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2023 Texas State Championships

Obituaries - May 2023

Gus Linke



Clarence "Gus" Linke, 76, of Morrison, Ill., died on April 6.

By Jim Goff

Gus Linke helped shape senior softball in the Quad Cities area between Illinois and Iowa for three decades, was one of the first people elected into the area Hall of Fame, ran the Quad City Classics for

Rain Surprises Teams at the 2023 Texas State Championships

By Donna McGuire
Softball News Report

GRAPEVINE, TEXAS - Early-scoring teams gained an advantage over teams that typically rally late when rain forced many contests to be shortened to four innings during the second session of the 2023 Texas State Championships played May 5-7 in Grapevine.

Sixteen teams earned berths to the 2024 Tournament of Champions in Polk County, Florida, by winning their divisions at the 62-team event, played from May 2-7.

Though Texans dominated the entry list, teams from Colorado, Nevada, Oklahoma, Kansas and Nebraska also competed. Two from Colorado, one from Kansas, Oklahoma and Nebraska earned TOC berths, along with 12 teams from Texas earning berths.

Results:

Men's 50+ Platinum: Rock N Legends 9 earned the 50+ Major TOC berth by defeating PowerHouse/FBI 17-16 in the finale. As the top finishing 50+ Major Plus team, PowerHouse also earned a TOC berth. Texas Steel/California Bats of Texas finished third in the four-team bracket.

Men's 50+ AAA: The second-seeded Alamo City Heat of Texas double-dipped top-seeded Johnny Softball Senior Class of Texas 15-5 and 10-9 to win the tournament's largest division with nine teams. Alamo City won five bracket games in a row as it rallied through the elimination bracket. Crossfire 50 of Texas finished third.

Men's 55+ Major: Escobar Body Shop II of Texas double-dipped ManCave of Texas in two nail-biters, 13-11 and 13-12, to win the four-team bracket. ManCave had beaten Escobar 25-18 earlier in bracket play. Team Blast of Texas finished third.

decades, represented the sport internationally – and was a very good pitcher.

In senior softball, Gus was instrumental in starting the Quad Cities Senior Softball League in 1992, served as its president from 2001 to 2004, founded its Hall of Fame, and was one of the first inductees in 2006. Tournament teams he played on included the Hardy Boys, City Limits, Chicago Classics Red, Hidden Hills, Car City, and The Rock Island Line 55s team that won the SPA National Championship in 2002 in Plano, Tex.

“He was a very good pitcher,” former teammate Dan Tuftee reports, “and ran the infield very well. He would also play short stop on occasion. I rode with Gus to Plano, and he drove straight through. Don’t know how he did it. While in Plano, we were going to the ball park. Gus pulled out of the hotel parking lot and turned left. Little did he know he was turning into four lanes of oncoming traffic. I thought we were all going to die!!! He quickly found reverse and we survived and won the tournament.”

Gus also took part in Senior Softball USA goodwill tours to Europe.

He took over running the Quad Cities Classic SSUSA qualifier tournament in the late 1990s. “Gus helped grow senior softball throughout the Quad Cities area for more than 2 decades,” said Terry Hennessy, Senior Softball USA’s CEO. “In recognition of Gus’ achievements, he was recognized as SSUSA’s Tournament Director of the Year in 2009.”

Growing up in New Jersey, Gus graduated from William Penn University in Oskaloosa, Iowa, and then accepted a job as a history teacher in Morrison, where he taught for 32 years while coaching golf, football, basketball and baseball. In 1986 he resurrected the MHS baseball program which went on to dominate their conference from 1986 until 1995. His 320 wins places him among the winningest baseball coaches in Illinois high school athletics history.

Men’s 55+ AAA: The Texas Silverbacks won the championship of the 10-team bracket by forfeit over ETX 55s of Texas. Scrap Iron Mile High of Colorado finished third.

Men’s 60/65+ Platinum: The champion Texas Crush Sixties went 6-0 and earned the 60+ Major Plus TOC berth. Runner-up Houston Fire 65s earned the 65+ Major Plus TOC berth. Omaha Silver Bullets/Minleon of Nebraska finished third in the eight-team bracket.

