turning down scholarships at XU and UC to enlist in the Marine Corps.

But Jones' future success in sports wasn't forsaken. It was only delayed. A brilliant twelve-year career in softball lay ahead of him.

After serving his country for eight years, Jones returned to Cincinnati in early 1964 and soon found himself playing softball with three of his seven brothers and softball legend Tom Taylor for Jack's Cafe in Blue Ash. After pitching his team to the league title and leading them in hitting, Jones and his teammates entered a more competitive league in Deer Park.

"We started getting big-time with a team called Monte Vista," recalls Jones. "That was a theater in Pleasant Ridge."

His two years with Monte Vista proved to be a springboard for the next stage of Jones' career.

"The next year Abrams Texaco took us over and we were 34-1 through the Metro," says Jones. "We had Tom Kasee at short, Lee Sledge at 3rd base, Black Ronnie (Jones' brother) played 1st and I pitched. We went to our first world tournament in Cleveland. We were all fairly young and we played the best team out of Northern Kentucky and beat them. We had also upset all those big teams in the City Tournament. We beat all the top teams from Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky."

Jones chalked up his second Metro crown the next year with Eddie's Cafe. During that season he experienced his all-time favorite softball exploit.

"The most exciting single event of my career was beating Wilsman Trucking in the finals of the 1968 Middletown Invitational," remembers Jones. "We were winning by one run in the bottom of the 7th. Wilsman had the bases loaded and their best and most powerful hitter at bat. I think the batter was Jimmy Wessel. We were playing with 280' fences and a white stitch Dudley.

"With a two-and-two count on the batter, I quick-pitched to our catcher, Jerry Daugherty. The ball was a bullet with no arc. The batter was surprised and he swung and missed and struck out. We won the game and the tournament. I was MVP."

Jones notched two more Metro titles with national powerhouse Century Tire in 1970 and '71, and finally wrapped up his career as a back-up pitcher for Hall of Famer Bobby Long with 1974-'75 Metro champions Sorrento's Pizza.

Two things characterized his playing style, says Jones.

“I had a big mouth. I talked to the batters and to the defense. I chased the batters around the bases and talked to them. My mouth was always going on me. Even my own teammates didn’t like it sometimes,” says Jones.

Defense was his other trademark.

“I don’t think there was anybody better than me. I backed up towards 2nd base in those days and covered the whole middle,” recalls Jones.

Along with earning MVP honors in Middletown in 1968, two other special times in Jones’ career were winning his first city tournament with Abram’s in 1967, and playing against his brother, another legendary pitcher from that era.

“Winning that City Championship with all the young guys we had was probably a million to one shot,” says Jones. “And when I played against my brother at St. Bernard I hit about .700 and had about eight hits off of him.

“We competed against each other, but I never played against him in the City Tournament,” says Jones. “They would really get up for us and they beat us a couple of times.”

After his two year stint with Sorrento’s, Jones walked away from the game to refocus his life on something more important: his family.

“I quit playing around 1976 to spend more time with my wife and daughter,” says Jones. “We got into the Arabian horse show business.”

Jones, who turns 71 this fall, will be inducted into the Norwood Sorrento’s-Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame on January 27th at the Radisson Hotel Cincinnati Riverfront in Covington.

“That will be icing on the cake for me,” says Jones. “Up until now my greatest honors have been serving eight years in the Marine Corps and being elected to the Sycamore High School Hall of Fame. I was all-Cincinnati there two years in row in basketball, and still hold the record for scoring the most points in one game (41). I had scholarship offers from XU and UC. I had 1,079 points there in three years. Basketball was my first love, but I also played baseball for four years at Sycamore.

“I’m grateful to have been considered for the Norwood Sorrento’s Softball Hall of Fame,” he continues. “It will be a privilege to join many of my former teammates in the softball Hall of Fame.

“It’s a great honor. I’m looking forward to it, and seeing some of my old players who I haven’t seen for years.”

Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall Of Fame Profiles...

Gary Mounts Starred In 1975 Ohio Valley Classic, Competed In 15 Consecutive World Tournaments

One of the great chapters in Cincinnati softball history was written in July of 1975.

Among other things, it proved to be the defining moment in the softball career of Gary W. Mounts.

At the time, the Ohio Valley Classic was without question the most prestigious softball tournament in the country in the mid-seventies. An annual showdown between the best ASA and USSSA teams in the country, the tournament provided a springboard for national powerhouses into national and world tournament play. And the tournament was a veritable “who’s who” in the game of softball.

Tournament operators handpicked the teams for the event from across the nation, and local teams could only gain entry into the event by competing in a qualifier. Estimates were that 15,000 fans attended the event each year. They lined up fifteen deep around the foul lines and behind the outfield fences at Ross Park in St. Bernard sipping out of buckets of tournament sponsor Pabst Blue Ribbon beer.

In 1975, Howard’s Furniture came to town brandishing back-to-back ASA Men’s Major National titles on their resume. They were expected to walk through the tournament and win a record third straight national title.

But that weekend in July of 1975, Goliath met David, and David won again.

“David” was Foxy Lady Lounge of Cincinnati, managed by Jay Hopkins. Hopkins orchestrated what is still considered to be the greatest upset in Greater Cincinnati softball history by running the table at Ross Park. His leadoff hitter was Gary Mounts.

“The 1975 Ohio Valley Classic will always remain the greatest thrill I had as a softball player,” recalls Mounts. “Winning that tournament against the top teams and players in the entire country could not be topped. Our team was a group of hard-nosed, exciting, dedicated players who were given no chance to win. But we accomplished the impossible. Batting leadoff and hitting .650 for the tournament while making the all-tournament team and winning the championship rings will stay with me for as long as I live.”

Of course, Mounts’ story didn’t end there. Nor did it begin there.

Amusingly, it began in a bar with a chance meeting with Greater Cincinnati’s “Mr. Softball” - Al Goodman.

“I came home from Vietnam in March of 1970 and stopped into a friend’s place down on Main Street, and Mr. Goodman was sitting at the bar,” remembers Mounts, who was forced to forego a baseball scholarship with Ohio State when he was drafted into the service in 1969. “I didn’t know who he was, and the bar owner, who was a friend of mine, introduced us. I had grown up a baseball guy. So he invited me out to Salway Park that Saturday to try out for Nick Ventre’s JTS Brown team. Nick was Al’s partner and sponsored the team. They were good buddies. So I went out to Salway and practiced with them and made the team, and pretty much played forever after that.”

Local softball Hall of Famer Al Goodman ran one of the largest independent softball leagues in the city in the seventies and one of the premier tournaments. He lived on Ludlow Avenue in Clifton. The words “Mr. Softball” were written on his mail box. He published a year book which served as the area’s softball bible prior to the Cincinnati Softball News. Mounts was named “Rookie of the Year” in Goodman’s book in 1971 and later earned the Goodman League “MVP” and “Best Infielder” awards. He was also named the MVP of the “Al Goodman Round Robin,” the area’s leading pre-season softball tournament.

Mounts went on to play in fifteen consecutive ASA Men’s Major Metro and Major World Tournaments during his career. Playing second base with legendary teams like Century Tire, Hammers, Dante’s and Jay’s AC, he won numerous major league titles, the Louisville Invitational, Lexington Thoroughbred Classic, Firecracker 500 in St. Louis, and Pittsburgh Invitational. In 1978 and 1980 his teams were runner-up in the USSSA World. Mounts batted .944 - going 17-for-18 - in the 1980 World.

“After winning the Ohio Valley Classic, batting 17-for-18 in the world was one of my greatest thrills along with competing in my first world tournament in 1972 with Century Tire,” says Mounts.

A lifetime .600 hitter, Mounts was known as a line drive hitter who could hit to all fields. He spent most of his career batting leadoff, and was fast and aggressive on the base paths. He considers his strengths as a player to have been his “desire to play and my speed.

“I couldn’t hit the ball out, but back then you had to be a big guy to hit it out,” says Mounts.

Mounts, who will be inducted into the Norwood Sorrento’s Softball Hall of Fame on January 27th during an induction ceremony at the Radisson Hotel Cincinnati Riverfront in Covington, says the occasion will serve as a “justification for all the blood and sweat and tears and summers of devotion to the game.

“At this point in time I look back on softball and realize it was the most fun I ever had,” says Mounts. “And it’s always been my dream to be part of the Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame.

“I have no regrets,” he says. “I’d do it all over again if I had the chance. And I will forever be in debt to the sponsors, managers, coaches and players for the privilege of meeting and sharing my life within the Greater Cincinnati softball leagues.”

Local Induction Is Icing On The Cake For USSSA National Hall Of Famer Colleen Needham

After being inducted into a national hall of fame, entering a “local” hall might appear to be a letdown for most people.

Not Colleen Needham.

Needham, who entered the USSSA National Hall of Fame in the manager category in November of 2006, will be inducted into the Norwood Sorrento’s Softball Hall of Fame on January 27th at the Radisson Hotel Cincinnati Riverfront in Covington.

Instead of viewing that as a letdown, Needham sees it as a chance to celebrate and endorse her softball legacy with all those who made it possible - right here at home.

“When it’s in front of your peers and players, it’s an incredible feeling of accomplishment,” says Needham. “Especially because I know full well what they’ve done and how they have been playing for teams in Cincinnati and playing for me, and have been sticking together when it wasn’t the best of times. And we still can’t get a sponsor despite accomplishing all this. But we don’t have anybody leaving and that says something about the players.

“In order for us to go to the world, we have to have a golf outing or a cornhole tournament to raise money,” she says. “But they’re willing to do that versus going to another team. They’re willing to stick together.

“It will also be more emotional for me because of all the local people and ties and the number of players who will attend the induction,” says Needham.

Recalling her career, Needham says her involvement in Cincinnati softball came about as just pure luck.

“When I moved here from Youngstown to take a job, I had played softball there - but not on a fairly high level team,” recalls Needham. “A customer told me about the Jake Sweeney team, and he got Don Johnson's number for me.”

Unwittingly, Needham had stumbled upon the number one softball team in the country: ASA National Champion Sweeney Chevrolet.

“I thought maybe I could play for them, but then I watched them play and that cleared up in my mind that I could not play at that level.”

Fortunately, while Needham got a quick reality check about her playing skills, the experience did not dissuade her from wanting to be part of the team. She sensed there were other ways to contribute besides on the playing field.

“I started following the team, and helped out doing whatever I could,” says Needham. “I started making their hotel reservations and that kind of thing. Then when Don left the team - they were Famous Recipe by this time - and we realized that the sponsor wasn't going to give us any money, I started sponsoring the team with Jan Deters and Jenny Johnson.”

That's when luck - or fate, if you prefer - struck again.

“We realized we were going to have to have a sponsor the following year, and during a youth clinic (in the winter of 1986) we met Joe Kiradjieff's daughter, Tracy,” says Needham. “Somebody had given us his name and pointed out that Tracy was his daughter, and I walked her to her car when he came to pick her up and I talked to him. He gave us his card and he said to come by his office and we'd talk about it.”

