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Action shot from Tidewater (left), group photo of New Zealand tour (middle, by Diane Milano) and photo of a 'Hobbit Hole' (right, by Jeannine Verellen).

**Reminder: Upcoming SSUSA & SPA Joint Tournaments**

*By Nic Francois*  
**Softball News Report**

The Softball Players Association (SPA) and Senior Softball USA (SSUSA) are co-hosting three more tournaments that teams can use to qualify for both the SPA and SSUSA World Championships.

The first joint tournament was the SSUSA-run 2023 Music City back in March.

Here are the remaining 2023 joint tournaments:

- Glen Burnie Classic - Glen Burnie, MD, May 3-7 (SPA Runs)  
**Deadline is Wednesday, April 19.**



- Twitty Men's Classic – Nashville, TN, May 11-14 (SPA Runs)  
**Deadline is April 27.**

**The Magic of New Zealand Brings Together USA Players and Local Teams**

*By Donna McGuire*  
**Softball News Report**

Nearly 30 senior softballers from across the United States recently taught some New Zealand youngsters that you're never too old to play slow-pitch softball – and still play it well.

Six teams of Kiwis took on three teams of Americans during tournaments held March 18-19 in Christchurch on the south island and March 23-24 in Auckland on the north island. The games were the latest edition of the annual international softball tours organized by Senior Softball-USA (SSUSA) since 1988.

“We saw magnificent sights, took a train to a glacier, went to the top of a mountain, sped down a river on a jet boat, took a steamer, explored a sheep ranch, sampled Maori culture with a concert and dinner – and played ball,” said Terry Hennessy, SSUSA's chief executive officer.



Skippers Canyon Jet Boat ride in Queenstown, New Zealand.  
 Photo by Steve Bull.



- Battle of the Roses - York, PA,  
June 17-18 (SSUSA Runs)  
**Deadline is June 1.**



These tournaments will use the rules of the association running the tournament. Teams must inform the association running the tournament whether they want to use the tournament to qualify for the organization not running the tournament.

For example, here's how it would work:

Teams playing in the Glen Burnie Classic, run by SPA, would tell SPA that they want to also qualify for the SSUSA World Championships. After the tournament, SPA will forward the rosters of those teams to SSUSA.

No matter if the team is currently registered with one of the organizations, both the team and the players must register with the organization running that respective tournament.

Teams (and their players) wishing to use their roster for both the SPA and SSUSA World Championships must register with both associations and meet their respective requirements.

## Heart Attack on the Field

**By Bill Weaver**

MESA, Az. – Sometimes, you never know what to expect when a new teammate joins the team. A case in point is what happened with the Ageless Wonders when they were playing a senior (60 and over) softball game at the Viewpoint RV

SSUSA players who signed up individually for the tour were distributed mostly onto the USA White or USA Blue teams. Meanwhile, for the first time in international competition, nearly an entire SSUSA tournament team signed up to play together. Nine of the USA Red team players also are teammates on the Sacramento Islanders 70+ team.

Overall, the Americans ranged in age from 64 to 87. Though some of the older Christchurch players sported touches of gray in their hair, most of the Auckland players looked barely old enough to shave.

“The players in some cases were young enough to be our grandchildren,” said John Fournier, a Californian and recent Senior Softball Hall of Fame inductee who managed the USA White team, which won all 12 games it played. “It is amazing we beat them. They were so fast, we hardly threw any of them out.”

While the Kiwis had youth and speed on their side, the Americans boasted experience and expertise, especially in playing slow-pitch.

In New Zealand, most men and women softballers still play fast-pitch. Many of the Kiwis needed time to adjust to the tall-arching pitches utilized in slow-pitch. Meanwhile, the Americans deployed better place-hitting skills, better pitching, and smarter defensive play overall.

“This tournament will help us build slowpitch softball in Christchurch and beyond,” said Cheryl Kemp, chief executive of Softball Canterbury and a former Olympic fast-pitch player and coach.

At each tournament location, the three USA teams competed against three local New Zealand teams.



**Two members of the Monowai Warriors team from Christchurch surprise Carolyn Rupley with a new Walker. The airline had lost hers on her trip to Christchurch.**

After the games, all the teams got together for a meal – and to get to know their New Zealand hosts in both Christchurch and Auckland. In Christchurch, it was a traditional “Spitroast” and in Auckland it was hamburgers and beer in the clubhouse.

The format for each tournament was the same: after five games apiece of round-robin play, the top two teams played for the tournament championship.

In the Lord of the Rings Classic title game in Christchurch, USA White never trailed as it defeated the local F-Troop team 14-7.

The title game in Auckland proved more challenging. USA White took on Hibiscus Coast, a local team loaded with 20-something youngsters as well as some teenagers. After four innings, the game was tied 7-7. From that point, USA White used solid defense and a seven-run open inning to pull away for a 21-12 victory.



and Golf Resort here back in November.

As we were taking the field in the bottom of the first inning of our second game of a double header, our first baseman, Tim Miksovsky, collapsed backwards onto the ground. Seeing this, our new third baseman, Mark Wilson recognized immediately that Tim was having a heart incident.