Men’s 60+ AAA: Alliance/Scrap Iron of Colorado ran through pool and bracket play unbeaten to win the title. Texas Threat finished second, losing only to Alliance. Crossfire of Texas took third in the six-team division.

Men’s 60+ AA: Playing a best-of-three format, Club Tilt/Haus of Colorado lost its first bracket game 25-21 but rallied to win the next two 15-14 and 11-5 against the El Paso Bad Boys of Texas.

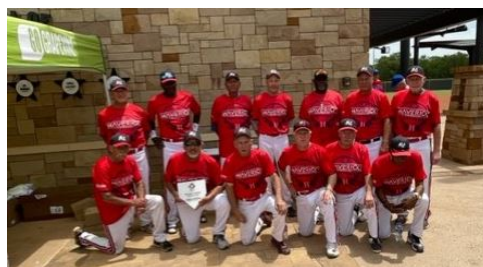
Men’s 65+ AAA: Tex/Ark Legends (photo below) defeated the Texas Legends 17-11 and 16-14 in a best-of-three format.



Men’s 65+ AA: Robson Ranch of Texas (photo below) defeated the Electrifiers of Texas 16-6 to win the four-team bracket. The Austin Wizards finished third.



Men’s 70/75+ Gold: Maverick Construction 75s (photo below) defeated Carriage Homes Patriots of Oklahoma 21-7 in the title game. Maverick Construction earned the 75+ Major Plus TOC berth while Carriage Homes captured the 70+ AAA TOC berth. The Texas Rattlers finished third in the four-team bracket.



Men’s 75+ AAA: The top-seeded Texas Raiders (photo below) capped a 5-0 tournament with an 18-5 title game victory over the Texas Legends. The San Antonio Silver Streaks finished third in the five-team bracket.

Gus subsequently served as the athletic director at MHS for 10 years. In 1995 he founded the girls' softball program and in 2001 was named Illinois Class A Athletic Director of the Year.

Current Quad City Classic qualifier director Kenny Chard began helping Gus with the QC Classic in 2015 before assuming full responsibilities in 2018 upon Gus' retirement. "It was such an easy transition," Kenny says, "because Gus had built it into one of the premier tournaments in the Midwest; every year we've hosted 35 to 40 teams, and now in our 28th year, we still do. Gus made the Quad City Classic what it is today."

Rich Fearn



Richard "Stitch" Fearn, 72, of San Marcos, Calif., died on March 11, 2023 due to heart failure.

Rich, or Stitch as most friends called him, played on a handful of Southern California teams over his 15 years with Senior Softball USA.

Senior Softball was more than a fun pastime for him and he often gave back to his local league, North County Senior Softball Competitive Division (NCSS-CD) out of Carlsbad. "He served as board director and player representative for ten years," according to NCSS-CD. "He was the league's constant cheerleader and always ready with a confidence boost and a pep talk for new or struggling players."



Men's 75/80+ Silver: Robson Ranch of Texas nabbed the bracket title and 75+ AA TOC berth by defeating another 75+ AA team, the Texas 75 Knight Riders, 17-9 in the finale. The Kansas-based Antiques of Kansas City finished third in the four-team bracket and earned the 80+ AAA TOC berth.

Charity Tournament: Iowa Spring Warm Up Gives Back to Community

By Nic Francois
Softball News Report

DES MOINES, IOWA – 25 teams representing five states competed in the annual 2023 Iowa Spring Warm Up Tournament April 27-30.

What makes the Iowa Spring Warm Up special, says tournament Director Jim Bagbey, is that all profits go to a local charity. For this specific tournament, the charity is Kaden's Kloset - Ankeny and Humboldt.

Kaden's Kloset is a 100% volunteer and donation run not-for-profit organization that assists children in foster care and their foster parents with clothing and other necessities. The charity's Ankeny and Humboldt locations operate in the Ankeny and Humboldt, Iowa, communities and beyond.

"Last year, Kaden's Kloset found itself serving more families and children than ever. Around the same time, we were contacted by Jim Bagbey," says Kristle Davis, founder of Kaden's Kloset. "We had no idea what an incredible gift their support would be! We were able to purchase new packages of socks, underwear, school supplies and more for our Klosets to distribute to local children!"