The rest, as they say, is history. Kiradjieff was the owner of Empress Chili, and he agreed to sponsor the team. That proved to be the missing ingredient in what was to become a women's slow pitch dynasty that would last for eleven years and bring three USSSA World Championships and three runner-up finishes back to Cincinnati.

But that is just part of Needham's softball legacy. During Empress Chili's heyday, while she served the team as General Manager and arguably was the guiding force behind the team's success, she was never listed as the team manager. Then in 1998, she organized a 35-over team that won a USSSA World Championship. Suddenly, Needham had re-defined herself. She stepped out from behind the scenes and into the dugout, embarking on an eight year journey that would make her the most successful manager in the history of the USSSA.

Needham's success as a manager has been nothing short of phenomenal. Her teams have won eleven Masters World championships, including three in the 35-over program, one in the 45-over program, five in the 50-over program, and one in the 55-over program. Amazingly, she won three 35-over World Tournaments in a row, and in 2005 alone won three Worlds, including two on the same day at the same park! Her record in the 35-over and 50-over programs is a combined 198-42, giving her teams an overall mark of 946-245 since 1982. At this rate, she's on track to win 1,000 games.

Then last year, Needham ventured back into the “open” program with a “B” team. After battling through an injury-plagued season in 2006, her Ty-1-On team captured the USSSA “B” World title last September in Lake Buena Vista, Fl.

“I would have to add that as one of the highlights of my career,” says Needham. “It was exciting. During the tournament one of my players said she was so nervous because we had to make sure we did better than the previous year.

Needham went on to say “it doesn’t matter what level or age it is, it’s always about the people. When we had Empress, we had to compete against the big money teams. But for us, it was always about doing it with people who are my friends - not just about somebody writing a check for somebody to be there that weekend.

“Whether you win a championship or not, it’s fun to sit back afterwards and decide what you need to improve on while you’re having an adult beverage. It’s something those other teams that are from all over the country miss because they’re all flying off in different directions. It just amazes me what satisfaction anybody gets out of that,” she says.

So what have been the keys to Needham's success?

“It's probably my organizational skills,” suggests Needham, “and honesty with the players as far as what their role is going to be. Most of the time I'm a calming force during the game. I'm also a good judge of talent, and I'm open-minded about listening to the players if they have an idea of what we need to do, whether it's in the midst of a game or in between games.”

When Needham was inducted into the USSSA Hall of Fame in 2006, the question arose as to whether she was being honored for the role she played with Empress Chili, or for her success in the Masters program?

“It's probably a combination of the two,” she surmises. “I don't think you can ignore that I had something to do with those Empress teams. I helped recruit players for those teams, did all of the organizational part - getting the team into tournaments and securing the sponsorships and handling the money from sponsors.”

What have been the most rewarding moments of Needham's career?

“Anytime we have won a World Championship it's been rewarding,” observes Needham. “It's also rewarding to watch some of these players come along in their careers and be elected not just to a local Hall of Fame but to the National Hall of Fame. And finally it was very rewarding when we won three (Women's A World Championships) in a row from 1986-'88. That was very rewarding from the standpoint of having a new sponsor and having that continued success.”

Like any good manager, Needham recognizes that without the right players, you can't win a championship. And for that reason, she deflects the credit to them for her selection to the Hall of Fame.

“It's a great honor,” she acknowledges. “But I attribute that to the players that played for me over the years, whether it was in the open programs or the Masters or Seniors programs.”

Longtime Sponsor Dave Neiheisel's Joseph Chevrolet Teams Have Captured Seven National Senior Crowns

Dave Neiheisel's formula for success over the last seven years has been simple: purchase two or three sets of uniforms, send a check to your tournament destination, board your team into a pair of six-passenger vans on Thursday night, then drive home with a national title on Sunday.

That blueprint has worked seven times for the President of Joseph Chevrolet and his softball teams since 2001.

But it wasn't always that easy.

In fact, it took twelve years, countless hours and miles on the road, and coming up empty handed more times than Neiheisel and his teams would care to remember before their determination finally paid off in 2001.

The start of the Joseph Chevrolet sponsorship came seventeen years ago, but you have to travel back in time until 1963 to begin the story of Dave Neiheisel's love affair with softball.

"I was playing hardball when a friend asked me to play softball at a tournament in Withamsville in 1963," recalls Neiheisel. The Hamilton Tailors were in the tournament, and I had a heckuva tournament."

The "Tailors" were two-time ASA National Champions in 1961- '62.

"Al Goodman called me and said Matty Carrelli was putting a team together, and I played with Matty for three years and we won the City Tournament with Standard Industrial Laundries," continues Neiheisel.

"After Matty quit coaching, I played with Carlisle Construction with Carl Nageleisen and Huddy Knock," says Neiheisel.

Neiheisel's stint playing with the better teams in Greater Cincinnati came to an abrupt end in 1965 when his job took him to Indianapolis. He returned in 1969 and played with the Firefighters, but competing for national titles was no longer on the horizon.

Fast forward to 1990. Neiheisel is now 49 years old, and, out of the blue, he gets an invitation to play softball again.

"A guy called me and said there was a 50-over league starting in Harrison," says Neiheisel. "So I went out and everybody throws in ten bucks, and I said, 'I'll pick that up.' Then they said they didn't have uniforms, and I said 'I'll pick that up.'"

And so the Joseph Chevrolet sponsorship was born. But another thing happened that night in Harrison that would chart the path of the sponsorship for the next seventeen years.

“Clyde Stafford was playing against us,” explains Neiheisel. “I didn’t know him at the time. So we started talking after the game.”

Stafford told Neiheisel about a half century league in Florida that played in a different location every month.

“This was where all the good half century teams were,” says Neiheisel. “So we went down there and didn’t win a game. So we came back and said we had to do something about that, so we put together another team.

“This went on for two years,” remembers Neiheisel. “Finally Jim Wessel and Bill Goedde started playing with us, and we started to win. The more we won, the better the players were that we were able to pick up.”

Finally in 2000, Joseph Chevrolet finally came of age at the 50-over level.

“At this time, they didn’t have ‘Major,’ ‘A,’ or ‘B,’” says Neiheisel. “And we were consistently ranked anywhere from first to fifth in the country. But there was only one governing body at the time, and we still couldn’t win a world tournament.”

The frustration finally ended the next year.

“In 2001 we started winning world tournaments, and in 2002, 2004, 2005 and 2006 we won a world tournament in at least one of the governing bodies,” says Neiheisel.

The 2001, 2002 and 2004 titles came in the 50-over division, while the 2005 and 2006 championships were in the 60-over. Joseph Chevrolet also sponsors a 70-over team, which won a world title earlier this year. The 60-over team will be competing in three world tournaments this fall.

Neiheisel says that the Joseph sponsorship hinges primarily on two factors.

“I want to play, and I want to have a good team,” says Neiheisel.

“Like Clyde (Stafford) says, there are only eight positions available, since he coaches and I sponsor the team.”

Neiheisel says that being successful has been “very important” to maintaining the sponsorship.

“When I met Clyde and went to Florida five or six times, we took a different team down every time. We just kept recruiting players until we put together a team that is

considered to be one of four teams capable of winning every tournament we go to. It's always been very important to me to put a winner on the field," says Neiheisel.

Neiheisel says that Joseph Chevrolet also sponsors local league teams.

"We pay their entry fees," he says. "For our national teams, we provide their entry fees, two or three sets of uniforms, and two vans that carry six people. We put everybody in a van and off we go to the tournaments. We leave on Thursday night and Sunday after the tournament we drive home. They're high-top vans with TV's."

Neiheisel's seventeen years of sponsoring local and national teams was recognized in a special way last fall, when he was elected to the Norwood Sorrento's-Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame.

"It's a heck of an honor," says Neiheisel. "You feel funny sometimes because you don't think the things you do deserve that kind of recognition. People have said things to me about it for awhile. It's surprising how many people find out about it and come up and mention it to you."

Neiheisel and five other individuals will be memorialized this winter, when they are inducted into the Norwood Sorrento's Hall of Fame on Sunday, January 27th at the Radisson Hotel Cincinnati Riverfront in Covington.

All-Decade, All-Century Selection John Steele Is Area's Only Three-Time "Player of the Year"

As John Steele prepares to enter the Norwood Sorrento's Softball Hall of Fame in January of 2008, he's having a sense of deja vu.

Back in 1996 when Steele made the jump from the "B" level to "A" with Watanabe/Perkins/Scarlato's/Easton, he wondered if he belonged.

Now those same feelings are plaguing him again.

"During my career, I played with or against a lot of people who are in the Hall of Fame," says Steele. "I've been to the Hall of Fame induction ceremony quite a few times and it was an honor to have been on the same field with some of the inductees, whether playing with or against them. It's a great crowd to be associated with. To have played ball in Cincinnati as long as I did and to play against all the people I played for, it seems like it would be a nice resting place. I just hope people feel like I belong there."

With four ASA Major Metro titles, seven ASA Major National and five USSSA Major World Series appearances to his credit, and having been named "Player of the Decade," a member of the Greater Cincinnati "All-Century Team," and "Player of the Year" an unprecedented three times, any reservations Steele has about belonging in the Cincinnati Softball Hall of Fame can safely be set aside.

But those accomplishments just scratch the surface of what Steele has achieved over the dozen years he played at the top level of softball in Greater Cincinnati. A few more include: hitting over 2,000 career home runs, finishing among the top five area home run leaders eight out of twelve years from 1992 through 2003, hitting over 100 home runs during that period while averaging 144 a season, and earning a spot on the Men's "Major" All-City team a remarkable ten consecutive years.

Steele's rise to the top didn't happen overnight. In fact, one could question why he lingered at the "B" level for as long as he did.

After playing for several years with his three brothers and some high school friends on such teams as Poor Michael's and Steele Brothers from 1982 until 1986, Steele's reputation for launching prodigious home runs finally got him into the line-ups of two of the better "B" teams in the area - Century Glass (1988-'89) and Wessel Construction (1990-'94).

While playing for Century, Steele got a taste of playing in the ASA Major Metro, and was smitten.

"I played in the lower division for four or five years, and every year I'd walk by those fields and I saw the crowds and the better teams in the Major division," recalls Steele.

"Then in 1988 I played with Century Glass in the Major Metro. I had never played in front of a softball crowd like that. It was opening night and I hit three home runs and had eight rbi's in the first inning."

Steele says he didn't miss another Major Metro for 18 years.

Finally in 1996, Steele was recruited to play for Watanabe/Perkins/Scarlato's/Easton. Initially he was apprehensive about moving into limelight.

"It was like being taken out of a comfort zone," said Steele. "They were one of the best teams in Cincinnati. They had beaten us a few times. I didn't know if I belonged, and I didn't want to play for him (sponsor/manager Dave Watanabe) and do badly."

Steele said he felt that by playing for Watanabe, "I had really made it.