Luckily Mark had previous paramedic experience. This was Mark's first day out with the new team. Welcome to the league Mark!

Mark began CPR immediately and called for someone to get the AED (Automated External Defibrillator). He applied the pads to Tim's chest and back and shocked him twice to get his heart back into rhythm. Because the AED was used within three minutes, Tim had a 70% chance of surviving even though he had no heartbeat for over three minutes.

The Mesa city fire department arrived and after what seemed an eternity and took over to get Tim taken to the Banner Gateway Medical Center here. The next day, Tim was able to walk around his room and was pretty much back to normal. Well pretty normal for Tim anyway.

A few days, later an pacemaker was surgically implanted.

Tim is thankful for the quick response by Mark, which is why he will be able to play softball next fall season.

USA Red's highlights included turning a triple play and winning one game on the final play. USA Blue's highlights included great hitting, with six players batting over .700, and a grand slam by Ricky Price of Texas.



USA Blue poses with the New Zealand Tigers. Photo by Jeannine Verellen.

At the tour's farewell dinner, awards were announced for each team's top offensive player, top defensive player, and team MVP.

USA Red awards: Monte Watson, a California who batted .692, earned offensive player honors. Joe Owens of California earned the defensive player award for his outfield play and relief pitching. Dan Norton, a Californian who managed the team, won MVP after batting .800.

USA Blue awards: Shortstop Bob Haim, a New Yorker who also excelled offensively by batting .765, won the defensive player award. Rick Sexty, a Californian who hit .774, won the offensive player award. Jeff Senten of Tennessee, who played second base and hit .853 overall, won MVP. (USA Blue was managed by Larry Feeler of Texas.)

USA White awards: Steve Stafford, a Californian who hit .844 and courtesy ran for other players, earned offensive honors. Daryl Bruns, the team's pitcher from California, won best defensive player. MVP went to Iowa shortstop David Prins, who Fournier called "one of the nicest guys you are going to meet in senior softball, and one of the best players."



USA Red and White Teams. Photo by Diane Milano.

All three managers thanked SSUSA Chief Executive Officer Terry Hennessy for organizing such a wonderful international trip.

"I would especially like to thank To Tarn and Greg Smith and the Richmond Keas Softball club in Christchurch and David Gillanders of North Harbour Softball in Auckland for their wonderful hospitality," said Hennessy.

"This is about 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> international tournament I've been on, and this is -- if not the best -- it is right up there at the top two or three," Fournier said. "It's been amazing. Everything about it. The food, the hotels, the people, the camaraderie."



Mark Wilson (left) and Tim Miksovsky (right).

Tim is active in Senior Softball USA, having played on numerous teams, most recently with the LPC 60s.

Mesa Arizona senior parks, most 55 plus communities, and SSUSA run tournaments all have the AED device on hand. This is literally what saved Tim's life.

Many people have asked Tim why he continues to play when he almost went to the 'big diamond in the sky' playing softball. Tim's response is, "Softball isn't what gave me the heart attack (his second), softball is what saved me. Had I been anywhere else other than a hospital or a fire station, I wouldn't be here today."

The people and the camaraderie that is built over the years playing this game we all love so much is priceless and in this case, it saved a life.

Hopefully this will be a reminder of the importance of having an AED available and that there is someone nearby with medical experience.

## Obituaries: April 2023

William T. Wheeler

## Oceanfront Views and Wind Gusts Make For an Interesting Tidewater Classic

By Donna McGuire  
Softball News Report



Oceanfront view outside of host hotel, Sandcastle Resort On The Beach, Virginia Beach.

Strong winds added an extra challenge to fly ball coverage as 54 teams from 10 states competed in the recent Tidewater Classic held in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Twelve teams earned berths in the 2024 Tournament of Champions by winning their divisions in the Senior Softball-USA event, which ran from March 29 through April 2. Two of those teams – the 55+ Major and 65+ Major winners – successfully defended 2022 championships.

Players and fans enjoyed some special amenities thanks to the event's host, the City of Virginia Beach, which offered hotels with oceanfront views as well as a variety of food and entertainment options.

The unseasonable winds arrived uninvited. Gusts reached 30 to 40 mph.

"The lesson of the day was: 'Don't assume anything on fly balls,'" Tournament Director Tim McElroy said. "Balls hit to center field could land in foul territory, or on the next diamond. Routine fly balls turned into adventures for outfielders."

### Results:

**Men's 40+ Masters Platinum:** Certified Ground Breakers (photo below), a Major team from Maryland, put together an impressive tournament, losing only one game by one run in pool play. After entering bracket play as the fourth seed, Certified ripped off four consecutive victories by an average score of 31-11. It defeated the Major Plus team HDI 40s of Virginia 26-16 in the title game. Lighthouse Transportation of Rhode Island won three elimination games to finish third in the seven-team bracket.



