

## **Publisher's Comments**

Everyone has heard of the old expression that "you can't judge a book by its cover."

That brings to mind one of my pet peeves, which is how some umpires dress when they work their league and tournament games.

In his book "Dress for Success," author John T. Molloy tells businessmen that "most men dress for failure," and I believe that is exactly what many umpires do.

Officiating is a tough job. I worked as an umpire one summer and quickly learned that I was too sensitive for the job. Like Ron Jeffers has frequently stated in this newspaper, officiating is one of those jobs where you are expected to be perfect your first time out and improve thereafter. And truth be known, even if you are perfect and make the right call every time, you're still going to be criticized on every close call. One team - and their followers - are going to be all over you. So if you can't take the heat, stay out of the kitchen.

But for those who can handle the abuse, and enjoy umpiring, and even for those who are only interested in the financial rewards, there are ways to make the experience more palatable. Like most vocations, people improve with time. The "Peter Principle" tells us that every umpire is going to reach a certain level of competency and probably not improve after that, but with a little patience, experience and training, even umpires without thick skins can survive on the softball field.

I believe that the quickest way for an umpire to earn the respect of the teams and make softball umpiring a rewarding experience instead of a miserable one is to make a good first impression. People make amazing assumptions about the professional credibility and potential performance of an individual based on their appearance during a first meeting. And it's very difficult to overcome a poor first impression, regardless of one's knowledge or expertise.

These days it appears to be becoming more fashionable to "dress down" in our society than to dress up. Whether at the workplace or at church, our standards and attitudes seem to have become relaxed, whether consciously or unconsciously.

However, there are areas where we still expect others to dress professionally. For example, when we think of a doctor preparing for brain surgery, would we want to see someone in shorts, sandals and a muscle shirt? Would you respect a highway patrolman dressed in khakis, t-shirt and flip-flops with no badge who pulls you over for a traffic violation?

No. We expect to see that patrolman dressed in full uniform with all his pieces of equipment in place and polished shoes so that we can easily recognize the authority figure we have become accustomed to.

Having said that, what do we think of when we see an umpire arrive for his game dressed like he's ready to mow his lawn? What kind of a statement is he making about the job he's planning to do? What kind of expectations will teams have of him? Is he projecting confidence, competence and credibility? If he doesn't care about how he looks, how much is he going to care about how he umpires?

That being said, a properly outfitted umpire is no substitute for a knowledgeable, experienced, well-trained, confident, hustling official with strong people and game-management skills. But his professional appearance will at least give us the impression that he will be professional in the other qualities that we would expect to characterize a good umpire. We might even subconsciously assume that if he's taken the time to prepare himself for the game with appropriate attire, that he's also prepared himself with the proper training and attitude and will conduct himself in a professional manner on the field.

There are other reasons to dress professionally besides making a good first impression. An umpire who dresses shoddily is a bad reflection on his fellow umpires, his umpire organization, his league or park, his national association, and the game. He shows lack of respect for both the game and the teams he is

working for. After all, the teams pay him his full fee, but in return, they are being short-changed. If the old adage “you get what you pay for” is true, maybe teams should expect to pay less for umpires who won’t invest in the official apparel of their national organization.

Umpires cannot buy respect. Simply purchasing a professional-looking uniform won’t guarantee them the kind of respect and cooperation they’d like to have. Ultimately, they must earn that. But dressing for respect, instead of dressing for failure, can go along way in earning the respect of the teams, and making the game more enjoyable and rewarding for both teams and umpires.

### **In My Opinion by Ron Jeffers**

I read in the Cincinnati Softball News where there is going to be a softball umpire school this summer for umpires who want to be one of the very elite group, and I think the idea is great provided the school is affordable to everyone.

What about the softball umpire who truly wants to be the very best he can be, but he can't afford the \$400 dollars tuition plus the cost of travel, and room and board just to be included in this group?

Years ago when I first started these weekend and week-long umpire schools, I made certain the cost was affordable to everyone, and if any umpire wanted to attend and couldn't afford it, a scholarship was provided, and no one knew about it.

I also believe every student should be umpiring league games each night, and all the games should be filmed with one of the school staff giving instruction on camera for the students to view and listen to later that night.

I agree with most everything Jerry Fick does in his umpiring leadership position, but I am afraid the cost of this elite umpire school is going to exclude some umpires from having the opportunity to advance and succeed only because they do not have the funds to attend this training.

I have had some very good friends who wanted the opportunity to advance their basketball officiating careers in high school and college sports, and they told me it pretty much required them attending officiating schools run by certain successful college basketball officials. They had to be seen and buddy up to these college officials and evaluators to have any chance of advancing in that sport.

In my opinion that should not be a requirement for advancement of any good dedicated basketball official. Consideration for a good high school or college officiating schedule should not require any official to attend a clinic or school to buddy up to the league assignors. This reeks of who you know and not how good you are as an official, and something about that just does not sit well with me.

Jerry is a very ethical and honest man, and I hope he has other ways where every softball umpire can succeed and be included in this elite group, even when they do not have the finances to attend this school.

I do not want to throw a wet blanket on this school. I just do want to be certain any dedicated, ambitious umpire gets the opportunity to make it to the top.

That is my opinion. What is yours?

### **What’s Your Gripe? By Ron Jeffers**

**Q. Ron, can you help sort this out for us? It happened in our league last fall.**

**We had the bases loaded and one out, when our player got a base hit to right field scoring the runners on 2nd and 3rd. The runner on 1st missed 2nd base but arrives safely at 3rd base. The batter was then thrown out sliding into 2nd base for the second out of the inning. Time was called and the 2nd baseman appealed that the runner on 3rd had missed 2nd base.**

The umpire did not allow the runs to score, costing us the league championship. Was we robbed?

A. I think I have been asked this question in every possible way over the years, and the simplest way I can explain it is as follows. No run can score when the third out of an inning is the result of a force out or failure of the batter/runner to reach first base safely. When the runner on first base failed to reach second base safely (by missing second base) he was out on appeal and the end result was we ended the inning with a force out and no run would score.

Don't be angry with the umpire. Be angry with the runner who missed second base. He is the one who cost you the game.

**Q. Mr. Jeffers, last year was my first year of umpiring, and I understand you prepare income taxes for people. I was wondering if you would mind telling me what I am legally permitted to deduct from my taxes when I file this year?**

A. All umpires who work softball and baseball need to get a good tax professional to help them with their taxes. Umpires all need to have an office in home where they can keep their game and meeting assignments on a computer file.

The purchase of equipment and uniforms and the cleaning of same is a deduction. All your miles going to and from your league and association meetings, clinics and games from your home office or main job is a deduction. All related dues are a deduction. The cost of your tax preparation as it relates to your schedule C income, mileage and office in home is a deduction. There are a lot of legal deductions umpires can claim, but it would be a great help for the umpires to go to a tax preparer who is also knowledgeable of officiating and umpiring in particular.

With a legal travel deduction of over fifty cents per mile, it is easy to have enough expenses to keep the income from officiating down to a minimum amount..

Whatever you do don't tell me what one umpire did. He didn't know who I was, and he told me the local softball umpires have to purchase and provide the game balls used in the games they umpire.

There are enough very legal deductions, and you do not need to lie and cheat on your taxes to wipe out any income you may derive from this avocation.