"I started taking more and more batting practice and then I started playing more games," says Steele.

Steele's work ethic paid off quickly, as he was named Greater Cincinnati "Player of the Year" in his rookie season with Watanabe. He repeated that honor the following year.

Steele stayed with Watanabe for five years, then joined Perkins Roofing/TPS from 2001-'03, earning his third nod as "Player of the Year" in 2002. In 2004 he moved on to

Alpine/Easton, then to EMR in 2005, and finally to Red's/Team Illinois in 2006. Now he plays in the Masters' program.

Steele says being named "Player of the Year" three times "was one of his greatest softball thrills.

"That was a pretty big accomplishment," says Steele. "I would like to have won it one more time, but the past four or five years I've had quite a few different medical problems."

Other special memories for Steele include "playing in my first USSSA Major World Series with Hague Water Conditioning in 1996 in Frederick, Md.," and "playing in my first Major Metro game. Playing against people like Jackie Collins and Leo Osterday was a thrill for me."

Steele says he is "grateful for all the coaches I played for, from Bill Ammann, who managed the first competitive team I played with, to Jim Wessel, Mark Pompilio, Maurice Frye, Dave Watanabe, Don Holden, Eron Smith and Red Moore. They were a big influence on my career.

"I was fortunate to play on teams where the entry fees and uniforms and travel and hotel rooms were paid for, and I didn't have to worry about that," adds Steele.

Steele says he is most thankful, however, "for all the people I've met and friends I've made through softball.

"If you took softball out of my life, you'd be taking about 98 percent of my friends away," says Steele. "Almost every friend I have is related to softball. It's been a major part of my life."

Steele says that even his spare time over the years has been consumed by the game.

"Even when I had free time, and I wanted to do something for myself, all I ever did was go to the batting cages and practice," he says.

Now that he's in the twilight of his career, Greater Cincinnati's all-time home run king doesn't have to worry whether or not he "belongs" any more. And in January, when he's inducted into the Hall of Fame, he can confidently fittingly assume his "resting place" among the greatest names in Greater Cincinnati softball history.

2007 Bud Light-Worth-All-City Team...

Freeze/Arnold's Jamison, Matheny Named Player, Manager Of The Year

Jon Jamison and Homer Matheny of Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Putter's have been named Bud Light-Worth-USSSA "Player" and "Manager of the Year," respectively, in voting for the "Bud Light-Worth-CINCINNATI SOFTBALL NEWS" Men's All-City Team for 2007.

Jamison batted .750 with 61 home runs and a .790 OBA to outdistance runner-up Jason Roesch of Blitz/Watanabe/TTP/Wessel/Easton eight points to four for "Player of the Year" honors.

"I have played with some great talent over the years, but I have never witnessed a better individual year than Jon had for us in 2007," remarked Freeze/Arnold manager Homer Matheny. "I'm fairly certain that he never made two outs in one game more than once all year. He is a hitter who can hit home runs, but above all else he is a hitter. He does not need to hit home runs to be successful."

Jamison was named to the NSA All-World and All-Super World, one an Outstanding Offensive Player award and was named tournament MVP four times in 2007.

On his way to "Manager of the Year" honors, Homer Matheny guided his team to a 52-23 mark with six first place finishes, including three USSSA "B" NIT titles, a U-Trip Great Lakes National championship and an NSA World crown. Freeze/Arnold also finished second in the USSSA City Slam and ASA Major Metro.

Matheny edged Terry Walton of Blitz/Easton by one point - eight to seven - to earn "Manager of the Year." Walton's club won the ASA Open Metro and U-Trip "B" State and had four other top four finishes despite being plagued by injuries much of the 2007 campaign.

Blitz/Easton's Jason Roesch batted .700 with 205 rbi's and socked 55 home runs. He was the "Open" Metro MVP and was named to three all-tournament teams in 2007.

"He led us in every offensive category," observed Blitz manager Terry Walton of Roesch. "He's a true clutch hitter with great power. He only hit two home runs for outs the entire season. Twenty six of his 55 home runs were either three run shots or grand slams. He earned the 'Open' Metro MVP, batting .759 with eight home runs and 22 rbi's."

Freeze/Arnold led all teams with ten overall selections, including five first-teamers. A total of seven teams were represented. Blitz/Easton placed nine team members on the all-star team, then came Dawg Pack with six. Community Cab/Cooper Sports/Easton, Mike Foulks/Team Insanity/Easton and Red's Boys/TPS each placed three players on the team and Loveless/Easton one.

Blitz/Easton had one more first-team selection than Freeze/Arnold, including Roesch, Brian Alexander, Steve Bosch, Jeff Edington, Frank Gruber, and Brad Tabler. Jamison, Jeff Click, Richie Jones, Jayson Scott and manager Homer Matheny were picked from Freeze/Arnold. Other first team selections were Jason Brown, Kevin Greene, Kevin Hall and Chris Young of Dawg Pack, Dave Beall and Mike Rogers of Community Cab, Jason Murphy of Mike Foulks and Tom Steven's of Red's Boys.

Repeat selections to the All-City team were Brian Alexander, Trevor Barth, Kevin Birkofer, Steve Bosch, Jason Brown, Jeff Click, Mike Cook, Jeff Edington, George Farris, Kevin Greene, Frank Gruber, Rob Menke, Jason Roesch, Mike Rogers, Rusty Scott, Tom Stevens, and Brad Tabler.

The Bud Light-Worth-Sports All-City team is selected by area managers whose teams participated at the USSSA "B" level in 2007. Qualifying managers were sent ballots on which they were required to nominate team members and provide key statistical information and comments.

Seven managers returned ballots, and copies of each were then returned to each manager along with a final ballot to vote for a first and second team at each position, four utility positions, and manager, player and rookie of the year. First team selections received two points, and second team selections one point.

The leading vote recipient at each position was placed on the first team, along with the next four highest point recipients, who were placed in the "utility" category. The next fourteen highest point recipients were then placed on the second team.

ALL-CITY NOMINEE BATTING LEADERS (.650 or higher): Shane Spicer .755, Jon Jamison .750, Tom Stevens .733, Kevin Hall .727, John Steele .704, Jason Roesch .700, Dave Beall .700, Kevin Greene .688, Paul DeMoss .676, Brian Alexander .673, Richie Jones .670, Chris Young .657, Jim Ray .656.

PREVIOUS SOFTBALL NEWS PLAYERS OF THE YEAR: 1977 - Mike LaFever, Rockcastle Motors; Runner-Up Jim Kuhn, Hal Manufacturing; 1978 - Hal Ward, Greater Cincinnati Sports and Ron Jones, Stroh's; 1979 - Rick Linz, Greater Cincinnati Sports, Runners-Up Jack Robinson, Bushelman Construction, and Hal Ward, Greater Cincinnati Sports; 1980 - Galen Kelly and Steve Hicks, Bushelman Construction; Runner-Up Dave Johnson, Hammer's; 1981 - Mike Tolliver, Jay's; Runner-Up Steve Hicks, Bushelman; 1982 - Mickey McMullen, Bushelman Construction; Runner-Up Joe Griffith, Knights; 1983 - Leo Osterday, Bushelman; Runner-Up Jack Collins, Bushelman; 1984 - Bob Massong, Bushelman; Runner-Up Leo Osterday, Bushelman; 1985 - Jack Collins, M. W. Tribble; Runner-Up Mike Sullivan, VIP Limousine and Mike O'Brien, Jay's; 1986 - Mike O'Brien, Jay's; Runners-Up Mike Sullivan and Don Cleaver, VIP Limousine; 1987 - Scott Hein, VIP Limousine/Express Transport; Runners-Up Mike Sullivan, VIP/ETC, Mike Harvey, Jay's, and Bob Cole, F & C Athletic; 1988 - Steve Roeder, VIP/ETC; Runner-Up Larry Shircliff, VIP/ETC; 1989 - Bill Jackson, VIP/ETC; Runner-Up Steve Roeder, VIP/ETC and Marty Monterosso, Jay's; 1990 - Marty Monterosso, Jay's; Runner-Up Homer Ruth, VIP/ETC; 1991 - Tony Salamone, Greg Back/Kipling's; Runner-Up Doug Riley, Greg Back/Kipling's and Tim Clemmons, Jay's; 1992 - Mike Kinnett, Watanabe/Scarlatto's/Easton; Runner-Up Doug Riley, McCluskey Chevrolet-GEO; 1993 - Tom Thompson, Jay's/Worth; Runner-Up Mike Kinnett, Watanabe/Scarlatto's/Easton; 1994 - Randy Lewis, Watanabe/Scarlatto's/Easton; Runner-Up Mike King, Hosea World-wide; 1995 - Mike Kinnett, Watanabe/Scarlatto's/Perkins/Easton; Runner-up Joe Penwell, Backstop/Easton; 1996 - Jim Kearns, Lovill/Easton and John Steele,

Watanabe/Scarlato's/Perk-ins/TPS; Runner-up Joe Penwell, Backstop/Easton; 1997 - John Steele, Wata-nabe/Scarlato's/Perkins/ TPS; Runner-up Marvin Doyle, Backstop/Easton; 1998 - Randy Lewis, Wata-nabe/Scarlato's/Perkins/TPS; Runner-up Tom Ellis, First American Title; 1999 - Mark Smith, Watanabe/ Perkins/TPS/Bike; Runner-up Tony Sharkins, Perkins Roofing/TPS; 2000 - Jack Collins, EMR/Meiner's Cafe/Worth; Runner-up Kevin Atwood, Perkins Roofing/ TPS; 2001 - Marvin Doyle, EMR/Worth; Runner-Up Jason Roesch, Cooper/ Pohlman/Worth, Steve Spille, Perkins/TPS, John Steele Perkins/TPS; 2002 - John Steele, Perkins/Wata-nabe/TPS; Runner-up Mar-vin Doyle, Cooper Sports/-Specialty Vending/Worth; 2003 - Brian May, Wata-nabe/K & G/TPS; Runner-up Tom Ellis, Watanabe/K & G/TPS; Darrell Hall, DLB/Arnold/Superior; Jon Jamison, Luckey Homes/-Rite Rug; 2004 - Brian Wegman, Watanabe/New/-K & G/Tiny Town/TPS; Runner-Up Shane Hatfield, Alpine/Easton; Mike Kin-nett, EMR/Worth; Johnny Miller, EMR/Worth; 2005 - Brian May, Watanabe/-TTP/Superior/CHL/B&A/TPS; Runner-Up Jon Jami-son, Arnold/Freeze; 2006 - Brad Reckart, Watanabe/-TPS/Superior/CHL/B & A/TPS; Runner-Up Kevin Greene, Storm/Wessel/-Nixco Plumbing/Flana-gan's Front Porch and Frank Gruber, A & K Tile/-Wessel/GRK/Blitz.

