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2022 World Championships Logo

Hurricane Ian Slams Winter Nationals' Site



The devastating Hurricane Ian tore through Ft. Myers last week hitting the home of the SSUSA's Winter Nationals, which runs Nov. 8-13.

"We have canceled all events through Oct. 31," said Jeff Mielke, Executive Director of Lee County Sports Development and longtime sponsor of the Winter National Championships.

"I should have more information next week on how far out we have to cancel things."

The softball complexes are currently being used for various staging/recovery efforts, he said.

If the complexes are not available in Ft. Myers, Cape Coral or Naples, SSUSA officials say they have lined up an alternate site in Polk County.

"We will make that decision next week, after we hear from our Ft. Myers' Hosts," said Terry Hennessy, SSUSA's CEO.

From The Dugout - What We Learned

2022 World Championships - Session 4 Ends 2,116 Games of the Worlds

By Donna McGuire

Two Triple Grand Slam titles, three undefeated teams and an astounding 11-game win streak highlighted the fourth and final session of the 2022 Senior Softball USA World Championships, which concluded Oct. 2 in Las Vegas.

Overall, a record 662 teams entered the largest slow-pitch tournament in the world. Pool and bracket play required the scheduling of 2,116 games across nine softball complexes. Ten dozen directors, 74 umpires and a supportive office staff helped SSUSA's leaders pull off the three-week event.

The final four-day session drew 142 men's 50+ teams, 24 women's 50+ and 55+ teams, and six coed teams. Four men's teams, two women's teams and one coed team left the playing fields as World Champions.



Batter from International Co-Ed Team, Tips and Lips (CA), Mid-Swing

One team likely needed extra recovery time following a grueling final two days.

Big Hurt Softball 50/Maximum Precast of Illinois (photo below) played 15 games overall, including seven in a row on Sunday, to win the men's 78-team 50+ AAA division.



The 2022 World Championships in Las Vegas attracted a record number of teams, offering very large brackets and a prize package to match: free quality, personalized rings from Josten's, the maker of rings for Superbowl and MLB World Series winners.

While we are very happy with the record turnout, there also were learning moments for us...including:

Master Rosters:

Perhaps one of the most confounding issues for a number of managers was the Master Roster. Managers are asked to fill out a Master Roster and to modify it for each tournament, as necessary. Managers then pick the roster from a tournament in which most of the players showed up. This becomes the team roster for the Worlds (not the Master Roster). It can be confusing.

Some managers assume that any player on the Master Roster is eligible to play in the Worlds. Players must actually play in the Qualifier that the manager chooses to be eligible to play in the Worlds.

For the 2023 Season, we will be getting rid of the Master Roster.... And hopefully the confusion.

Concessions

We arranged for concessions at all fields, but most of the concessionaires never showed up. This created an issue not only for food, but more importantly for water. Fortunately, one of the concessionaires who did show up agreed to provide service at all sites in 2023.

Water:

For health reasons, we stopped providing water in the dugouts three years ago. The health concerns were not just Covid. We could not monitor use of the coolers in the dugouts and some players were using the coolers to rinse their sweat bands and dipping their hands in the coolers to pick out ice.

So, we remind players to bring their own water to ensure the health and safety of all. This policy will not change, but we will strive to have concessionaires on site to sell water.

Game Cards:

We added a score box next to the manager's signature at the bottom of the game card as a check against the score box the umpire filled in. In a half-dozen cases, the managers wrote in the correct score and signed the card – however the inning-by-inning score was incorrect and the directors entered that score, which was used for seeding. As a result, the wrong score was used to seed the teams.

We are eliminating that second score box to avoid any confusion in the future.

Your Comments Help:

We take manager and player suggestions seriously because they help us make the tournament better. You can email us at info@seniorsoftball.com

Thank you!

Terry Hennessy is the chief executive officer of Senior Softball USA and can be reached at terryh@seniorsoftball.com.

New Website Coming Soon for Shirt and Magazine Sales



"That's extremely rare and the first time it's happened since 2015, when PDC of Michigan matched that Championship Sunday effort," said Dave Dowell, SSUSA's master scheduler and one of its national directors. "But what makes this one even more impressive to me is B Hurt had to win four in a row late Saturday afternoon/evening just to get to Sunday."

The odds looked long Friday evening, when Big Hurt stood 2-2 overall. It had just fallen into the elimination bracket of the tournament's largest division – a division so big that Dowe had divided the 78 teams into four pods for play through Saturday. On championship day, th 12 surviving teams would converge at Big League Dreams to settle matters.