**Q. Dear Ron: the USSSA adopted a rule change at their national meeting last November which now allows a team to play under the shorthanded rule if a player is ejected and does not have a replacement. The umpires are up in arms about the rule, but the directors think it's good to let the teams play ball, especially in a postseason tournament situation where they might be sent home from a national or world tournament. Do you have an opinion on this?**

A. I do not have a problem with the short-handed rule when it is the result of a player getting sick or injured, but if it happens as the result of a player being ejected for some unsportsmanlike act or conduct I agree with the umpires. The game should be forfeited at that time.

It is about time players and teams are held accountable for their actions. Stop kissing up to these troublemakers and make them accountable and responsible for their oftentimes lewd and insidious type of conduct.

A good rule to follow is eject any player who conducts himself in a way that would be unacceptable to you if it were one of your children. Poor behavior should never be tolerated, and to allow a team to continue playing when they are shorthanded as a result of one of their teammates showing their rear end is a stupid rule at best. Stop condoning this kind of bad behavior.

**CRC News by Ron Odenbeck**

**Early Registration Underway; All Balls, Bases And Umpires Included In Fees...**  
**CRC Continues Successful Three-Season Format In '08; Features Central Locations**

The 2008 Cincinnati Recreation Commission Adult Softball Program registration for all teams - old and new - continues this month until all leagues are filled.

Lighted Leagues and Sunday afternoon leagues will begin play the week of April 6th. These leagues will play at Oskamp, Oakley and Schmidt fields, and will use an eight game season format. The fee for all lighted leagues is \$350 (8 games). The fee for Sunday afternoon (unlighted) games is \$285 (8 games).

Twilight leagues (unlighted) will begin the week of April 22nd. These leagues will play at Airport, Oskamp, Oakley and Salway fields and will use a ten game season format. The fee for twilight leagues is \$345 (10 games).

**APPLICATIONS AND PAYMENTS**

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

Entry fees will not be refunded after league schedules have been completed. Teams withdrawing prior to completion of league schedules will be assessed a \$25 service charge for clerical and material fees. Again, registration is not completed until you have phoned the Athletic Office and made payment.

**ROSTERS**

Rosters are due in the Athletic Office before the first game is played. Rosters and CRC rule book are available on the web site. The manager's signature is required for the roster to be acceptable.

**THREE SEASON FORMAT**

Our three season (spring, summer, and fall) leagues at Schmidt worked out so well again in 2007 the CRC Athletic Division will continue that program in 2008. Also, all CRC Softball field locations will again offer the one fee covers everything (ASA and USSSA registration fee, umpire fee, balls, bases, scorebook, rule book and Cincinnati Softball News subscription for each manager).

**WEATHER CONDITION UPDATES**

The Athletic Division will also be offering field and weather condition updates at all field locations for the 2008 season. Please listen to the entire message when calling the rainout line for detailed information on each field's status. This will provide better game day communication and help to prevent unnecessary trips to the fields by the teams.

**ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING**

An organizational meeting for team managers will be held on Wednesday, March 19th. Once again for your convenience, there will be two sessions at 6:00 PM and 7:00 PM in the CRC office first floor auditorium. We highly recommend that all team managers attend.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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

UMPIRES

Umpires will be assigned by the Cincinnati Recreation Commission. The CRC Athletic Division will be holding umpire training on Sunday February 24th from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. The CRC is looking for ex-players and current umpires who are on time, KNOW the rules, hustle, are professional, and believe in great customer service. Contact Bill Bailey at 352-1627 for further information.

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

All Cincinnati Recreation Commission men's, women's, mixed couples and black american leagues will again offer berths into USSSA championship tournaments in 2008.

Men's, women's and mixed leagues will offer berths into both State Championship and Great Lakes Division National Championship Tournaments. Black American teams will be awarded World Tournament berths from selected leagues.

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

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

Teams accepting berths are responsible for paying their own entry fee. The CRC League Supervisor and USSSA officials will determine the proper team classification.

Tournament packages for Great Lakes Division National Tournaments and Ohio State Tournaments will be mailed to eligible teams by the USSSA. Teams must meet USSSA eligibility requirements to advance.

### **USSSA News**

#### **Bob Lipsky Appointed Ohio USSSA District IX Umpire-In-Chief**

Bob Lipsky, a twenty year veteran official with the Buckeye-Metropolitan Umpire Association, has been appointed Ohio USSSA District Umpire-In-Chief by District IX Director Bob Owens.

Lipsky succeeds former District IX U-I-C Darrin Ward, who resigned following the 2007 season. Ward had served as District U-I-C since 2004.

Lipsky, who will begin his 21st season as a USSSA umpire, has been a board member of the Buckeye-Metropolitan Umpires since 1994, and most recently served as the organization's Umpire-In-Chief in 2007.

The Buckeye-Metropolitan Umpire Association is the largest USSSA umpire organization in District IX, last year registering 51 of the 173 umpires officiating in the district. The Buckeye-Metropolitan Umpires serve Expressway Park as well as several other league and tournament operators in eastern Hamilton County, Clermont County and southern Butler County.

"Bob brings tremendous skills and experience as an administrator, clinician and umpire to this position," says District IX Director Bob Owens. "He has served on his organization's Board of Directors for fifteen years, and the last five he has run their clinics and assisted as a clinician at our district clinics. And no active umpire in Greater Cincinnati has more experience working state, national, and national invitational tournaments than Bob."

Owens says that Lipsky has worked over forty USSSA state tournaments, twenty national tournaments, and almost 150 National Invitational Tournaments at Expressway Park alone. In addition, he has officiated at

other Greater Cincinnati parks and in other districts in such events as the Louisville Slugger and Springfield Stroh's Men's "A" National Invitational Tournaments.

After obtaining a degree in business from the University of Cincinnati, Lipsky says he began to play softball "seven nights a week and at every ball park in the city" with such teams as Uno's Pizza, A. B. Wise and Expressway Park.

"When I started playing at Expressway, I fell in love with the park," recalls Lipsky. "The fields and the facilities were great, but I wasn't enthusiastic about their umpires and I felt I could help and improve their umpiring, even though I had never umpired a game. I started umpiring there in 1988 and I haven't left there since. This will be my 21st year.

Lipsky says he's worked everything from "pee wee girls' youth all the way to major.

"I've done them all, and I love it all," says Lipsky. "I was going to be one of the umpires in the new pro league that was supposed to start seven or eight years ago, but the league never got off the ground."

Lipsky says he first joined his organization's board in 1994 when it went under the name of the "Tri-State Umpire Association," and has been an officer with the group every year since then. "I've taught their classes for the last five years, helped out teaching at District IX clinics, and I've attended every District IX clinic in the area since 1988."

This year, Lipsky says he will serve as the Buckeye-Metropolitan Umpires Association's Assistant Umpire-In-Chief.

"I was the U-I-C last year, but it was too demanding of my time. They needed someone who would be there every single night, which I can't do with my job."

A salesman for Gateway Travel, Lipsky and his wife of 18 years, Sheila, have no children.

"We raised my brother's son after my brother passed away," notes Lipsky. "God works in strange ways."

Among his duties as District U-I-C will be "organizing and helping to teach the clinic each year, answering any rules interpretations that come up in area leagues and tournaments, and running clinics for any organizations that need help.