**2007 WORTH-BUD LIGHT-CINCINNATI
SOFTBALL NEWS MEN'S ALL-CITY FIRST TEAM**

Pitcher	Frank Gruber (9)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
Catcher	John Jamison (11)	Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Put.
1st Base	Jason Roesch (13)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
2nd Base	Jayson Scott (7)	Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Put.
3rd Base	Jeff Edington (8)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
Shortstop	Jeff Click (9)	Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Put.
	Kevin Hall (9)	Dawg Pack/Wessel/A-1
Outfield	Brian Alexander (12)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
Outfield	Chris Young (10)	Dawg Pack/Wessel/A-1
Outfield	Richie Jones (8)	Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Put.
Outfield	Jason Murphy (8)	Mike Foulks/Easton
Utility	Brad Tabler (10)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
Utility	Kevin Greene (10)	Dawg Pack/Wessel/A-1
Utility	Tom Stevens (9)	Red's Boys/TPS
Utility	Jason Brown (8)	Dawg Pack/Wessel/A-1
	Dave Beall (7)	Com. Cab/Cooper/Easton
	Steve Bosch (7)	Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
	Mike Rogers (7)	Com. Cab/Cooper/Easton
Manager	Homer Matheny (8)	Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Put.
MVP	Jon Jamison (8)	Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Put.
Rookie	Richie Jones (10)	Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Put.

**2007 WORTH-BUD LIGHT-CINTL. SOFTBALL
NEWS MEN'S ALL-CITY SECOND TEAM**

Pitcher T. J. Thompson (5) Mike Foulks/Easton
 Catcher Mike Canupp (4) Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Put.
 2nd Base Kevin Birkofer (6) Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
 3rd Base George Farris (6) Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Put.
 Shortstop Paul DeMoss (6) Dawg Pack/Wessel/A-1
 Outfield Ben Moerlein (6) Com. Cab/Cooper/Easton
 Outfield Rob Menke (5) Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Put.
 Outfield Larry Wert (5) Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
 Outfield Mike Cook (4) Dawg Pack/Wessel/A-1
 Brandon Johnson (4) Mike Foulks/Easton
 Scott Trame (4) Dawg Pack/Wessel/A-1
 Utility Jim Ray (5) Red's Boys/TPS
 Utility Trevor Barth (4) Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Put.
 Utility Homer Matheny (4) Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Put.
 Utility Ryan Richmond (4) Loveless/Easton
 Rusty Scott (4) Red's Boys/TPS
 Manager Terry Walton (7) Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
 MVP Jason Roesch (4) Blitz/Watanabe/Easton
 Rookie Paul DeMoss (5) Dawg Pack/Wessel/A-1

**2007 WORTH-BUD LIGHT-CINTL. SOFTBALL
NEWS ALL-CITY HONORABLE MENTION**

BLITZ/WATANABE/TTP/WESSEL/EASTON: Frank Gruber (POY), Kelly Haiber
COMMUNITY CAB/COOPER SPORTS/EASTON: Kevin Blanton, Tony Huber,
 Mike Reichert

DAWG PACK/WESSEL/A-1: Jason Brown (POY), Jim Gentry (Manager), Kevin Hall
 (POY), Bobby Kindoll, Jason Kraemer, Shane Spicer (POY)

FREEZE/ARNOLD/JAC/PUTTER'S: Bob Noeth

LOVELESS/EASTON: Micah Gray, Tyler Minges (Outfield, Rookie), Billy Villines,
 Jason Wood

MIKE FOULKS AUTO BODY/TEAM INSANITY/EASTON: Roger Drake, Mike
 Foulks (Manager), Jason Murphy (POY), Eddie Weinberg

RED'S BOYS/TPS: Scott Beverly, Shane King, Johnny Leep (Rookie), Red Moore
 (Manager), Jim Perry, Kevin Rassman, Matt Reynolds (Utility, Rookie), Jimmy Roberts,
 Steve Shields, Tom Stevens (POY), Casey Stewart

**Kentucky USSSA State D Champions Dominate All-No. Ky. First Team...
 Good Guys/GBI Cincinnati's Murphy, Allen Named Top Player, Manager Of The
 Year**

Good Guys/GBI Cincinnati pitcher Doug Murphy and manager Terris Allen have been
 named the Northern Kentucky "Player of the Year" and "Manager of the Year,"
 respectively, for 2007.

Murphy and Allen led Good Guys/GBI to a 72-24 record, a Kentucky USSSA "D" State Championship and a fourth place finish in the USSSA Men's "D" World Tournament. The team recorded nine top four finishes overall, including a U-Trip "D" NIT title and two "D" NIT runner-up finishes. Good Guys' fourth place finish in the "D" World was the highest ever by a Greater Cincinnati team.

Good Guys/GBI manager Terris Allen lauded Murphy as "one of the best pitchers in the tri-state.

"He's the heart of our team," said Allen. "He anchors our middle with his defense and keeps hitters off-balance with his pitching. We had a banner season and Doug was a big reason for that."

Allen won "Manager of the Year" honors handily over Mike Foulks of Mike Foulks Auto Body/Team Insanity/Easton, earning nine points in the voting compared to four for Foulks. Foulks' team placed in the top four in four events, claiming a first and second place finish in USSSA "B-C" NIT's, a third place finish in the Ohio USSSA "C" State, and a fourth place finish the USSSA Great Lakes "B" Nationals.

Tom Stevens of Red's Boys/TPS was runner-up "Player of the Year," arguably posting the most impressive statistics of any player in Northern Kentucky. Stevens batted .733 with 169 rbi's and 52 home runs. He powered Reds' Boys to a pair of first place finishes, including the NSA "B" State Championship, two runner-up finishes, and a third and a fourth place finish. Reds' Boys' most impressive showing came in the 48-team USSSA Men's Major NIT last July, when they finished in 5th place.

Others receiving "Player of the Year" votes included Tim Duffey (.611, 19 HR's) and John Tomlinson (.675, 72 HR's, 192 rbis) of M & M Connection/Saints, Chaz Goetz (.634), Scott Goetz (.632) and Brian Stevenson (.599) of Good Guys/GBI, Jason Murphy (.601, 21 HR's, 94 rbi's) and T. J. Thompson (.492) of Mike Foulks/Easton, Gary Schoultheis (.750, 25 HR's) of Nu-Way, Mike Scuglik (.673, 31 HR's) of Sentry Fire/Apex/LBYC, and John Steele (.704, 18 HR's, 65 rbi's) of Red's Boys/TPS.

Northern Kentucky "Rookie of the Year" honors went to Adam Visnic of Sentry Fire. Johnny Leep of Red's Boys and Jason Murphy of Mike Foulks finished second in the voting. Visnic batted .701 with 20 home runs. Leep hit .641 with 48 rbi's, and Murphy .601 with 21 HR's and 97 rbi's.

Nomination forms were sent to USSSA class B and C tournament participants and Northern Kentucky, and USSSA D teams that qualified for the U-Trip "D" World Tournament. A total of seven managers nominated team members.

Copies of each form were then returned to the participating managers, who were asked to select a first and second team at each position, plus four utility positions, manager, player and rookie of the year. First team votes were worth two points, and second team one

point. At least seven points were required to make the first team, and four to make the second team.

“Player of the Year” Doug Murphy led all players in the voting, garnering 12 out of a possible 14 points.

Other first team selections included Murphy’s teammates, Chaz Goetz, Brett Hopkins, Brian Sandlin, Brian Stevenson, Scott Goetz and Terris Allen (manager); Mike Foulks’ Brandon Johnson, Jason Murphy, Seth Tracy and Eddie Weinberg; Jimmy Roberts, Rusty Scott, John Steele and Tom Stevens of Red’s Boys; Tim Barker, Kraig Piper, Adam Visnic (Rookie) and Mike Scuglik of Sentry; Gary Schoultheis of Nu-Way; Mike Barone of M & M/Saints; and Mike Sellet of Two-N-Out.com.

Red’s Boys/TPS led all teams with eight selections, followed by Good Guys/GBI with seven, Mike Foulks with six, and M & M, Sentry and Nu-Way with four each.

2007 ALL-NORTHERN KENTUCKY FIRST TEAM

Pitcher Doug Murphy (12) Good Guys/GBI Cin.
Catcher Tom Stevens (11) Red’s Boys/TPS
1st Base Kraig Piper (7) Sentry/Apex/LBYC
Seth Tracy (7) M. Foulks/Insanity/Easton
2nd Base Eddie Weinberg (6) Foulks/Insanity/Easton
3rd Base Jimmy Roberts (6) Red’s Boys/TPS
Gary Schoultheis (6) Nu-Way
Shortstop Chaz Goetz (6) Good Guys/GBI Cin.
Rusty Scott (6) Red’s Boys/TPS
Outfield Mike Scuglik (10) Sentry/Apex/LBYC
Outfield Mike Barone (9) M & M Connection/Saints
Outfield Brett Hopkins (8) Good Guys/GBI Cin.
Outfield Jason Murphy (8) Foulks/Insanity/Easton
Utility Brian Sandlin (10) Good Guys/GBI Cin.
Utility John Steele (8) Red’s Boys/TPS
Utility Timmy Barker (7) Sentry/Apex/LBYC
Utility Brandon Johnson (7) Foulks/Insanity/Easton
Mike Sellet (7) Two-N-Out.com
Scott Goetz (6) Good Guys/GBI Cin.
Brian Stevenson (6) Good Guys/GBI Cin.
Manager Terris Allen (9) Good Guys/GBI Cin.
MVP Doug Murphy Good Guys/GBI Cin.
Rookie Adam Visnic (8) Sentry/Apex/LBYC

2007 ALL-NORTHERN KENTUCKY SECOND TEAM

Pitcher T. J. Thompson (5) Foulks/Insanity/Easton
1st Base Greg Butler (5) Nu-Way

2nd Base Brian McDonald (5) M & M Conn./Saints
 Jimmy Ray (5) Red's Boys/TPS
 Chaz Weber (5) Two-N-Out.com
 Shortstop Tim Duffey (5) M & M Connection/Saints
 Outfield Shawn Merrill (5) Nu-Way
 Outfield Steve Shields (5) Red's Boys/TPS
 Outfield Shane King (4) Red's Boys/TPS
 Outfield Eric Merrill (4) Nu-Way
 Matt Reynolds (4) Red's Boys/TPS
 Utility Shawn Donaghy (4) Two-N-Out.com
 Utility Shawn Sproles (4) Two-N-Out.com
 Utility John Tomlinson (4) M & M Conn./Saints
 Utility Adam Visnic (4) Sentry/Apex/LBYC
 Manager Mike Foulks (4) Foulks/Insanity/Easton
 MVP Tom Stevens Red's Boys/TPS
 Rookie Johnny Leep (3) Red's Boys/TPS
 Jason Murphy (3) Foulks/Insanity/Easton

HONORABLE MENTION

BEST WAY FRAME/NASTY BOYS: Davey Johnson, Doug Newton

GOOD GUYS/GBI CINCINNATI: Brian Goebel, Chaz Goetz (Shortstop, POY), Scott Goetz (Utility, POY), Brett Hopkins (Outfield, ROY), Brian Stevenson (Outfield, POY, ROY)

JLC/LEGENDS/COUNTRYWIDE: Rob Coffey, Steve Hunt, Paul Laible (Utility, Rookie), Chris Malay, Scott Moree, Billy Scott

M & M CONNECTION/SAINTS: Tim Duffey (Short-stop, POY), John Erdman, John Tomlinson (Manager, Pitcher, POY)

MIKE FOULKS AUTO BODY/TEAM INSANITY/EASTON: Jim Burt, Craig Johnson, Andrew McGowan, T. J. Thompson (Pitcher, POY)

NKY THUNDER: Rob Mitchell

NU-WAY: Jeff Combs (Manager), Brian Lewis (Outfield, ROY), Gary Schoultheis (3rd Base, POY)

RED'S BOYS/TPS: Scott Beverly, Lance Fossit, Johnny Leep (Outfield), Red Moore (Manager), Jim Perry, Kevin Rassman, Matt Reynolds (Outfield, ROY), Tom Stevens (Catcher, POY), Casey Stewart, John Steele (Utility, POY)

SENTRY FIRE/APEX/LBYC: Kevin Henn (Manager), Mike Scuglik (Outfield, POY), Brian Walker

TWO-N-OUT.COM/EASTON: Kelly Dans, Todd Etlar, James Evans, Brett Harlow (ROY), Shawn Sproles, Chris Weber

September 15-16...