"We are so very grateful for each and every player on the teams that provide support to our organization through their team entry fees," added Davis.

Jim Bagbey has another charity tournament with Senior Softball USA coming up May 18-21, in Waterloo, Iowa. This one will donate to Kaden's Kloset of Waterloo and Cedar Falls and surrounding communities. While it might be too late to add your team to this upcoming tournament, please contact Bagbey for next year's charity tournaments.

Results:

Men's 50+ AA/AAA/Major: AAA rated MC Improvements (WI) took first place in a close championship game, 15-14, against Major rated Iowa Demons. While MC Improvements is the 50+ AAA Champion, Iowa Demons were the 50+ Major Champs. Elite Reality/KR Signs, AAA, worked their way through the elimination bracket to claim third place.

Men's 55+ AAA/Major: Similar to the 50+ bracket, 55+ Iowa Demons went undefeated in the seeding and bracket games to clinch the 55+ Major Championship, while KC Stampede (MO) worked their way through the elimination bracket after losing their first bracket game to win the 55+ AAA Championships. Minnesota Lumberjacks 55s finished third in the four-team division.

He will be remembered as a long-time player with D & K Softball 65s and 70s teams, as well as a few years with Over The Edge 60s, Top Gun 65 Mavericks, and Titans 55s and 60s teams.

Kenneth R. Krogh



Kenneth Ronald Krogh, 73, of Spokane Valley, Wash., died on March 7 due to leukemia.

Ken has played with Senior Softball USA since 2011, playing with teams from Washington state and Arizona as an out-of-region player.

After schooling and several odd-jobs, Ken found a career as a Spokane police officer and eventually became a detective. In his free time, he enjoyed playing several sports. "Ken took advantage of some natural athletic skills by playing basketball at the YMCA, while also playing co-ed volleyball and softball, unknowingly laying the groundwork for what would later be recognized as a Spokane Hall of Fame softball career," according to his lighthearted online obituary.

He will be remembered for playing with White Elephant Shores 60s (WA), Sidewinders 55s (AZ), Northwest Silver 65s (WA), and Brunettes (Brunettes/Spikes) 70s (WA).

Men's 60+ AAA/Major: Two Major teams made it to the championship game, so the 60+ Major championship title belongs to the Iowa Demons ([top photo below](#)), who were also undefeated. Second seeded Omaha Silver Bullets/Minleon finished as the finalist team after surviving the elimination bracket after losing their first bracket game. Minnesota Lumberjacks 60s ([bottom photo below](#)) finished third, as the 60+ AAA Champions, after forfeiting the last elimination game to Omaha Silver bullets/Minleon.



Men's 65+ AAA/Major: Second seeded Minnesota Blizzards ([top photo below](#)) took first place and the 65+ AAA title after winning a tight championship game, 13-12, against first seeded and undefeated Minnesota Lumberjacks 65s ([bottom photo below](#)). While this would normally result in an IF game, both teams decided to forfeit due to the cold weather. Therefore, the Lumberjacks accepted second and the Playmakers (WI) took third place.



Men's 70/75+ AA/AAA/Major: In this four-team mixed division, three teams earned titles. Second-seeded Minnesota River Bats ([top photo below](#)) went undefeated in the bracket, earning the titles of Divisional Champions and 70+ AAA Champions. Fourth seeded Midwest Fossils (NE - [bottom photo below](#)) finished second and earned the title of 75+ Major Champions. AAA rated Silver 70s Softball (IA) finished third.



Wayne Gilmore Session 2 Pushes Through Bad Weather



Softball News Report

WESTMINSTER, MD – 50 teams representing nine states competed in the annual 2023 Wayne Gilmore Memorial, April 20-23.

The tournament's namesake, Wayne Gilmore, succumbed to a heart attack while playing in a 40s division in 2018. In the years since, Senior Softball USA has held the Wayne Gilmore Memorial tournament to honor the life of a husband, father, friend and veteran.

Fifteen teams (age 65-75) kicked things off on Thursday morning while the other 35 teams in the younger age groups hit the field on the weekend.