"I love to teach," says Lipsky.

Additionally, Lipsky promises to "make myself available to help in any way, shape or form.

"If someone needs a District U-I-C present for any tournament, I can be there."

Lipsky's goals include unifying area umpires and helping them to become more professional.

"Basically I want to help get everybody on the same page with how the rules are administered so that the umpires are calling things the same way at every ball park," says Lipsky. "We try to teach them at the clinic but we don't always get the participation we need there. I think at the last two clinics, some organizations didn't show up at all. If everybody came, we could all get on the same page and learn a unified strike zone and positioning.

"As I've traveled from park to park, I see umpires who start out with a 'one and one' count instead of an '0 and 0' count," says Lipsky. "They don't wear the proper uniforms and it's just not right. You want everybody to look professional and to be professional. I don't want umpires out there just for the money, but people who have a love for the game and want to improve it. I can't stand seeing an umpire who doesn't know the rules and doesn't hustle."

## **Blitz/Watanabe/TTP/TPS, Mike Foulks/Team Insanity Join Conference USSSA**

Two Greater Cincinnati teams - Blitz/Watanabe/TTP/TPS and Mike Foulks Auto Body/Team Insanity - have joined Conference USSSA for 2008.

Now in its third year, Conference USSSA was launched prior to the 2006 season. It represented a complete restructuring of the USSSA Men's Major World Series.

Prior to 2006, teams became eligible for the World Series by winning one of a dozen Men's Major National Invitational Tournaments. The previous season Men's "A" World Champions also qualified, along with any Men's Major team with nine or more players on the USSSA "Elite" player list. Additional at-large berths were awarded based on points. A travel purse of \$5,000 was awarded at each Major NIT among the top six finishers. The World Series was then seeded based on points accumulated at Major NIT's.

Under the new Conference structure, 32 teams compete in 18 NIT's to advance to a Conference Championship and USSSA World Series. The top fourteen teams - based on points - will receive a paid berth to the Series, ten rooms for four nights at a host hotel, and \$2,000 travel expense.

But qualifying for the World Series is just part of the carrot for joining the Conference, says Mike Foulks Auto Body/Team Insanity sponsor-manager Mike Foulks.

"The Conference gives you the opportunity to play the best teams in the country on a regular basis," says Foulks. "That will prepare our team for the tournaments that matter the most to us at the end of the season.

"Playing teams of that caliber will only make your team stronger and better prepared mentally," adds Foulks. "It will make your guys step up a level. You get the most out of your players against upper level players, and every game means something."

Also, says Foulks, "the Conference will allow us to play a lot of different teams instead of going to local tournaments and playing the same old teams over and over."

"We're looking forward to playing in the Conference in 2008 and we welcome the competition, and hope it better prepares us for the worlds at the end of the year," says Terry Walton, manager of Blitz/Watanabe. "You get a hundred additional points for every Major NIT, you're guaranteed a spot in the Smoky Mountain Classic, and the exposure for our sponsors creates more and more awareness of your team on the national level. That could help with future sponsors and recruiting players who may be attracted to playing in the Conference. You're not going to get this kind of exposure anywhere else."

"Also," points out Walton, "the Conference gives 'B' teams an opportunity to play in the World Series that they wouldn't otherwise have."

Mike Foulks/Team Insanity will participate in six Conference events, including Columbus, In., St. Louis, Mo., Joliet, Il., Maryville, Tn., Cincinnati, Oh., and Detroit, Mi.

Blitz will play in Columbus, Maryville, Cincinnati, Detroit, and possibly St. Louis.

One of the principle benefits of Conference USSSA is that members are assured of their entry into Conference events.

"My guys like that we're guaranteed to get in tournaments like the Smoky Mountain Classic and Cincinnati Major NIT, while other teams are turned away," says Foulks.

"Before, we had to play in the Spring Open in Maryville early in the season to guarantee our team a spot," says Walton.

With a price tag of \$5,000, entrance into Conference USSSA isn't cheap. But in return, all teams receive their entry fees for six Conference NIT's, 100 bonus points for each entry into a Conference NIT, and guaranteed entry into all Conference NIT's.

Additional benefits hinge on performance. For example, the top fourteen teams receive a paid berth to the U-Trip World Series, forty room nights and \$2,000 travel. The top eight "A" teams and above, and "B" teams and below are invited to the Conference Championship and receive twenty room nights and participate in an awards dinner and ceremony. Also, the top eight B, C or D teams receive a paid berth to their respective World Tournament, \$2,000 travel money, and either 40 room nights (B and D World) or \$1,500 (C World).

In addition, the highest finishing A, B, C and D teams in the Conference is awarded 500 bonus points towards their open class point total and \$500 travel money for their respective World Tournament. Men's "B" teams receive a paid berth into the "A" World Tournament.

Teams also vote for conference rules. There are player stats, Conference awards, and superior officiating.

"If all the hops go our way and we play with no mistakes, we could also be afforded the chance to win travel money and a spot into the Conference USSSA tournament on Labor Day Weekend," says Mike Foulks.

**For All Men's C And D Teams With 1,000 Points, And E And Mixed Teams With 500 Points...  
Ohio USSSA District IX "Ultimate Super Softball Series Awards" Program Will Again Offer Paid World Berths, Travel Expense In 2008**

Local USSSA officials have announced features of the Ohio USSSA District IX "Ultimate Super Softball Series Awards" program for the 2008 season.

Now entering its seventh year, the program will once again provide paid berths and travel expense based on USSSA National Ranking points.

The points reflect participation and success in USSSA qualifying tournaments.

"Once again this year we're going to award every 'C,' and 'D' team in Greater Cincinnati that accumulates 1,000 points, and every "E" team that accumulates 500 points, a paid berth to the World Tournament," says Ohio USSSA District IX Director Bob Owens. "And if the team has already qualified for the World, the team will receive \$250 in travel expense if the team advances to the World.

"In addition, the highest ranked men's "C," "D" and "E" team will receive an additional \$250."

The deadline to earn points is Labor Day Weekend at the conclusion of National Tournament play.

"We're very pleased to be able to offer these enhancements through the 'Super Series Awards' program again this year," says Owens. "Competition for these berths and travel expense has sparked tremendous interest in our qualifying program, and we are pleased to be able to reward teams at the end of the summer for their success and participation."

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the Super Series program, says Owens, is that teams will be able to track their points again this year on the USSSA's national web site at [ussa.com](http://ussa.com).

"USSSA's website is one of the most frequently visited websites in the world," says Owens. "Teams love to track their progress and that of other teams on the site."

The "Super Series" program also features travel expense money for the winners of each Cincinnati area USSSA Men's Class C, D, E and Mixed Couples qualifiers and Mixed Couples NIT's. Posting of USSSA national ranking points will be done weekly. Some tournament operators will also post the winning team's



picture on the USSSA website. And an article on the winning team will appear in the CINCINNATI SOFTBALL NEWS and be posted at cincysoftball.com and on SOFTBALL MAGAZINE'S national website at softballmagazine.com.