Nine Run 7th Lifts Champions Past TCPI 27-26 In Finals...

Jamison, Menke Carry Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Putters To NSA "B" World Title

Kankakee, Il...Freeze/Arnold/JAC/Putters rallied for nine runs in the bottom of the 7th to stun TCPI/Fieldhouse 27-26 in the championship game of the National Softball Association Men's Class "B" World Tournament September 15th in Kankakee, Il.

Don Sikora's one-out single capped off Freeze/Arnold's furious comeback as the Cincinnati club overcame a 26-18 deficit to complete a five game sweep of the twelve team affair.

Jon Jamison went 20-for-22 (.909) and Rob Menke 16-for-18 (.889) to power the champions and earn Most Valuable Player and Best Offensive Player honors, respectively.

"They only made four outs between them in five games," commented Freeze/Arnold player-manager Homer Matheny. "Jon held the front part of the line-up together and Rob the back part. They were both equally important.

Also named to the All-Tournament team for Freeze/Arnold were Matheny and Jayson Scott, who both batted .700, Jeff Click, who hit .684, Richie Jones at .682, Trevor Barth at .579 and George Farris. The champions averaged 23 runs per game en route to the title and scored at least 20 runs in every contest.

"It was really just a great job of putting together some good innings," said Matheny. "We hit very well together. We were held scoreless in three innings in the finals and still had a couple big innings to end up scoring 27 runs. In the 3rd, 4th and 6th we didn't score a run, and we scored 27 in the other four."

Matheny noted that All-Tourney selection Jeff Click finished strong for the winners after a poor start.

"He was 0-for-4 in our first game and ended up going 13-for-15 over the last four games," said Matheny.

But, stressed Matheny, "it was a total team effort. Everyone did what they were supposed to do."

A ten run 4th and a seven run 7th helped carry Freeze/Arnold to a 20-12 victory over DMB/Burris (IN) in game one. After a two run shot by George Farris knotted the score in the top of the 4th, Homer Matheny went solo to put his team ahead to stay at 3-2. Jon Jamison capped off the inning with a three-run bomb. DMB battled back to trim the deficit to 13-10 after six, but Freeze/Arnold erupted for seven runs in the top of the 7th to seal the win. Don Sikora's two-run double highlighted the inning.

Jon Jamison, Rob Menke, and Richie Jones combined for a dozen hits.

Next Freeze/Arnold plated two runs in the bottom of the 6th to break an 18-18 tie, then held TCPI/Fieldhouse (IA) scoreless in the top of the 7th to preserve a 20-18 victory. Jon

Jamison, who delivered the big hit for Freeze/Arnold with a big two-run, bases loaded single in the 6th, collected five hits for the winners. Jayson Scott and Jeff Click were both perfect in four at bats.

Freeze/Arnold used a seventeen run 3rd to overcome a 7-6 deficit and went on mercy-rule Wildman/Freedom 25-10 in five innings in game three. A three-run blast by Trevor Barth broke a 7-7 tie and put his club ahead for good in the 3rd. Rob Menke, Scott Stigers, Jon Jamison and Jeff Click shared twelve hits to pace the offense.

Freeze/Arnold then steamrolled Goodfellows Pub (OH) 23-11 in the winners' bracket finals, jumping out to a 12-0 lead with five in the 1st and seven in the 2nd. The eventual champions added six in the 3rd to pad their lead to 18-5, then closed out the scoring with five in the 4th. George Farris launched a three-run homer to put his team on the board in the 1st. Jon Jamison and Trevor Barth added three-run swats in the 2nd to account for six of Freeze/Arnold's seven runs.

Farris, Jamison, Barth and Jeff Click banged out four hits apiece in the win.

In the finals, Freeze/Arnold exploded for eleven runs in the bottom of the 1st, but TCPI outscored the Ohio team 26-7 over the next five innings to take a commanding 26-18 lead into the bottom of the 7th. But there the wheels fell off the wagon, as Freeze/Arnold roared back to within one at 26-25 on a two-run Richie Jones shot. Then, after Jayson Scott's one-out homer tied the game, Rob Menke tripled, and after TCPI issued a pair of intentional walks to load the bases, Don Sikora singled to left-center to plate Menke with the game winner.

Menke pounded out five hits, and Sikora, Jon Jamison and Homer Matheny each went 4-for-5 to power the champions.

Freeze/Arnold manager Homer Matheny said his team simply decided it was too late and too cold and "finally kicked it in" in the bottom of the 7th against TCPI.

"It was 9:30 at night, about 30 degrees and we didn't want to play another game," said Matheny.

September 20-23...

Setters, Carr Lead Good Guys/GBI Cincinnati To Fourth Place Finish In USSSA "D" World At Liberty Park

Sterling Heights, Mi.--Jeff Setters and Adam Carr led Good Guys/GBI Cincinnati to a fourth place finish in the USSSA "D" World Tournament September 20-23 at Liberty Park.

Good Guys/GBI recorded the second most wins of any team in the tournament as they posted an 8-2 mark. T-5-Star (UT) swept undefeated past the 192-team field with a

perfect 8-0 record. Blue Water (CA) and Dizzy Roosters (KY) each went 7-2 en route to a 2nd and 3rd place finish, respectively. Dizzy Roosters ousted Good Guys/GBI from the tournament in a narrow 13-12 decision. Mid-Valley Plastering (CA) saddled Good Guys with their first loss in a fourth round contest, 9-7.

Good Guys/GBI Cincinnati's 4th place finish is believed to be the highest ever recorded by a Greater Cincinnati team in the USSSA "D" World.

"Losing our games by one and two runs shows we were competitive in every game. We were not over-matched," said Good Guys/GBI manager Terris Allen.

A gritty drive through the losers' bracket late Saturday and early Sunday, when Good Guys/GBI won three of four games in their final at bat before falling to home state rival Dizzy Roosters, was key for the Northern Kentucky club.

"We had two come-from-behind wins Saturday night, and that was huge," remarked Allen. "San Benito Performance (CA) had a chance to beat us in the bottom of the 7th, but they didn't and we finally took the lead for good in the top of the 8th."

That was Good Guys/GBI's second win in the losers' bracket and fifth of the tournament. In his team's first four wins, said Allen, Good Guys/GBI "took early leads and held on."

Consistent and "timely hitting" and "overall defense" helped carry the Good Guys to their 8-2 record, said Allen.

"We scored in double figures in seven of our eight wins, and held five teams under ten runs."

Jeff Setters paced the offense with a hefty .690 average. Brian Sandlin was right behind at .680, Brent Hopkins chipped in at .641, Scott Goetz at .638 and Brian Goebel at .630.

Setters and Adam Carr were named to the All-World team.

"Jeff led us in extra base hits and in hitting and played an outstanding 2nd base," said Allen. "Adam led us in hitting through Saturday and with his defensive play at 3rd. He made a lot of outstanding plays. And he pitched a game for us as well."

Thursday and Friday, Good Guys/GBI looked unstoppable as they overpowered Gates Logging 15-5, Noran Radiator 11-5 and Thunder Bay 17-0 on the strength of a Doug Murphy shutout.

Good Guys/GBI scored two runs in the top of the 4th to break a 3-3 stalemate, then padded their lead to 8-3 before blowing the game open with seven in the 6th. Doug Murphy singled home the go-ahead run in the 3rd. Brian Goebel's rbi single closed out the scoring in the 6th.

Scott Goetz banged out four hits, and Brian Sandlin, Adam Carr, Chaz Goetz and Brent Hopkins added three apiece.

In game two Good Guys/GBI used a three run 3rd to go ahead to stay at 3-1, then broke open a 4-3 contest with four runs in the top of the 5th. Brent Hopkins put his team on top for good with an rbi single in the 3rd. Ryan Hayes was perfect in three at bats.

Next Good Guys/GBI scored all seventeen of their runs in the first three innings to seal a 17-0 whitewashing of Thunder Bay. Scott Goetz's rbi single put his club on the board in a two run 1st. Adam Carr's two-run double highlighted a four run 2nd. Then in the 3rd Jeff Setters contributed a two-run double to spark an eleven run outburst.

Chaz and Scott Goetz and Brian Sandlin collected three hits each for the winners.

That would be as far as Good Guys/GBI would go in the winners' bracket, as Mid-Valley Plastering stopped the Kentucky squad 9-7. But a 21-11 shelling of Winnie Rangans righted the Good Guys' ship in game five.

Brian Stevenson's two-run double helped the Good Guys grab an early 5-0 lead in the bottom of the 1st. Good Guys added a sixth run in the 2nd, then put the game away with a seven run 3rd. A two-run double by Adam Carr and a two-run single by Scott Goetz accounted for four of the seven runs as the lead swelled to 13-2. Winnie Rangans never recovered from the eleven run deficit.

Brent Hopkins pounded out five hits, Brian Goebel added four, and Goetz, Nick Bibbins, Jeff Setters and Ryan Hayes each went 3-for-4.

Good Guys/GBI needed eight innings to outlast San Benito Performance 13-11 in game six, scoring three runs in the top of the 8th to nail down the win. Ryan Hayes delivered a big two-run double to break a 10-10 tie, then scored on a Brent Hopkins' sac fly. Brian Stevenson went 4-for-5, and Jeff Setters and Chaz and Scott Goetz combined for nine hits.

Next Good Guys/GBI rallied for four runs in the bottom of the 6th to overcome an 11-10 deficit and pull out an eventual 14-12 victory over Last Call. Adam Carr tripled and scored the tying run on Adam Hayes' base hit. Brent Hopkins then singled in the go-ahead run. Stevenson went 4-for-4, and Hopkins and Chaz Goetz pitched in with a 3-for-4 effort.