Using a steady offense that regularly churned out runs, Big Hurt kept winning. Despite being short on players. Despite a bloody injury on Sunday. Despite needing an extra inning 1 dispatch one foe by one run on Sunday morning.

Its final two victories came against another Illinois team that had been undefeated until B Hurt delivered two big hurts in a row.

"It's the most impressive bracket survival effort I've ever witnessed," Dowell said.

Joe Freiburger, the team's manager, agreed.

"I've never seen a run like that before, especially in a big tournament," he said. "It was ju one of those weekends."

Both Triple Grand Slam winners also celebrated special tournament runs.

Unfazed (photo below), a Virginia team, won the women's 50+ AAA Triple Grand Slam o year after going winless at the World Championships.



"The whole team is so excited," said Cynthia Nelson, Unfazed's manager. "Last year, we lost every game. This year, we stepped it up and won everything."

Fattboyz/Prestige of California won the men's 50+ Major Plus Triple Grand Slam by knocking off the team that had beaten it in the Worlds finals the previous two years.



Once tournaments conclude, all inventory is returned to the national office. We would like to present our overstock to you.

"Play as long as you can, because you only have one chance." - Willie Mays

Senior Softball USA is developing a new website designed to offer past tournament shirts and newer editions of the SSUSA Newspaper for sale.

This is perfect if you forgot to buy a shirt at a tournament or need another for yourself or your family.

We have periodically sent these overstock items to those in need when we have seen natural disasters strike in our country. While we will continue to do this when the need arises, we also want to introduce this overstock sales opportunity to players across the nation.

It will be bright and easy to navigate with large buttons and an accessible shopping cart. You can view the shirts by year and each tournament is clearly marked.

Once you choose a shirt, you will see what sizes and colors are available. Only available sizes and colors will be shown.

As for our newspapers, the publications are in full color, soft-bound issues that come out with the latest tournament results, pictures of people around the sport, and major highlights of events past and to come.

We will be rolling out our new site in the coming weeks. We will send an email out when it is live and add a new tab for it on our existing website.

Rhode Island Senior Softball League – 40th Anniversary

Senior Softball USA congratulates the Rhode Island Senior Softball League on 40 amazing years.

In celebration, the league is holding an end of the year picnic on Oct. 8 in Warwick where they will induct the leagues' first-ever RISSL Hall of Fame inductees.

The following SSUSA players are to be inducted into their Hall of Fame: Dick Bamford, Pete De Masi, Joe Giordano, John Murphy, Emil Notorantonio, Tony Rozzero, George St. Vincent and Len Yanku.



Obituaries: October 2022

Bob Ireland



Fattboyz/Prestige/Elite's Western National Trophy (left), USA National Plaque (right), and World Champions Trophy (center).

"To be World Champions and win the Triple Grand Slam is just amazing," Manager Anthony Garnica said. "We had some great team chemistry."

The key for Unfazed, Nelson said, was how well the women focused. Their attitude was: Let's do this.

"We've always pulled together as a team, but I think we pulled together even more for this tournament," Nelson said. "There were no negatives. All positives."

Unfazed defeated Snap, Crackle, Pop of Washington in the USA game 15-3. The energy provided by winning the National Championship helped spark Unfazed's undefeated run through the women's 15-team 50/55+ Gold bracket, Nelson said. In the championship game Unfazed pulled away late to win 16-10 and finish the tournament 6-0. The final out – a strikeout – showed how well Unfazed's two pitchers performed all tournament, Nelson said.

"Our defense was on point, our hitting was good, and our pitchers both did an outstanding job," she said.

On the men's side, Fattboyz faced old nemesis Suncoast/Adidas of Florida in the 50+ Major Plus USA game. Suncoast trailed much of the game but fought back and took a 25-20 lead in the top of the open inning. The bottom of the inning ended with a one-out walk-off bat hit and a 26-25 win for Fattboyz.

"That gave us momentum and energy moving forward," Garnica said. "It took the monkey off our back a little bit."

Great defense by infielder Todd Johnston, solid pitching by Robert "J.B.I." Van Landingham, and an offensive show put on by Dennis Shrum lead an overall team effort, Garnica said. Shrum batted .897 for the tournament with 12 home runs while hitting third. He collected 26 hits in 29 at-bats.

Session Four Division Results:

Women's 50+ Major: Old School of California started as the fifth seed in a nine-team bracket. It knocked off the first, second and fourth seeds enroute to winning the championship game 11-5 over Dynasty Girls/BSM of Florida. Stix With Impact of California finished third.