Owens says that each qualifying tournament will award travel expense money again this year to the winner in the form of certificates, which can be redeemed towards State, National or World Tournament entry fees. Tournaments with four to seven teams will award \$50, eight to eleven teams \$100, twelve to fifteen teams \$150, sixteen to twenty teams \$200, and tournaments with more than twenty teams will award \$250. This program will be in place for most Men's C, D and E and Mixed Couples State and National qualifiers as well as Mixed Couples National Invitational Tournaments. All Men's E World qualifiers held in Ohio USSSA District IX will feature a paid World berth for tournaments with eight or more teams. Tournaments with fewer than eight teams will award half the World Tournament entry fee of \$150. If the winning team has already qualified for the World, the team will receive travel expense in lieu of the paid berth. An unpaid berth will pass down to the next highest finishing, previously unqualified team.

Last year, over \$29,000 in travel expense was won by teams in USSSA District IX events.

"This will be a tremendous opportunity for our local 'C,' 'D' and 'E' teams to advance to the ultimate tournament in their program - the USSSA World Tournament," says Owens.

This year's USSSA Men's "C" World Tournament will be held September 18-21 in Sterling Heights, Mi. The "D" World will be September 18-21 in Lake Buena Vista, Fl., and the "E" World will be held September 11-14, also in Lake Buena Vista.

The U-Trip Mixed "C" and "E" World Tournaments will be held in Lexington, SC, while the Mixed "D" World will be in Lake Buena Vista, Fl. Both events will be held October 17-19.

**NOTE:** The travel expense policies outlined above will not be in effect for selected "super qualifiers," "cash tournaments," and other designated events.

### **8th Annual Wayne Rust Memorial-Mid-Summer Park Championship Returns To Expressway Park**

Milford, Oh.--Expressway Park has announced that the 8th Annual "Wayne Rust Memorial-\$2,500 Mid-Summer League Championship Series" will be held at the park again in 2008. This year's event will be held the week of July 28-August 3. Only Expressway Park league teams not competing in the ASA Cincinnati Me-tro will be eligible to participate. Regular league games will not be played the week of July 28th.

Last year's "Mid-Summer Championship Series-Wayne Rust Memorial" drew a record 40-team field. Ice Softball Outlasted Dirty Birds 8-5 in the second championship game to capture the "Platinum" title. In the Gold Division, Creative Point rallied for two runs in the top of the 7th to trim Airtight Plumbing 11-8 and complete a four game sweep. Coaches Crew clipped Tom Brate Trucking 12-11 in the second championship game of the "Silver" division. While in the Gold Division, X-Force squeezed out three of their four elimination round victories in their final at bat, polishing off Richard Industries 15-5 in the finals.

Each of the champions made away with \$500 in cash, while the runners-up collected \$250.

The format will once again be a three game round robin Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, with all teams from each round robin division advancing to a double elimination tournament on the weekend. The "Series" will feature \$2,500.00 in cash awards.

Teams can obtain eligibility rules and requirements and other details by picking up a tournament packet at the park pro shop.

### **Expressway Park League Meeting March 12th At Holiday Inn Eastgate**

The 2008 Expressway Park team managers' meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 12th, from 7:00 PM until 9:00 PM at the Holiday Inn Eastgate.

Team managers will receive their managers' packets at the meeting, and 2008 league and USSSA rule changes will be reviewed.

Also at the meeting, bats, gloves, batting gloves, and equipment bags will be sold at thirty to forty percent off regular Expressway Park pro shop prices. And representatives from various bat manufacturers will be in attendance to show their new bats and answer any questions about bat standards.

A manager and player raffle will also be conducted at the meeting. Prizes will include a portable TV, DVD player, boom box, Holiday Inn Eastgate Weekend getaway, softball bats and equipment and restaurant certificates.

Managers are required to attend, and players are welcome to attend. Refreshments and snacks will be served at the meeting.

For any additional information contact Expressway Park at 831-2273.

### **Five NIT's, Ohio State Tournament Again Highlight 2008 USSSA Mixed Couples Slate**

Five National Invitational Tournaments and the Ohio State Tournament will again be the featured events on a 23-weekend USSSA Mixed Couples Tournament calendar for Greater Cincinnati in 2008.

USSSA State and National qualifiers will be held at Expressway Park in Milford, Kolping Park in Mt. Healthy, Pastime Park in Harrison, Riverstar Sportsplex and Triple Creek Park in Cincinnati. A 2008 USSSA mixed couples tournament schedule appears below.

A total of twenty three USSSA Mixed Couples State and/or National qualifiers are scheduled for area parks in 2008. Each event will be part of the "Ultimate Super Softball Series Awards" program initiated six years ago by local USSSA officials. A principle feature of the program is that every USSSA State, National and World qualifying tournament held in Greater Cincinnati will award travel expense money to the winning team.

"The awards will be made in the form of certificates which can be redeemed towards State, National or World tournament entry fees," explains USSSA District IX (Cincinnati) Director Bob Owens.

The Ohio State and National Tournament entry fees are \$225, and World Tournament entry fees are \$300. Tournaments with three to seven teams will award \$50, eight to eleven teams \$100, twelve to fifteen teams \$150, sixteen to twenty teams \$200, and tournaments with more than twenty teams will award \$250.

In addition to the travel expense money awarded, teams will receive USSSA ranking points, which can be tracked throughout the season at [usssa.com](http://usssa.com), the USSSA's official website. Participants are ranked at the State, Divisional and National level. Also, throughout the season, winning team photographs will also be posted at [usssa.com](http://usssa.com), and tournament highlights will also be posted at [cincysoftball.com](http://cincysoftball.com).

In addition to the state and national qualifiers, there will be five National Invitational Tournaments. Those will be on April 26 at Riverstar Sportsplex, May 10 at Kolping Park, May 18 at Pastime Park, May 31-June 1 at Riverstar, and July 26 at Expressway Park. These events will feature the same travel expense awards, national ranking points, and other elements of the State and National qualifiers, plus offer direct berths to the USSSA Mixed World Tournaments. The USSSA Mixed Major and D World Tournaments will be held in Lexington, SC, and the Mixed C and E Worlds in Lake Buena Vista, FL. Both events will be October 17-19.

The local NIT slate will get underway on April 26, when Riverstar will host the 9th Annual Worth-Bud Light-Mike Adler Memorial Mixed NIT for Mixed Major, C, D and E teams. Last year High Octane rallied

for two runs in the bottom of the 7th to stun Wessel Sports, the eventual U-Trip B World Champions, 20-19 in the finals.

The following month on May 10, the 9th Annual Worth-Bud Light Mixed NIT will be held at Kolping Park. Wessel Sports romped to a 4-0 mark, outscoring their opponents 77-23 en route to the title.

Three weekends later on May 31-June 1, the 16th Annual Worth-Bud Light-Billy Backman IV Memorial City Slam NIT will be held at Riverstar Sportsplex. In a showdown of defending USSSA C and D World Champions, Arni's/Prime Players outslugged Dented Bats 21-18 in the winners' bracket finals and 20-16 in the championship game of the C division. While in the D, eventual Ohio State Champion Bomb Squad, which wound up finishing 3rd in the USSSA D World, spanked Sizzle Softball 18-7 in the deciding game.

Next up will be the 12th Annual Worth-Bud Light-Mid-Summer Classic NIT at Expressway Park on July 26th. Last year's tournament was captured by Brady's Bunch/Cherry Grove Lanes, which mowed down three elimination round opponents on their way to the title. Brady's Bunch avenged a 17-2 round robin setback in the finals, knocking off Summerville Bank 12-8.