In game eight, Good Guys/GBI exploded for eight runs in the bottom of the 4th to blow open a 6-6 game with Swing Softball, taking a 10-6 lead on back-to-back two-run doubles by Chaz Goetz and Brian Stevenson. Pitcher Doug Murphy held Swing Softball to three runs over the final four innings to preserve the win.

Goetz and Brian Goebel shared eight hits to power the offense.

Good Guys/GBI's final victory was another come-from-behind affair, as they erased a 7-5 deficit with a four run outburst in the bottom of the 6th. Rbi singles by Adam Carr and Ryan Hayes knotted the score at 7-7, then Brent Hopkins singled in the go-ahead run. A Chaz Goetz sac fly capped off the inning.

Hayes, Hopkins, Jeff Setters and Brian Stevenson combined for a dozen hits to pace the champions.

Dizzy Roosters then sent Good Guys/GBI packing 13-12.

Good Guys/GBI manager Terris Allen commended his team's season-ending performance.

"We took a young team up there without a lot of experience playing at the national level," observed Allen. "And we haven't finished out of the top ten all year."

Cincinnati Club Steamrolls Yard Dawgs 16-6 In Finals...

Richter, Kron Power Ty-1-On To USSSA Women's "B" World Title At Wide World Of Sports

Lake Buena Vista, Fl.--Riding the hot bats of one-two hitters Lisa Richter and Karen Kron, Ty-1-On swept undefeated past a sixteen team field to capture first place in the USSSA Women's "B" World Tournament September 20-23 at Walt Disney's Wide World of Sports Complex.

After battling past their first three opponents, Ty-1-On steamrolled Incognito 14-4 in the winners' bracket finals and the Yard Dawgs 16-6 in the championship game to wrap up a 5-0 weekend. Richter (.652) was named the tournament's Offensive MVP and Kron (.563) the overall MVP.

"Lisa led off and was very steady for us," observed Ty-1-On manager Colleen Needham. "She didn't have a game where she didn't have multiple hits.

"Karen batted second and played shortstop and made a lot of critical plays. In one of our closer games she stopped a ball from going into the outfield and no one scored. That doesn't always show up in the book, but it saved a run," said Needham.

"They batted first and second in our line-up and they're very fast, and Lisa Tyler, who is a left-handed hitter, batted third. And if she got a base hit, one of them would always score," added Needham.

Needham credited her club's title to experience, a strong bench and having a veteran pitching tandem.

"Early on in our first game when we got behind we didn't panic," said Needham. "We kept plugging away. We knew it wouldn't be a good idea to get into the losers' bracket

early on. We pinch-hit Sharon Graham and she walked and that started something and got us going.

“We went with sixteen players and anybody on the bench could have started, so that was a big key,” continued Needham. “We went down not only with a strong starting line-up, but a strong bench in case someone got hurt or went cold on us.

“The other was that we had two quality pitchers in Brenda (Ryan) and M. J. (Ranz), and we could go with either one of them,” noted Needham. “Watching some of the other teams, the pitchers would continue to pitch even if they were getting blown out. So we were very fortunate to have not just two pitchers, but two pitchers who pitched in their heyday at the ‘A’ level.”

Offensively, Richter and Kron got plenty of support from All-World selections Theresa Hirschauer (.556), Lori Wilp (.551) and Lisa Tyler (.500). They were joined on the All-World team by Rhonda Klette, Brenda Ryan and Andrea Costa.

Ty-1-On barely survived their first game, rallying for five runs in the top of 6th to overcome a 9-5 deficit, then sealing a 14-9 victory over Mad Jacks with four more runs in the 7th. M. J. Ranz, who held Mad Jacks scoreless over the final two innings to preserve the win, also had the big hit in the game - a two-run double in the top of the 6th to put her club ahead for good at 10-9. Lisa Tyler’s two-run single closed out the scoring in the 7th.

Andrea Costa and Lisa Richter combined for eight hits, and Karen Kron chipped in with three to pace the offense.

Next Ty-1-On used a six run 4th to break open a 2-2 contest with Lady Drillers and went on to post a 9-4 win. Lori Wilp’s two-run double to put her team on top to stay at 4-2. Rhonda Klette also delivered a two-run double in the inning as the lead swelled to 7-2.

Wilp collected three hits, and M. J. Ranz, Andrea Costa and Sharon Graham each went 2-for-3.

Ty-1-On never trailed in their final three games, although the Lady Brokers threw a scare into the eventual champions after falling behind 10-3 in game three. Ty-1-On broke out to a 3-0 lead on the strength of rbi singles by Lisa Tyler, Theresa Hirschauer and M. J. Ranz in the top of the 1st. Ty-1-On added two in the 2nd, one in the 4th and three in the 5th to take what appeared to be a commanding 10-3 advantage, but the Lady Brokers stormed back with four in the bottom of the 6th and three in the 7th before bowing out 12-10. The Brokers brought the winning run to the plate in the bottom of the 7th before Brenda Ryan came in to pitch and retired the final batter on a fly out to Lisa Richter in left field.

Richter banged out four hits, Karen Kron added three and Lisa Tyler went 2-for-2.

Revenge was sweet for Ty-1-On against Incognito in the winners' bracket finals. The Detroit team, which had clipped Ty-1-On 13-12 in the losers' bracket finals of the U-Trip Great Lakes Nationals just four weeks earlier in Canton, Mi., found themselves staring at a 13-0 deficit after a half an inning and never recovered in a 14-4 rout. Lisa Tyler put her team on the board with a two-run double in the top of the 1st. A two-run single by Theresa Hirschauer capped off the inning. Tyler, Hirschauer and Lori Wilp shared eight hits for the winners.

After pushing across a lone run on Lisa Tyler's single in the top of the 1st, Ty-1-On exploded for eight runs in the top of the 2nd to forge a 9-0 lead and went on to polish off the Yard Dawgs 16-6. Back-to-back rbi singles by Sharon Graham and Rhonda Klette made it 3-0 in the 2nd. Theresa Hirschauer's rbi double made it 8-0, and M. J. Ranz followed with a sac fly to cap off the inning. The Yard Dawgs answered with four runs in the bottom of the 2nd, but Ty-1-On erupted for five more runs in the top of the 3rd to slam the door on the Georgia club. Karen Kron contributed the big blow of the inning with a two-run single. Pitcher Brenda Ryan held the Yard Dawgs to a meager two runs over the final five innings.

Kron pounded out five hits to power the champions. Hirschauer and Lisa Richter chipped in with four each, and Lori Wilp added three.

Ty-1-On's Colleen Needham said that after winning their third game, her club could almost taste the title, accounting for her club's two blowouts in the winners' bracket finals and finals.

"It seemed like the closer we got to it, the better we played," said Needham.

"We won because we played as a team, and stayed focused on our goals of winning it," remarked Needham.

"It was certainly enjoyable," she continued. "When some of the players came to me a couple of years ago and said they wanted to play something besides the masters program, I told them I never would have believed they would have gotten to where we got to on Sunday.

"Last year we finished third, which was really good considering we lost Sharon Graham for the season and Shelly Cummins and Lisa Tyler right before the tournament. But this year, everybody stayed healthy and did a really good job, and I was really proud of them," said Needham.

September 29-30...

Tourney MVP Rob Rocky Powers Champions With 5 Homers, 15 Rbi's...
Late Rallies Carry D & S Engineering To Worth-Bud Light-USSSA One-Pitch NIT
"Gold" Title At Expressway Park

Milford, Oh.--D & S Engineering rallied from a first setback in round robin play to reel off five straight victories and capture a first place finish in the Gold division of the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA One-Pitch National Invitational September 29-30 at Expressway Park.

D & S went 2-1 in round robin play, then battled past three elimination round opponents to post a 5-1 overall record. The champions used a six-run outburst in the bottom of the 6th to pull away from P & G Construction 14-7 in the finals. D & S won their first two elimination round games in the top of the 7th, erupting for six runs to overtake ETL/Rocky Top 17-14 in game one before pushing across a run to trim Team Certified 14-13 in game two.

Rob Rocky, who batted .733, cracked five home runs and collected fifteen rbi's, was named tournament MVP.

"He came up with the big hits and went 4-for-4 in the championship game," said D & S manager Kevin Mell about Rocky's performance.

Other hitting leaders included Mell and J. D. Fugate, who each batted .600.

Steve Blake was named defensive MVP.

"In the championship game he made three outstanding plays in left field - two of them diving," noted Mell.

"We also got some great pitching from Shane Ferguson. In one-pitch, you have to throw strikes, and he didn't walk many guys," observed Mell.

Mell said that Jeremy Billow mopped up for Ferguson.

"He pitched the championship game and did a fantastic job holding P & G Construction to only seven runs," said Mell.

Mell credited his club's championship to "timely hitting.

"We pulled away in some of the games that were close in the 6th or 7th inning," remarked Mell.

D & S got a quick wake-up call in their round robin opener, dropping a narrow 14-13 decision to Michael's. But a 13-1 spanking of Hog Wild Saloon and an 18-7 rout of P & G Construction helped right their ship for the elimination round.

A six run 7th enabled D & S to overcome a 13-11 deficit and pull out a 17-14 victory over ETL/Rocky Top in game one. A Rob Rocky homer and an rbi single by Chris Mell knotted the score at 13-13, then Steve Blake cracked a three-run homer to give his club a 16-13 lead, and ETL never recovered. J. D. Fugate went 4-for-5 to pace the offense.

D & S needed seven innings again in game two to shake off Team Certified 14-13. With the score tied at 13-13, Paul Farfsing singled leading off the top of the 7th, took 3rd on Kenny Jones' base hit, then raced home with the eventual winning run on a Steve Blake sac fly. Pitcher Shane Ferguson then shut down Team Certified in the bottom of 7th to preserve the win.

Farfsing collected four hits altogether, and Jeff Gentil chipped in three for the winners.

D & S jumped out to an early 8-1 lead over P & G Construction after two innings in the finals, but P & G came storming back, scoring five in the 4th and one in the 5th to cut the deficit to 8-7. But in the bottom of the 6th, D & S exploded for six runs to seal the win and the title. D & S never trailed in the game, taking a 5-0 lead in the bottom of the 1st on a two run Rob Rocky single followed by a Paul Farfsing three run bomb. Back-to-back rbi doubles by Kevin Mell and Rocky and a triple by Pat Philhower accounted for D & S three runs in the 2nd. Then in the 6th, J. D. Fugate doubled in two runs to make it 10-7. Jeff Gentil doubled to score Fugate, and Kevin Mell launched a two-run homer as the lead swelled to 13-7. Rob Rocky closed out the scoring with a solo shot.

Rocky pounded out four hits to power the champions.

Regarding his club's two wins in their final at bat, manager Kevin Mell said that "it all gets back to timely hitting.

"We put this team together at the end of the year for 2008, and I believe it's the beginning of something special," concluded Mell.