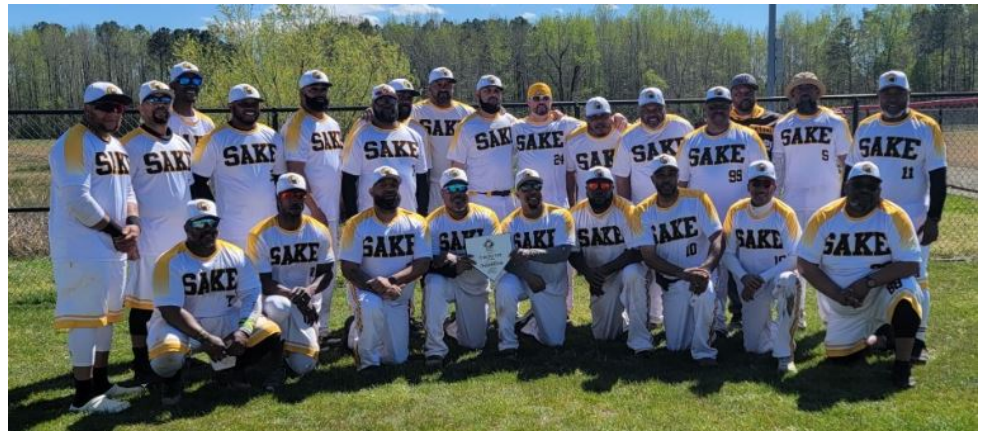


William (Bill) Wheeler, 89, of Gig Harbor, Wash., died March 17 from a rare form of lung cancer.

William, known for his commitment, played with Senior Softball USA for more than 20 years on teams from Washington, Oregon, Utah and Arizona.

After military service and marrying his wife, they settled in New York where he served 20 years with the NYPD. Upon their move to Washington State, he worked with the Washington State Patrol for another 20 years and drove an ambulance for 17 more years into his retirement.

“Bill loved good food, good conversation, classic movies, trivia, watching sports (like the M’s), oldies music, bowling, and most of all: softball,” according to his online obituary. “He competed for close to 70 years and won over 50 medals as well as six senior softball championship rings.” He was also inducted into his league’s Hall of Fame in 2004.



**Men’s 40+ Masters AAA:** Old People Problems of Delaware (photo below) went 6-1 overall and won the title with a 16-11 victory in the “if” championship game over Gigantes/O.C. of Maryland after losing the first championship game by one run. Past Our Prime won three elimination games to finish third in the seven-team bracket.



**Men’s 50+ Platinum:** Fifth-seeded Utility Systems C&E of Maryland (photo below) needed two championship games to subdue second-seeded Automotive Triage/JG Construction/Haterz Athletics of North Carolina. After losing the first title game 24-19, Utility Systems won the second 20-19. Top-seeded Walkoff of Maryland won three elimination games to finish third in the nine-team bracket.



**Men’s 50+ AAA:** The top-seeded Maryland Classics (photo below), which went 6-1 overall, lost its first title game 30-17 but won the second 24-18 over BACKSIDE of Virginia.



Strictly Business of Virginia finished third in the four-team bracket.



**Men's 50-55+ Silver:** Top-seeded Extra Innings/OBF (photo below), a 55+ AAA team from Virginia, capped an unbeaten tournament with a 21-6 title game victory over the 50+ AA team Flatline/Van Meter Homes of Virginia. The 55+ AAA team GOATS of Maryland finished third in the three-team bracket.



**Men's 55+ Major:** Defending champion .50 Cor Sports & Apparel/Grit Hounds Softball of Virginia (photo below) double-dipped Bond 124/Caterbone Realty Group of Connecticut 27-26 and 24-22 to win the six-team division. The N.E. Merchants of Maryland finished third in the six-team division.



**Men's 55-60+ AA:** DHF Contractors 60s of Virginia (photo below) defeated the Longshoremen 55s of Virginia 19-9 in the championship game. The New York Capitals finished third in the three-team division.



**Men's 60+ Major:** Second-seeded Building Innovations Group/TJ Plumbing of New York (photo below) lost its first bracket game then won five in a row, including 22-21 and 32-26 championship game victories over The Bank of Delaware. The Carolina A's of North Carolina finished third in the five-team bracket.





**Men's 60+ AAA:** Top-seeded and unbeaten Northern Virginia Force won three games by one run but made sure the title game was less tense by defeating Turn 2 Electric of North Carolina 31-13. The Hudson Valley Cyclones of New York finished third in the three-team division.

**Men's 65+ Major:** Defending champion Talaga Construction of Connecticut ([photo below](#)) won a repeat title by defeating Promotion/Phoenix Tube of New Jersey 21-16 and 14-3 in a best-of-three format.



**Men's 65+ AAA:** The Hudson Valley Cyclones of New York ([photo below](#)) capped a 5-0 tournament by defeating The Starboard of Delaware 23-10 in the title game. Northern Virginia Force 65s finished third in the three-team bracket.





**Men's 70+ AAA:** Northern Virginia Force 70s (photo below) beat the Syracuse Cyclones of New York 23-8 and 29-15 in a best-of-three format.



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