Champions Old School (CA) with Finalists (Dynasty Girls/BSM (FL))

Women's 50/55+ Gold: Unfazed, which won all three legs of the Triple Grand Slam, defeated Snap, Crackle, Pop 16-10 in the title game of a 15-team bracket. All Mix'd Up of Arizona finished third.

International Coed: Tips & Lips of California defeated O & S (Old and Slow) of Nevada 6 in the finale after losing the first championship game 14-13. Slappin Gaps of California too third in the six-team division.



Robert "Bob" Ireland, 76, of Oconomowoc, WI, died Sept. 3.

Ireland has been with Senior Softball USA for more than two decades and was a long-time player and decision-maker for the Badger Classics team out of Wisconsin.

He was passionate about sports and played softball throughout his life.

"Some of his softball highlights include being able to play with his sons and winning the national senior softball title," according to his obituary.

He's been playing with the Badger Classics team since at least 2004, playing with them through the age divisions of 55+ to 70+.

Current manager, Wes Kehl, remembers how important and influential Ireland was to the team. Badger Classics' original name was Cooney, the name of a local town in Wisconsin. Despite being named after the town's founder, the name was seen as a derogatory in parts of the country. Upon the team learning this when traveling for tournaments, Bob called a meeting to convince his teammates to change the team's name.

Although the team meant no harm and didn't know before, he didn't want to hurt people and recognized senior softball is about fun and camaraderie, not arguing over a name, according to Kehl.

Bob served in the U.S. Marine Corps and in Vietnam before serving as a police officer in Oconomowoc and then the county sheriff's office. He was the original founder of the department's Make-A-Wish Foundation Softball Tournament Fundraiser, according to his obituary.



Champions Tips & Lips (CA) and Finalists O & S (NV)

Men's 50+ Major Plus: Fattboyz, which won all three legs of the Triple Grand Slam, defeated HTM of Idaho 33-27 in the championship game of the 10-team bracket. Deluxe Bakery of New Jersey finished third.



Champions Fattboyz/Prestige/Elite (CA) and Finalists HTM (ID)

Men's 50+ Major: Stadium of California (top photo below) was one of three teams to finish the fourth session unbeaten. Stadium, which went 8-0 overall, defeated 50 Degrees of Missouri 24-9 in the championship game after beating the same team 21-18 in the winner's bracket finals. Both teams started as third seeds in their respective National and American pods. Lighthouse Lookouts of Georgia won six elimination games before falling 30-29 to 50 Degrees in the third-place game. In the USA game, Steves Sports/AJS of Connecticut (bottom photo below) defeated Junkies/Onyx/NVS of California 19-17 to win the National Championship.



Men's 50+ AA: Harford Financial Group of Maryland (photo below) went 5-1 overall, including a 19-14 championship game victory over A3/NW50 of Washington. Harford's only loss was by one run in bracket play. Washington Ogs finished third in the eight-team bracket



Men's 50+ AAA: Big Hurt double dipped another Chicago league team, Chitown Assault/Truly (photo below), 26-21 and 17-6, in the title games. Those were Chitown's only tournament defeats. Big Hurt, meanwhile, averaged 22 runs a game in its seven Sunday victories while allowing an average of 13 runs. Vancouver Connection of Washington placed third. Damage, the Western National Champion, placed fourth overall and earned the Nator Championship by defeating Fat Chops/4 Seasons of Massachusetts 20-19 in the USA game



Most Big Hurt and Chitown players know each other from league play, and some are teammates in that league, Freiburger said. That made the finals special, he said.

Losing early in bracket play on Friday angered his players, Freiburger said. They set a goal of making it to Sunday, which meant winning four games on Saturday.

"People were hitting, which was good," Freiburger said. "We got to Sunday and kept hitting."

Though the team arrived in Vegas with 14 players, it lost two to injury before Sunday play began. In the team's second game Sunday, leftfielder Mike Gomez ran toward the Green Monster at Fenway chasing a fly ball. The ball caromed off the wall and smacked Gomez in the face, opening a big cut in his chin. He finished the final four innings on the bench but refused to go to the hospital for much-needed stitches after the team beat Miami Power 18-7 in extra innings. As Freiburger remembers it, Gomez said: "We just won the game. I'm staying." Then he played the final five games with a big bandage on his head.

Tim Pignato pitched all 15 games for Big Hurt. The team compiled a .712 tournament batting average, led by team MVP Victor Wogen. Hitting third in the lineup, he smacked 56 hits in 63 at-bats for an .889 average.

The most memorable part of the tournament for Freiburger?

"Playing that many games," he said. "And the team pulling together and playing hard for games."

And yes, everyone was "pretty tired" afterward, he said.

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