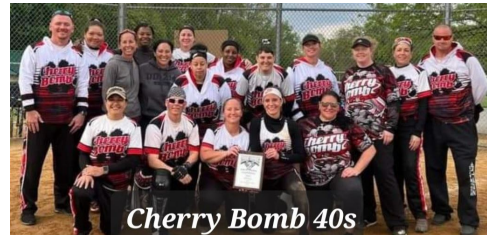
The weekend caused a few issues, as "play was suspended on Saturday after thunder, lightning and heavy rain soaked the fields," said Tournament Director Tim McElroy. "Parks staff pumped water overnight and prepared fields as the sun rose allowing the tournament to continue Sunday. The parks staff and umpiring at the Wayne Gilmore Memorial tournament were fantastic," he said.

Results:

Women's 40+ Major: Inclement weather limited the seeding games for this bracket, both teams winning their seeding game. In the bracket games, Vintage (NJ - [photo below](#)) defeated DCG/Golden Girls (MD) twice, 4-1 and 14-12 respectively, avoiding an IF game.



Women's 40/50+ AAA: Inclement weather also limited the seeding games for this bracket, but that didn't stop third seeded Cherry Bombs (MD - [photo below](#)) from climbing out of the elimination bracket to double dip Lew's Crew/Exceeding Expectations (MD).



Men's 40+ AAA: Each of the three teams in this bracket were only able to play one seeding game due to the weather. First seeded Gigantes O.C. (MD) took first after double dipping Autism Pride (MD). Gigantes ended up in the elimination bracket after losing their first game to Autism Pride.

Men's 40+ Major: As in the AAA division, each of the five teams were only able to play one seeding game; however, that did not stop New Holland Legion (PA) from winning in all 4 games. The finalists, Certified Ground Breakers (MD), a higher seeded team than the champions, lost their first bracket game to New Holland, only to be defeated again by New Holland in the Championship game.

Men's 50+ AAA: Old Skool/GTS Sports (PA) went undefeated for all five games ([photo below](#)), seeding and bracket, to win. They are the only team in the tournament to do so. Third seeded Warpath 50 (MD) lost their first bracket game against Old Skool and survived the elimination bracket to battle them again in the championship, losing 6-13.



Men's 50/55+ Platinum: Inclement weather effect both the seeding and bracket games in this five-team bracket. BPA/Rawlings (PA) was the sole team in the championship bracket and took first place. They were due to play DLB/Tyler Trucking (PA) from the elimination bracket in the championship game, and therefore DLB is the second place team.

Men's 55+ AAA: Xtreme Home Improvements (NY) defeated GOATS (MD - [photo below](#)) twice in a row, taking first and avoiding an IF game in the two-team bracket.



Men's 55+ Major: In another two-team bracket, MFP Thunder (NY) defeated Finance of America (NJ) twice in a row to take first place and avoid an IF game.

Men's 60+ Silver: This four-team division had two champions due to inclement weather on Saturday. New England Vipers (CT) worked their way through the elimination bracket to win the Championship game, 10-4, against Gaithersburg Rental/TC Backer (MD), which was undefeated in the bracket. The IF game was able to be played later that day.

Men's 60+ Major: Second seeded Building Innovation Group/TJ Plumbing (NY) swept their bracket, including the championship and the game before against top seeded, The Bank (DE).

Men's 65+ AAA: Long Island Jaguars won the three- team division after winning all 3 bracket games, including the championship game against Spring Ford (PA), 19-4. Spring Ford and Northern Virginia Force 65s took second and third place, respectfully.

Men's 65+ Major: Talaga Construction (CT), first seed team, lost its first bracket game to High Street Bucs (MD). Talaga then won the elimination game and the Championship game against High Street Bucs, triggering an IF game where Talaga double dipped High Street for the win.

Men's 70+ Gold: Northern Virginia Force's 70s (photo below) team went undefeated until the championship game against Spring Ford (PA). Northern Virginia Force emerged victorious, winning the IF game, 11-10.



Men's 75+ Gold: First seeded High Street Bucs (MD) took first place (photo below), sweeping the bracket and only losing one seeding game. The Delaware Legends and Northern Virginia Force took second and third, respectfully.



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