Championship play actually gets underway on August 23-24 when the Ohio USSSA Mixed State Tournament is held at Riverstar Sportsplex and Expressway Park. With some forty C, D, E and E Rec teams participating last year, it is believed to be one of the largest mixed tournaments in the nation. Like the Mixed NIT's, the Ohio State Tournament offers direct World Tournament berths.

The Mixed Couples National Tournament, which attracted twenty one teams in its sixth year last fall, is scheduled for September 27-28 at Kettering Fields in Dayton. The event offers direct berths to the USSSA World Tournaments to the highest finishing C, D and E teams.

A complete list of local USSSA Mixed Couples state and national qualifiers and National Invitational Tournaments appears below. For information regarding USSSA Mixed Couples NIT's outside the Cincinnati area, visit the USSSA national website at [ussa.com](http://ussa.com).

## **2008 GREATER CINCINNATI USSSA MIXED COUPLES TOURNAMENT CALENDAR**

April 12 State-National Qualifier (Kolping Park)  
April 6 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
April 13 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
April 20 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
April 27 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
May 18 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
May 26 (Monday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
June 1 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
June 8 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Pastime Park)  
June 8 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
June 15 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
June 28 State-National Qualifier (Triple Creek Park)  
July 6 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
July 13 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
July 20 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
July 27 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
August 3 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
August 9 State-National Qualifier (Kolping Park)  
August 10 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Pastime Park)  
August 10 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
August 24 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
September 1 (Monday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)  
September 21 (Sunday) State-National Qualifier (Expressway Park)

## **USSSA NATIONAL INVITATIONAL TOURNAMENTS**

April 26 National Invitational World Qualifier (Riverstar Park)  
May 10 National Invitational World Qualifier (Kolping Park)  
May 18 National Invitational World Qualif. (Pastime Park)  
May 31 National Invitational World Qualifier (Riverstar Park)  
July 26 National Invitational World Qual. (Expressway Park)

## **USSSA STATE TOURNAMENTS**

August 23-24 Ohio C State Tournament (Riverstar Park)  
August 23-24 Ohio D State Tournament (Riverstar Park)  
August 23-24 Ohio E State Tournament (Riverstar Park)  
August 23-25 Ohio E Rec State Tournament (Riverstar Park)  
September 13 Ohio Fall State (Riverstar Park)

## **USSSA GREAT LAKES NATIONAL TOURNAMENTS**

September 27 USSSA Great Lakes C National (Dayton, OH)  
September 27 USSSA Great Lakes D National (Dayton, OH)  
September 27 USSSA Great Lakes E National (Dayton, OH)

## **USSSA WORLD TOURNAMENTS**

October 17-19 USSSA Major World (Lake Buena Vista, FL)  
October 17-19 USSSA C World (Lexington, SC)  
October 17-19 USSSA D World (Lake Buena Vista, FL)  
October 17-19 USSSA E World (Lexington, SC)

## **Four NIT's, Great Lakes National Tournaments Anchor Local Women's Program**

Four National Invitational Tournaments, the Ohio State and Great Lakes Women's National Championships will be the marquis events on a twelve-weekend USSSA Women's Tournament calendar for Greater Cincinnati in 2008.

USSSA State and National qualifiers will also be held at Northside K of C, Riverstar Sportsplex, Springdale Recreation Center and Triple Creek Park in Cincinnati and Pastime Park in Harrison.

NIT's are slated for Riverstar, Pastime and Expressway Park in Milford. The Ohio USSSA State Tournament will be played at Queen City Sports Complex in West Chester.

State and national qualifiers will be on March 15-16 at Riverstar (C and D divisions), May 24-25 at Northside K of C (B, C and D), June 8th at Pastime (D and E), July 12th at Triple Creek Park (D and E), and July 19-20 at the Springdale Recreation Center (B, C and D).

Four National Invitational Tournaments, each offering direct berths to the USSSA B, C and D World Tournaments. These will include the Worth-Bud Light-Commie Currens NIT on Saturday, April 5th at Riverstar Park in California, the 3rd Annual Worth-Bud Light-Bernie Dickman Memorial-Women's Spring Classic on Saturday, April 19th at Expressway Park in Milford, the 25th Annual Worth-Bud Light-Blue Chip Classic on June 7-8, also at Expressway Park, and the 30th Annual Worth-Bud Light-Queen City Classic on June 19-20 at Pastime Park in Harrison.

Teams will have their choice of awards or travel expense money at some NIT's and qualifiers, says Ohio USSSA Women's State Director Myra Burwell.

“It’s our experience that teams are getting a little tired of trophies and plaques and want all the financial help that we can give them,” comments Burwell.

In addition to the travel expense money awarded, teams will receive USSSA ranking points, which can be tracked throughout the season at [usssa.com](http://usssa.com), the USSSA’s official website. Participants are ranked at the State, Divisional and National level. The teams with the most points receive the best seeding at USSSA post-season events, and often receive first round byes. Also, winning team photographs will be posted at [www.usssa.com](http://www.usssa.com), and tournament highlights at [www.cincysoftball.com](http://www.cincysoftball.com), throughout the season.

Last year’s Worth-Bud Light Commie Currens Memorial USSSA Women’s NIT at Riverstar was won by D & S Engineering, which rallied from a 7-0 1st inning deficit to outlast the Battin’ Bullets 11-9 in the championship game.

In the Spring Classic at Expressway, eventual USSSA Women’s “B” World Champion Ty-1-On mercy-ruled Stage II 27-17 in six innings in the “B-C” division, while Dented Bats trimmed Pelle’s 3-2 in the “D” division.

In June, Ty-1-On rolled to their third championship of the year in Expressway’s Blue Chip NIT, rallying for two runs in the bottom of the 6th to escape with a 10-9 victory over the Shooters in the championship game. Hometown favorites the Milford Hit-Hers battled through the losers’ bracket to take the “D” division, upending Bedrock Tanning 2-1 and 11-0 in a double finals.

Two weeks later in the Queen City Classic at Pastime Park in Harrison, Hill & Griffith bested two-time champion Shooters in the “C” division finals, while Pelle’s outslugged the Intimidators 19-13 in the “D.”

Championship play will commence with the Ohio USSSA State Tournaments for class B, C and D teams on August 9-10 at Expressway. Action returns to Milford three weekends later with the Great Lakes B, C and D National Tournaments on August 31-September 1.

Teams must compete in their respective State and National Tournaments in order to advance to the World Tournaments, which will be held this year in conjunction with the U-Trip Men’s Major World Series and Men’s “D” World.

A complete list of local USSSA Women’s state and national qualifiers, National Invitational Tournaments, and State, National and World Tournaments appears below. For information regarding USSSA Women’s NIT’s outside the Cincinnati area, visit the USSSA national website at [usssa.com](http://usssa.com).