Floccari Single Keys Title...

Dixon Softball Escapes ERA, Sweeps Worth-Bud Light-USSSA One-Pitch NIT "Silver" Division At Expressway Park

Milford, Oh.--Dixon Softball rallied past ERA 11-10 in nine innings in the first game of the elimination round, then went on to sweep to a 6-0 record and capture first place in the Silver division of the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA One-Pitch National Invitational September 29-30 at Express-way Park.

Dixon Softball mercy-ruled Tyler Trucking 13-3 in the semi-finals, then polished off Sports Reach 15-10 in the championship game. Prior to the elimination round they had disposed of Team Mayhem 10-1, BJ's/Blackies 11-3 and Brew Crew 11-9 in round robin play.

But it was Dixon's ability to survive a key first-round match-up with ERA in the elimination round that enabled them to eventually win the title.

Dixon trailed ERA 10-8 going into the bottom of the 7th. With two outs and runners on second and third, Steve Floccari stepped to the plate and calmly singled in both runners to

force extra innings. Finally in the bottom of the 9th, Matt Hosterman walked, moved into scoring position on a Chris Perry single, then raced home with the game winner on Jason Bronner's base hit.

For his clutch hit, Floccari was named tournament MVP.

"It was a team vote," said manager Rob Dixon. "Everybody voted and Steve was the man. The big reason we made it to the championship game was his big hit against ERA with two outs that scored two runs. And he hit pretty well overall."

Floccari was one of ten Dixon players to hit .600 or better for the weekend. Matt Hosterman led the way with a hefty .714 average. Jason Bronner and Aaron Brewster followed at .692, Brian Walton batted .684, Tony McKinney .681, Todd Hawks and Gerald Dixon hit .667, Steve Floccari .645, Jeremy Snider .643 and Ivan Waialae an even .600.

"We had a batting average of .645, and scored twelve runs per game and only gave up six," observed Rob Dixon. "We also got some good pitching from Tony McKinney, and played errorless defense through six games. The way we played, I think if we had played twenty games that weekend, we would have won all twenty."

Dixon called team leader Matt Hosterman's .714 average "a quiet .714.

"You wouldn't have thought he was leading the team until you did the averages," said Dixon.

Defensively, Dixon cited the performance of shortstop Ivan Waialae and his team's three-man outfield.

"Ivan fielded everything," said Dixon. "And he had a lot of balls hit to him. A lot of balls looked like they were out of reach, and he came up with them and threw guys out."

Matt Hosterman and Steve Floccari combined for eight hits, and Ivan Waialae, Jeremy Snider, Aaron Brewster and Tony McKinney each went 3-for-4 as Dixon Softball escaped ERA 11-10 in game one of the elimination round.

Next Dixon used a seven run 1st and a six run 2nd to jump on top of Tyler Trucking 13-2 after two, then eased to a 13-3, five-inning rout to move on to the finals. Jeff Leasher's rbi single put his club ahead to stay at 3-2 in the 1st. Steve Floccari followed with a two-run double to cap off the inning. Leasher accounted for three more runs in the 3rd with a three-run, inside-the-park home run as the lead swelled to 11-2. Brian Walton closed out the scoring for Dixon with a two-run double.

Leasher, Floccari, Walton, Jason Broner and Ivan Waialae were all perfect in three at bats for the winners.

In the finals Sports Reach held an early 4-3 lead after an inning and a half, but Dixon scored four runs in each of their next three at bats to forge a 15-8 advantage and never looked back. Matt Hosterman's sac fly put Dixon on top for good at 5-4 in the 2nd. Todd Hawks delivered a big two-run homer in the 3rd, and Steve Floccari a two-run triple in the 4th. Tony McKinney held Sports Reach scoreless in the 5th and 6th before giving up two runs in the top of the 7th to make the final 15-10.

Jeff Leasher pounded out four hits to power the champions. Hosterman, McKinney, Rob Dixon and Jason Broner shared a dozen hits.

"It was a good overall tournament for us both offensively and defensively," summed up Dixon manager Rob Dixon. "The guys came ready to play."

October 6-7...

Chris's Band Box Mercy-Ruled 16-5 In Finals...

O'Day, Fiscus Lead Trailblazers To Worth-Bud Light-USSSA Fall "D" State Crown At Expressway Park

Milford, Oh.--The Trailblazers mercy-ruled Chris's Band Box 16-5 in the championship game to capture first place in the Worth-Bud Light-USSSA Men's "D" Fall State October 6th at Expressway Park.

Mike O'Day powered the offense with a .706, four home run, twelve rbi performance, while pitcher Tony Fiscus was limiting three of his team's five opponents to seven runs or less.

O'Day was named tournament MVP.

"Mike had clutch hits all day," observed Trailblazers player-manager Nate Fite. "He hit four home runs and they all came at the right time. Every time he came up to bat the bases were loaded or there were runners on 2nd and 3rd, and he came up with the right hit at the right time. You couldn't have asked for much more."

Fite said Fiscus has been leading the Trailblazers on the mound for twelve years.

"It doesn't matter who's around the guy, he's just a winner," said Fite. "Without Tony we would not have had a chance. He's one of the most under-rated pitchers in U-Trip and he doesn't get the credit. The Trailblazers' roster has changed in twelve years, and 'Fishy' has kept finding a way to win."

Fite said that the Trailblazers set the tone for the tournament with a big come-from-behind win in their opener.

"The key was winning that first game," said Fite. "We were down 10-0."

The Trailblazers battled back, scoring six runs in the bottom of the 6th to stun JAFT 20-17.

“Everybody on the team except for Tony hadn’t won anything before, and our new guys showed they wouldn’t quit,” said Fite. “That win gave us a lot of confidence.”

The defense also came up big, said Fite.

“We got a lot of good defensive play from Brian Seibert and Jason Wells at short and in centerfield,” said Fite. “Brian just started playing there for us.”

Fite and Tony Fiscus led the offense with a hefty .765 performance. O’Day followed at .706 and Brandon Casey batted .611.

The Trailblazers scored twenty runs in their last four at bats to overcome a 10-0, 2nd inning deficit against JAFT in their opener. After cutting the lead to 17-14 in the 5th, the ‘Blazers plated six runs in the bottom of the 6th to grab a 20-17 advantage. Brandon Casey’s leadoff double ignited the rally. Charlie Leinhardt singled in the tying run, setting the stage for a big three-run blast by Mike O’Day to close out the scoring. Tony Fiscus then slammed the door on JAFT in the top of the 7th to preserve the win.

Casey and O’Day were both perfect in four at bats, and Mike Papoi chipped in with a 3-for-4 effort.

Next the Trailblazers used a six run 3rd to erase a 4-3 deficit and take a 9-4 lead over Fitzgerald Pharmacy. The two teams traded three runs apiece over the final four innings, giving the ‘Blazers a 12-7 victory. Once again Mike O’Day delivered the big blow in the game, clubbing a slammer in the 3rd to put his club ahead to stay at 7-4. Tony Fiscus followed with a two-run double to cap off the inning. Tony Fiscus banged out three hits to pace the offense.

The Trailblazers rolled past Chris’s Band Box 12-2 in five innings in game three behind three hits each from Nate Ellington and Nathan Fite. The Trailblazers never trailed after jumping on top 5-0 in the top of the 1st. Matt Ellington’s two-run double put his team on the board. Tony Fiscus followed with a two-run single to make it 4-0. The Trailblazers sealed the win with a four run 4th, opening up a 12-2 bulge with the help of a two-run Nate Fite double.

TPE/Backstabbers ambushed the Trailblazers 10-4 in the winners’ bracket finals, but the eventual champions roared back to crush Chris’s Band Box 16-5 in six innings to take the title. The ‘Blazers erupted for six runs in the top of the 2nd on the strength of a Mike O’Day three-run blast, then exploded for seven runs in the 6th to break open a 9-5 contest. Brandon Casey’s three-run shot highlighted the inning. Tony Fiscus pitched in with a two-run single. Jason Wells and Ray Rhodon collected three hits each to lead the champions.

Trailblazers' Nate Fite concluded by saluting tournament operator Expressway Park.

"They put on a good tournament," said Fite. "Everybody always says that but they always do. It was another well-run tournament."

WORTH-BUD LIGHT-MEN'S CLASS D FALL STATE TOURNAMENT FINAL STANDINGS

1. Trailblazers, Cincinnati, OH 5 0
2. TPE/Backstabbers, Cincinnati, OH 4 2
3. Chris's Band Box, Dayton, OH 5 2
4. Blue Collar, Independence, KY 4 2
5. M & M Connection/Saints, Newport, KY 5 2
Hitmen, Hillsboro, OH 5 2
7. Eager 4 Beaver, Fairborn, OH 3 2
Fitzgerald Pharmacy, Winchester, OH 3 2
9. Dirty Birds/Skyline/Howser, Cincinnati, OH 3 2
Old School, OH 2 2
Kahoots, Fairfield, OH 2 3
P & G/BK Contracting, Dayton, OH 2 3
13. Backyard Boys, Leesburg, OH 3 2
JAFT, Xenia, OH 3 2
Dixon Softball, Milford, OH 2 2
JB's, Cincinnati, OH 2 2
17. Combat Softball, Midland, OH 2 2
Budweiser, Springfield, OH 1 2
Accurate Masonry/Q. C. Accoustics, Cin., OH 0 3
Cincinnati Diamondbacks, Cincinnati, OH 0 3
Lykins Contracting/Sunman Packaging, Cin., OH 0 3
Re/Max/TBR, Hamilton, OH 0 3
Team Havoc, Wilmington, OH 0 3
Warriors, Milford, OH 0 3

Tri-State Air-Filters Tramples Expressway Park Round Robin Appreciation Field

Milford, Oh.-- Tri-State Air Filters romped past six opponents en route to a first place finish in the Expressway Park Round Robin Appreciation Tournament on September 22nd.

Tri-State outscored their victims 110-35 on their way to the title, allowing only one team closer than eleven runs. That came in a 14-5 rout of USSSA "E" National Champion Cincinnati Diamondbacks in the semi-finals.

The champions polished off Wicked Wayz 16-2 in the finals.

Tri-State spanked three round robin opponents prior to the elimination round, drilling Oops 15-3, Big Guns 24-13, and Coaches Crew 14-1. Then in the elimination round, Tri-State steamrolled Little Leaguers 27-11, Cincinnati Diamondbacks 14-5 and Wicked Wayz 16-2.

Five Claim Titles In Expressway Park Customer Appreciation Round Robins

Milford, Oh.--Five teams won division titles in the Expressway Park "Customer Appreciation" Round Robins held Saturday and Sunday, October 13th and 14th, at Expressway Park.

Saturday, October 13th, the Playmakers swept past five opponents, while the Dirty Birds went 4-1, en route to their respective division titles in a twelve-team, two division round robin. The Playmakers escaped with a key second round 6-5 victory over runner-up Wicked Wayz on their way to the division one crown. No other team came within ten runs of the winners, as they romped past DeClaire Insurance (2-3) 12-2, A. T. Excavating (0-4) 24-11, 4 Corners (1-4) 19-9 and PBSI (3-2) 24-13.