## **2008 GEATER CINCINNATI USSSA WOMEN'S SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT CALENDAR**

### **USSSA STATE-NATIONAL QUALIFIERS**

March 15-16 USSSA C-D (Riverstar Sportsplex)

May 24-25 USSSA B-D-C (Northside K Of C)

June 8 USSSA D-E (Pastime Park)

July 12 USSSA D-E (Triple Creek)

July 19-20 USSSA B-C-D (Springdale Recreation Cener)

### **USSSA NATIONAL INVITATIONAL TOURNAMENTS**

April 5 USSSA B-C-D National Invitational (Riverstar Park)

April 19 USSSA B-C-D National Invitational (Expressway Park)

June 7-8 USSSA B-C-D National Invitational (Expressway Park)

June 21-22 USSSA B-C-D National Invitational (Pastime Park)

### **OHIO USSSA STATE TOURNAMENTS**

August 9-10 USSSA Ohio B State (Milford, OH)

August 9-10 USSSA Ohio C State (Milford, OH)

August 9-10 USSSA Ohio D State (Milford, OH)

### **USSSA GREAT LAKES NATIONAL TOURNAMENTS**

Aug. 31-Sept. 1 USSSA Great Lakes B National (Milford, OH)  
Aug. 31-Sept. 1 USSSA Great Lakes C National (Milford, OH)  
Aug. 31-Sept. 1 USSSA Great Lakes D National (Milford, OH)

#### USSSA WORLD TOURNAMENTS

September 19-21 USSSA B World (Lake Buena Vista, FL)  
September 19-21 USSSA C World (Lake Buena Vista, FL)  
September 19-21 USSSA D World (Lake Buena Vista, FL)

#### **Five Enshrined Into Norwood Sorrento's-Greater Cincinnati Softball Hall Of Fame At Radisson Hotel Cincinnati Riverfront**

Springdale, OH.--Five more area softball greats were inducted into the Norwood Sorrento's Softball Hall of Fame during a banquet ceremony held in their honor on January 27th at the Radisson Hotel Cincinnati Riverfront in Covington.

The ceremony, attended by a robust crowd of 250, brought to 128 the total number of people who have been enshrined into the Hall of Fame since its inception in 1985.

Inducted into the Norwood Sorrento's Softball Hall of Fame of Greater Cincinnati were James Richard "Dick" Jones of Fairfield, who pitched four teams to ASA Major Metro titles; Gary W. Mounts of Batavia, who played in fifteen consecutive ASA National or USSSA World Tournaments; Colleen Ann Needham of Cincinnati, who has coached and managed more World Championship teams than anyone in USSSA history; sponsor David P. "Dave" Neiheisel of Cincinnati, whose Joseph Chevrolet teams have captured a dozen national championships; and John Arthur Steele of Cincinnati, the greatest power hitter in Greater Cincinnati softball history.

WCPO-TV sports anchor Dennis Janson served as Master of Ceremonies at the banquet for the fourth consecutive year.

The afternoon program commenced with a cocktail hour featuring a slide show and memorabilia display. After a buffet dinner, banquet sponsors and past inductees were recognized.

#### **Dick Jones Induction**

Dick Jones was the pitcher for four ASA Cincinnati Major Metro champions over a five year period from 1967-1971. Jones won three consecutive Blue Ash/Deer Park batting titles with league champions Jack's Club in 1964 and Monte Vista Theater in 1965 and '66 prior to his breakout season in 1967, when he pitched Abrams Texaco to a 34-1 mark and an ASA Metro title. Jones added another Metro crown with Eddie's Cafe the following year, also earning Most Valuable Player honors in the Middletown Invitational. Two years later Jones pitched Century Tire to consecutive Metro titles (1970-71), tossing a no-hitter in the 1971 Metro. He was also a part of the Sorrento's Pizza team that captured Metro championships in 1974-'75. He is a member of the Sycamore High School Hall of Fame.

Jones softball career was delayed for eight years while he served his country in the U. S. Marine Corps.

Forrie Longeway, a former teammate with Jones' Century Tire team, was the first testimonial speaker of the afternoon.

Longeway said he and Jones were close friends who still "hang and commiserate together." After comparing several local softball greats to various animals based on their personalities and characteristics on the field, Longeway called Jones a "peacock.

"And he was a bad peacock," joked Longeway. "He would strut around on the mound, and bark orders at us and bark at the other team."

Longeway then shared a story that he felt summed up Jones' "fierceness.

“We were playing Little Caesar’s in Parma, Oh. in the ‘71 World Tournament, and Tex Collins was the batter,” recalled Longeway. “He was one of the greatest long ball hitters I ever played against. There were thousands of people in the stands, and Tex was showboating and warming up using four or five bats. And Dick said, ‘hey, fat butt. Get in the batter’s box. You can’t hit me.’ And Collins got in the box and hit an absolute rocket up the middle, and Dick catches it. And on his way back to the dugout he says, ‘hey big boy, if that’s the best you can do, sit down.”

“For those of you who don’t know Dick, that explains what kind of person he was and what kind of a competitor he was,” said Longeway in closing.

Jones began his remarks stating that “it’s an honor to be here this afternoon with such a select group of athletes.”

He then thanked the Hall of Fame committee for the award, and Sorrento’s Pizza for sponsoring the Hall of Fame.

Reflecting on his career highlights, Jones said that two in particular stood out.

“I started my career with a young team called Abrams Texaco,” said Jones. “We had 34 wins and only one loss and we won the Metro undefeated that year.

“The second one was that I pitched a no-hitter in the Metro tournament. It’s the only one I know of and we beat at team called United Savings. The score was 6-0,” said Jones.

Jones concluded by giving “special thanks to my wife, Ginny, and my daughter, Tori, for standing behind me during my softball career, because I wasn’t the easiest person to live with.”

### **Gary Mounts Induction**

Inducted next was Gary Mounts, also began his softball career after serving his country. After a breakout season with the JTS Brown softball team in 1971, when he was named Greater Cincinnati “Rookie of the Year” and to the All-City team, Mounts joined national powerhouse Century Tire in 1972. Over the next three seasons, Century dominated local play, winning seven out of nine Major League titles and back-to-back ASA Metro Tournaments, while qualifying for three consecutive ASA National Tournaments. Over the next ten years, he batted leadoff and played 2nd base for the Jay’s/Foxy Lady Lounge teams. His defining moment came in 1975, when he helped lead Foxy Lady to the Ohio Valley Classic championship at Ross Park in St. Bernard. The “OVC” was the premier tournament in the nation at the time. Mounts led Jay’s to numerous invitational tournament titles and a runner-up finish in the USSSA World Tournament in 1978 and 1980. He was a perennial All-City selection during his career.

Mounts’ presenter was “Red” Ronnie Jones, a 1999 inductee into the Norwood Sorrento’s Hall of Fame, who came all the way from Dallas, Tx. to speak for his former teammate.

“Remember this day,” Jones told Mounts. “You’ll never forget it as long as you live”

Jones said that throughout Mounts’ career, he “made things happen with his hitting, fielding and baserunning.”

Mounts could always hit, said Jones, but it took former Century Tire infielder Pat Wright to teach him “all the nuances of playing the game and how to play 2nd base,” a position Mounts would inherit from Wright.

Later Jones and Mounts joined the Jay’s-Foxy Lady teams of the seventies and eighties, where Mounts and shortstop Davey Johnson “formed the best double play combination” of their era, said Jones.

But always, “Gary Mounts set the table,” noted Jones.

Jones went on to recall Foxy Lady's improbable championship in the 1975 Ohio Valley Classic.

"Foxy Lady only had two or three legitimate home run hitters, and every team we played had twelve or thirteen," said Jones. "Some said it was the biggest upset in local softball history. And again, Gary Mounts set the table.

Jones concluded by saying that Mounts never did "anything really spectacular" during his career. "He just really hit well and played his position well.

"He was mister consistent," said Jones.

Mounts thanked "the DeLuca family for being so devoted to the game of softball for carrying on this event that yearly is one of the greatest social events in this city," and the committee for "what must be a very trying task to judge all the applicants. They have done a magnificent job."

Mounts also thanked his parents, sister, brother, daughter, Century Tire manager Reed Hughes and his former teammates on Century, Hall of Fame league director Al Goodman, former Jay's teammates Davey Johnson and Ron Jones, and Jay Hopkins, who Mounts called "the greatest sponsor and manager and teammate in all of Cincinnati softball.

"He was passionate about the game and the greatest motivator I've ever known," said Mounts.

"All due respect to Jerome Youngblood, it was Jay who was the Most Valuable Player in the 1975 Ohio Valley Classic. He got all of us to play above our ability."

Mounts said he enjoyed his playing career with JTS Brown, Century Tire and Jay's, but stated that "the greatest thing I have taken from softball is the lifetime of friendships that you make. And at functions like this, you realize how strong and everlasting these friendships are.

"This is a great honor for me, and I will cherish it for all of my days," said Mounts.

### **Dave Neiheisel Induction**

Dave Neiheisel, the third inductee, has sponsored softball teams in Greater Cincinnati for two decades under the Joseph Chevrolet banner. Although Joseph has sponsored several area men's and mixed couples teams in local leagues, the sponsorship is best known for its national championship senior teams. Joseph Chevrolet won its first national title in the 55-over division in 1992, and since then has captured a remarkable twelve National Championships in the 55 and over, 60 and over, 65 and over and 70 and over programs. This past season the team won two 65 and over national titles and a 70 and over national title. The Joseph Chevrolet name is respected all across the country for its competitiveness, sportsmanship and professionalism. The teams are always provided with the necessary funds to pay for their equipment, uniforms, entry fees and travel expenses, as well as courtesy vans to travel to out of town tournaments.

Speaking on Neiheisel's behalf was Clyde "Soapy" Stafford, the Joseph Chevrolet team's longtime player-manager, and a 1989 inductee into the Norwood Sorrento's Softball Hall of Fame.

Stafford said that Joseph had been a "great sponsor for the last twenty years.

"Every tournament we've gone to we've been the class of the tournament with our uniforms. And Dave has paid for all the tournaments we've been in, and we've been in a lot over the last twenty years," said Stafford. "And we always had really nice vans to travel in."

Stafford then related several humorous anecdotes about Neiheisel, a notorious practical joker. He also told of Neiheisel's benevolent side, projecting him as an individual always willing to help those less fortunate.



“Dave’s also been a great ball player,” pointed out Stafford. “But he’s been a phenomenal sponsor. And the only thing bigger than his heart is his feet,” joked Stafford.

“Dave Neiheisel, I welcome you as a friend to the Norwood Sorrento’s Softball Hall of Fame.”

“First of all, I’d like to thank Sorrento’s and all the Hall of Fame board members for bestowing this honor on me,” said Neiheisel when he came to the podium to accept his induction. “I’m humbled and very grateful to be in the company of so many talented people that I’ve been fortunate enough to both play with and sponsor.”

Neiheisel recalled his long softball career, which included winning a city championship in 1964 with Standard Laundry before a job change took him to Indianapolis. Some three decades later he returned to Cincinnati, where an invitation to play in a 50 and over league in Harrison ultimately led to his sponsoring the team.

“Towards the end of the year, some of the guys wanted to put a team together and play in a half century tournament in Florida, so we put twelve guys together in two vans, and quickly found out we couldn’t compete. We didn’t make it seven innings in five games,” said Neiheisel.

Finally, Neiheisel said that the team recruited the players necessary to win, including Bill Goedde, Jim Wessel, Roy Hern, Dave Beamer, Jimmy Nageleisen, Butch Hays, Bill Schlessinger, Jerry King and Mike Burns.

Burns, said Neiheisel, never made an error the entire time he played for Joseph.

“That’s because he never played the field,” he quipped.

“During Joseph Chevrolet’s existence we’ve had twelve members of this Hall of Fame who have worn Joseph Chevrolet jerseys,” said Neiheisel proudly. “And six of our starters are members of the Hall of Fame. And we’ve always been ranked in the top five in the nation.

“All in all, since 1992, we’ve won twelve world championships, a ton of invitational major championships, and we were runner-up another four or five times,” continued Neiheisel.

“Whenever you do something like this, you don’t even think about being honored, especially when there’s a selfish reason for doing it. And the selfish reason was, I put up the money, and I was going to be a starter,” he added.

“But regardless, this will be an honor I will cherish for the rest of my life. Thank you.”

### **Colleen Needham Induction**

The afternoon’s next inductee, Colleen Needham, coached and managed more World Championship teams than anyone in the history of the United States Specialty Sports Association. During the last 25 years, Needham has coached or managed seventeen World Champions in the Women’s A and B programs and Masters program. She was general manager of three-time USSSA Women’s A World Champion Empress Chili in 1986, ‘87 and ‘88, and over the last ten years has managed six 35-over World Champions, five 50-over World Champions, and a 45-over and 55-over World Champions with either Ty-1-On or the Ohio Cardinals. More recently she managed Ty-1-On to a USSSA B World title last September. Her teams have also been runner-up in the USSSA A World Tournaments four times. Overall her teams have a combined won-lost record of 946-245. She has been named Greater Cincinnati Manager of the Year four times, and was inducted into the USSSA National Hall of Fame in 2006.

Introducing Needham was Brenda Ryan, a four-time Greater Cincinnati Player of the Year and a member of both the Norwood Sorrento’s and USSSA National Hall of Fame.

“First of all, I’d like to congratulate everyone on your induction,” said Ryan. “It’s a huge honor and you will remember this day the rest of your life.”

Ryan pointed out that perhaps the greatest tribute that could be paid to Needham was that “the players who have played for her have done so now for fifteen or twenty years.

“That’s a true testament to Colleen and the fact that she’s always been there for her players,” said Ryan.

“She’s there for you whether it’s in the middle of the season or the middle of winter,” she continued. “She’s a person you can go to if anything happens. You can’t have a better friend. She’s always there for you.”

Ryan told the crowd that she wound up playing for Needham because her Northside K of C team folded, and that prior to that, she “couldn’t stand Colleen.

“I didn’t know why I didn’t like her. I just knew that she was the enemy.”

“But when you got to know her, you found out she was a true friend,” said Ryan. “And also what a great coach.”

“Colleen, welcome to the Hall of Fame.”

After thanking Sorrento’s and the Hall of Fame Committee for electing her, and congratulating her fellow inductees, Needham quickly passed the credit for her honor to her past and present players.

“I have been blessed with great players in my years of coaching, and that is really why I stand here before you today,” said Needham. “Most of them are not just players but friends. Some did not start out that way, but I am proud to say many have ended up good friends.”