Dirty Birds rallied from a first round 14-12 setback to the Players in division two to steamroll Young Guns (4-1) 13-6, Unstoppable Movers (2-3) 16-7, Ballbusters (2-3) 28-0 and Brew Crew (1-3).

Sunday all three division winners - Little Leaguers, Skullbusters and Dirty Birds - went undefeated.

The Little Leaguers outscored their division one opponents 93-30 as they overpowered Milford Dairy Queen (2-3) 14-0, The Swingers (1-4) 24-14, Lights Out (2-3) 20-7, High Rollers (1-4) 12-2 and UAW #863 Xplosion (4-1) 23-7 in the deciding contest.

In division two, the Skullbusters survived a pair of one-run decisions, trimming Time Warner (1-3) 8-7 in their opener and John Sauber (3-1) in game three. Other wins came over B. A. Cutters (3-2) 22-14, Wolfpack/BW3 (2-3) 12-2 and Airtight Plumbing (0-5) 14-11.

While in division three, the Dirty Birds ran their record to 9-1 on the weekend as they outslugged ITEK (1-4) 17-15, then spanked Putters Tavern (1-4) 19-9 and Pak (1-4) 14-4, nudged past Team Emanon (4-1) 15-13 in a key matchup with the division runner-up before polishing off Airway/Saints (2-3) 17-1.

In all, twenty prizes were awarded over the two-day event, ranging from \$100 in 2008 league and tournament credits to fielders' gloves, sweatshirts, golf shirts, and \$25 Quaker Steak certificates.

Tabler, Branch, Craig Power Wessel Sports To USSSA "B" World Title At Wide World Of Sports

Lake Buena Vista, Fl.--Brad Tabler hit .818 with four home runs and 18 rbi's, Jason Branch batted .792 with seven home runs and 22 rbi's, and Christy Craig hit .667 to help power Wessel Sports to a USSSA "B" World Championship October 19-21 at Walt Disney's Wide World of Sports.

Wessel went 1-1 in pool play before going 3-2 in the elimination round en route to a 4-3 record. The tournament was a combined "A" and "B" event, and Wessel, which was the highest finishing "B" team, was awarded the "B" World Championship. Team Combat (WA) won the overall title, Team Fantasy (MN) finished second overall and Wessel placed third.

Wessel defeated Pena's DBC/Mike's Automotive (IA) 21-4 prior to dropping a tough 19-17 decision to Team Fantasy in the elimination round, then rallied to eliminate Added Touch/Combat (WA) 12-9 and Pena's DBC 19-11 before Team Fantasy sent the Northern Kentucky club home with a 24-8 spanking.

"We were quite satisfied with our third place finish going into that game, and you could tell by how we played," said Wessel manager Bill Chard.

Chard cited "team chemistry" and his team's ability to come up with clutch and make key defensive plays as the reasons behind his club's success.

"We came together that weekend," summed up Chard. "We just played well together as a team. We hit in key situations and came through with key defensive plays when we needed them."

Brad Tabler was named the tournament's "Outstanding Offensive Player" after leading Wessel with a hefty .818 weekend. He also clubbed four home runs and collected 17 rbi's. Jason Branch followed with a .792 mark, seven home runs and a team-high 22 rbi's en route to male MVP honors. Christy Craig was named female MVP after turning in a .667 performance, and Liz Ulland was named the tournament's "Defensive MVP."

"It seemed like every time Brad came up we were in a two out situation, and he came through with a big hit whether it was a single or a home run," commented Wessel's Bill Chard.

Chard said Branch was named MVP "for his overall excellent play.

"He batted just shy of .800 and led us in home runs and played stellar defense in center field. He made several key catches in the outfield that were anything but routine."

Christy Craig's .667 effort "came against some of the best pitchers in the country," noted Chard. "Most of the other female players in the country struggled throughout the tournament hitting some of the same pitchers."

Chard said Ulland played 2nd base “and in co-ed, a lot of guys like to hit the back side. And she caught everything that was hit at her.”

All-World selections Shane Spicer, who batted .680 with seven home runs and 20 rbi's, and Joel Ramos, who hit .760 with four home runs and 16 rbi's, also came up big for his team, said Chard.

“Shane controlled the games from the mound with his pitching and came through with some key home runs and was second on the team in rbi's,” observed Chard.

Chard called Ramos “one of the best shortstops in the country.

“He struggled a little for us defensively, but made key defensive plays and came through with a clutch hit every time we needed it.”

Wessel went 1-1 in pool play, falling to eventual overall champion Team Combat 20-10, then evening their record with a 24-11 spanking of 2006 USSSA “C” World Champion Arni's Prime Players (IN). Wessel put up six runs in the 3rd and 4th and nine in the 5th to overcome a 6-2 deficit and seal the win. A two-run double by Joel Ramos put the Kentucky club on top to stay at 7-6 in the 3rd. Joel Ramos launched a three-run homer in the 4th, and Shane Spicer, Jason Branch and Joel Ramos each contributed a two-run shot in the nine run 5th.

Chris Young paced the offense with five hits. Branch, Spicer, Brad Tabler and Christy Craig each went 4-for-4.

Wessel started the elimination round with a 21-4 rout of Pena's DBC, using a thirteen-run 4th to erase a 3-1 deficit. An rbi single by Jason Branch put Wessel ahead for good at 4-3. Joe Ramos followed with a two-run single and Brad Tabler a two-run double to make it 8-3. Three runs later Shane Spicer cracked a three-run homer to cap off the inning at 14-3.

Amy Schweineful collected four hits, and Branch, Tabler, Chris Young, Bip Roberts and Tony Woodruff contributed three each.

Wessel's stay in the winners' bracket proved short-lived, however, as Team Fantasy outslugged the eventual “B” champs 19-17 in game two.

Some clutch pitching by Shane Spicer got Wessel past Added Touch/Combat 12-9 in their first losers' bracket contest. After Added Touch exploded for nine runs in the top of the 2nd to overcome a 7-0 deficit, Spicer held the Washington club scoreless over the final five innings. Meanwhile Wessel pushed across two runs to knot the score, then in the bottom of the 6th Bip Roberts smacked a two-run triple, then scored on a Tonya Woodruff sac fly to give his club an eventual 12-9 victory. Roberts and Christy Craig each shared six hits to lead the winners.

That pitted Wessel again Pena's DBC again in the losers' bracket semi-finals, where they used a three run 5th and a five run 6th to pull away to a 19-11 victory. Pena's drew first blood with two runs in the top of the 1st, but were held scoreless over the next three innings while Wessel jumped out to an 11-2 advantage. A two-run shot by Jason Branch gave Wessel the lead for good at 3-2 in the 1st. Shane Spicer's two-run triple highlighted a five run 2nd, and Bip Roberts' two-run single proved to be the big blow in a three-run 3rd.

Pena's struck for six runs in the top of the 5th to make it interesting, but Joel Ramos answered with a three-run homer in the bottom of the inning to give his club a six run cushion, then Wessel erupted for five runs in the 6th to slam the door on the Iowa club.

Chris Young, Christy Craig and Joel Ramos combined for a dozen hits, and Jason Branch chipped in three to seal the "B" World title.

Wessel manager Bill Chard conclude by thanking sponsors Jim Wessel of Wessel Sports and Chad Vordemesche of Tigerfitness.com.

Burg Powers Warriors Past Worth-Bud Light-USSSA Great Lakes "E" Fall National Field At Expressway Park

Milford, Oh.--Jim Burg went 20-for-24 (.833) with ten rbi's to power the Warriors to a first place finish in theWorth-Bud Light-USSSA Great Lakes "E" National Tournament October 13th at Expressway Park.

The Warriors turned the tables on Dixon Softball 19-7 in the championship game. Dixon had routed the Warriors 18-5 in pool play. The winners went 5-1 overall, sweeping past three opponents in the elimination round after posting a 2-1 mark in round robin action.

Burg, who paced the Warriors offensively, also starred on the mound, holding five of his club's six opponents to single digit scoring. He was the easy choice for tournament MVP honors.

"He was actually a pick-up the morning of the tournament," said Warriors' manager Ryan Staten. "He was hanging out at the park and we were short players, so he came in and pitched for us. In our very first game, he had a single to win the game. He was pretty consistent throughout the tournament. He went 20-for-24 on the day and surprised us all. He just showed up and asked to play, and was our most consistent hitter."

Tom McClanahan Jr. also had a big day for the champions, going 16-for-24 (.727) with eight rbi's.

"He's one of the keys to our team," commented Staten. "We expect that out of him every time. He's very consistent. We expect that from him more than anybody else on our team."

Tom McClanahan Sr. chipped in with a solid .687 day and contributed five rbi's.

Staten said his team "started off slowly, but our defense held us together. In our first game we won 3-2, and our defense was pretty solid the entire day.

The Warriors' offense continued to sputter in an 18-5 spanking by Dixon Softball in game two. But that loss appeared to serve as a wake-up call for the Warriors' offense, which averaged 19 runs over their final four games.

"When the elimination round started, we started hitting better," noted Staten. "We just started playing as a team and just got on a roll and never looked back from that point."

As surprising as the Warriors' turnabout was against Dixon, a third round 36-3 thrashing of nationally ranked JB's was perhaps even more amazing.

"We jumped out to a 20-2 lead in the 2nd inning and they got out of their rhythm, and we just kept playing and hitting the ball," observed Staten.

The Warriors barely survived their first elimination round contest with Express/Titans, as they needed nine innings to pull out a 9-7 victory. The Titans had forced extra innings with a two-out, two-run rally to knot the score at 7-7 in the bottom of the 6th. Neither team scored in the 8th, then in the top of the 9th, Josh Cooper doubled home Chris Turner with the eventual winning run. Jim Burg pitched shutout ball the last three innings to preserve the win. Cooper and Burg combined for eight hits to lead the offense.

In the semi-finals, the Warriors jumped out to an 11-3 lead over Maxed Out Mudcats, then held on for a 13-11 victory after the Mudcats rallied for seven runs in the top of the 7th. Tom McClanahan Jr.'s two-run double put the Warriors ahead 2-0 in the bottom of the 1st. Tom McClanahan Sr. and Jessie Moore followed with rbi doubles to make it 4-0. A two-run triple by Ryan State capped off a four run 2nd as the lead swelled to 8-2.

Tom McClanahan Jr., Staten and Brandon Smith shared nine hits in the victory.

In the finals the Warriors used an eleven run explosion in the top of the 7th to break open an 8-6 battle with Dixon Softball and seal a 19-7 win. Chris Turner collected four rbi's in the inning with a two-run double and a two-run single. Josh Moore also contributed a two-run double in the inning.

Turner collected five hits and five rbi's overall, and Moore and Jim Burg chipped in four hits each and two rbi's to help power the champions.