Needham said that at some tragic times in her life she found out “what kind of people and players she was surrounded by.

“My players have always been there for me in those real life situations and for that I thank all of you. Those are the moments and times that have meant the most to me. There is no trophy big enough to compare to those times when I needed my players just to be around.”

Needham said she recognized early in her softball career that she was called to coach.

“I love the game of slow pitch softball,” said Needham. “I love to win and hate to lose. I love seeing my players have success. I love believing in them and helping them believe in themselves. I love out-thinking the opposition. I love the feeling I get when I go against the book and go with my gut and it works. I keep doing this because I have a passion for this great game. I love the adrenaline of come-from-behind victories. And I love celebrating with my players afterwards.”

Needham said she fell in love with the game while following the Sweeney Chevrolet team in the mid-seventies.

“I knew I wanted to be involved in it, and I got lucky along the way and met a number of people who helped me learn the ropes,” said Needham. “Thanks to Jan (Deters), who has been my assistant for many of these championships and my sounding board. And Myra Burwell for all her help over the years and all she has done and continues to do to make the USSSA women’s program such a success.”

Blessed with good organizational skills, Needham compared her “softball journey” to that of the “CEO who started out sweeping the floors and ended up running the company.”

A milestone in her career was a chance meeting with Joe and Carol Kiradjieff “and the Empress Chile dynasty began,” she said.

“When the Empress era ended, I still had a passion for the game, so we started a Masters 35 and over team,” she continued. “Then before you knew it, I was asked to help coach and organize a 50 and over team, the Ohio Cardinals. And the senior program has been and continues to be a great source of fun for me.”

Then two years ago, Needham said that some of her younger players had a desire to compete at the open level, and a “B” team developed. “I went along for the ride, and we were USSSA World Champions last year,” said Needham.

Needham closed by noting that it always takes a team effort to succeed.

“In this ‘all about me’ world, I have found that to be true whether it is a softball championship or a successful business venture. It is never about one person.

“Thank you to all my players for your sacrifices over the years, the love and respect, and for working together unselfishly to achieve our many championships. Like Harry Truman said, ‘it is amazing what you can accomplish if you don’t care who gets the credit.’”

### **John Steele Induction**

The final inductee of the afternoon, John Steele, has the distinction of being the only three-time Greater Cincinnati “Player of the Year.” The most prolific power hitter in Cincinnati softball history, Steele averaged 159 home runs a season from 1995 through 2003, and finished among the top five home run hitters in the city nine times from 1992 through 2003. During his career he has hit over 2,000 career home runs.

Steele was “Player of the Year” in 1996 and 1997 with Watanabe Optical, and again in 2002 with Perkins Roofing. He was a first team All-City selection every year from 1995 through 2004, and his teams have captured four ASA Major Metro titles. He has made appearances in seven ASA Major National Tournaments, in twelve USSSA A World tournaments and in five USSSA Men’s Major World Series. In 2000 he was named to the All-Decade first team for the nineties and to the Greater Cincinnati All-Century team.

Presenting Steele was Dave Watanabe, Steele’s manager and sponsor from 1996 through 2000. Watanabe was also the sponsor and manager of four Greater Cincinnati ASA Major Metro championship teams, and was selected the All-Decade manager for the nineties.

Watanabe began his talk with a compliment to Cincinnati softball.

“When I see this crowd, I’ve just got to say ‘wow,’” said Watanabe. “There’s just so much tradition here. It really keeps Cincinnati softball at the top of the industry, and I just wanted to make sure everybody realized that.”

Watanabe then recalled how one of his former players, Hall of Famer Tony Salamone, approached him in 1994 and suggested that Watanabe might want to take a look at an up-and-coming player by the name of John Steele. “And I thought, if you’ve got a name like John Steele, you’ve got to be good.

“So I met John and he was about 6’-3” or 6’-4” and weighed about 250 pounds at the time, so he passed the ‘look test’ for me,” said Watanabe. “So we gobbled him up the following year and he was with us six years.”

Watanabe said Salamone told him that Steele was big and strong and could hit the long ball, but could he field?

“But since Tony and John both played the same position, Tony said, ‘well, I don’t know if he can field,” joked Watanabe.

“But John could field, and throw and run. And he was big and strong, and nobody worked at the game like John. He was probably the most anal guy I knew when it came to working at the game. He worked at it 247. And I believe that’s how he became a Hall of Famer,” said Watanabe.

“He’s still going strong, and still plays competitive softball, and nobody has ever really had a bad word to say about him. I was very fortunate to have him play for me.

“So here he is today, and the Hall of Fame is getting a great addition,” concluded Watanabe.

Steele told the crowd that he was “honored to be here and I want to thank the Hall of Fame Committee and the sponsors.

“I also want to thank my family: my wife, Lori, of 23 years, and my daughters, Brittany and Morgan. Also my brothers - Mike, who I started playing softball with on Poor Michaels; Bill, who got our brothers’ team together; and Tony, who would always pitch in the home run hitting contests for me,” said Steele.

“I would also like to thank all the coaches I played for, starting with Bill Ammann, who thought I could play, and Dave Watanabe,” said Steele. “Also all the sponsors I played for, like EMR and Don Holden, who is a great person and a great sponsor; and Red Moore; and Louisville Slugger and Hank Bassett. I think I was with TPS about twelve or thirteen years, and I appreciate it.

“I also want to thank all my teammates that I’ve played with. I know I’d forget some if I tried naming them all. But thanks to Steve Williams, a guy I took ‘bp’ with, Tom Stevens, and a guy who likes hitting more than I do, Tony Pompilio,” said Steele.

“We’ll make this short. Thank you, I appreciate it,” concluded Steele.

Each inductee received a plaque courtesy of Sorrento’s Norwood, Hall of Fame rings through the support of some thirty gold and silver banquet sponsors, and medallions from the Cincinnati Metro Amateur Softball Association.

A record sixty past inductees attended the function, including Jim Anaruma, Norma Eschenbrenner Ante, Ron Baird, Dave Beamer, Bev Beck, Kevin Birkofer, Whitey Brown, Mike Burns, Ron Cutter, Jan Deters, Ken Ewald, Bob Fennell, Denver Gabbard, Bill Goedde, Sharon Graham, Roger Grein, Butch Hays, Scott Hein, Gloria Hill, Theresa Hirschauer, Mark Huber, Davey Johnson, Don Johnson, Jenny Johnson-Kappes, Ron Jones, Galan Kelly, Mike Kinnett, Carol Kiradjieff, Joe Kiradjieff, Jim Kuhn, Mike LaFever, V. K. Lehmann, Rick Linz, Bob Long, Paul McMullen, Fred Meinking, Jerry Meyer, Sam Monterosso, Marty Monterosso, Jimmy Nageleisen, Leo Osterday, Pam Patrus, Mary Jane Ranz, Myron Reinhardt, Sonny Rider, Walt Roeckers, Dan Romanello, Tom Rowan, Brenda Ryan, Tony Salamone, Carol Smith, Brenda Ryan, Bill Schlessinger, Lee Sledge, Clyde Stafford, Tom Taylor, Dick Thielmeyer, Donna Wolfe, and Richard Zureick.

Deceased Hall of Fame member Ray Ernst was represented by his son, Dick, and Willie DeLuca by his brother Ralph.