Senior Softball NEWSLETTER
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The 2026 40th annual Rock 'N' Reno Challenge Cup and Steve Simmons Memorial/Northwest Championships in the Twin Cities area transitioned SSUSA to the second half of the 2026 season, as the premier tournaments (Easterns, Westerns and World Championships) approach.

Obituaries: May-June 2026

Art Graebe



Art Graebe (center, blue and grey zipper jacket) holding second place awards from the 2025 Tournament of Champions' All-Star Game.

Art Graebe, 76, a long-time Scrap Iron coach, died June 11 from an aggressive cancer.

Art was player/coach of the Scrap Iron Diamonds team when they were 60, 65 and 70s teams. Art was a very loyal manager to his players, which is a rare trait.

As a Scrap Iron Club Hall of Fame member, he held many positions including vice president, chairman of the Uniform Policy Committee, member of the Hall of Fame Committee, and the club newsletter editor.

Wishy-Washy Weather Can't Stop the 2026 40th Annual Rock 'N' Reno Challenge Cup

By Donna McGuire
Softball News Report

Teams from eight states captured championships in SSUSA's 40th Annual Rock 'n' Reno Challenge Cup tournament, which concluded May 31 in Nevada.

California delivered the most entries and the most champions. Eighteen teams from the Golden State took home first-place trophies, championship shirts and berths to the 2027 Tournament of Champions.



Acme 60s vs. Tough Monkey/Onyx/Elite of the Men's 60+ Major Plus division, both from California, playing their first game in the best two out of three bracket.

Oregon and Washington finished a distant second with three champions apiece. Nevada, Idaho, Arizona, Utah and North Carolina also produced title winners.

The May 22-31 tournament drew 199 teams to ballparks in Carson City, Sparks and Reno. As usual, women's teams produced a strong contingent with 36 entries. The men's 40 Masters Division earned the title of largest age group with 32 teams participating.

“I played on Art’s Diamonds team for 11 years,” said John Parisi, president of the Scrap Iron Softball Club. “He convinced me to take a volunteer role as Scrap Iron president and has been my mentor to this day.

“Art shared fond memories of playing tournament ball with many of us. Most players on his teams wanted to win more for him than themselves. He inspired that level of loyalty.”

Here are some words from players and others:

“Art was a great guy and such a strong, positive ambassador of our sport. What a loss!” said Terry Hennessey, SSUSA chief executive officer.

Art’s close friend Fran Dowell, SSUSA Executive Director, said: “Art was an amazing supporter of Senior Softball. He was so excited to be the all-star coach for the Tournament of Champions. His goal was to beat Terry Hennessy’s all-star team. He is coaching a winning team in heaven now. He was a dear friend, and I’ll miss him greatly.”

“Oh, my goodness. This is very sad news indeed. At one point, I found out his childhood nickname was Buddy, and that’s the name I would call out when scorekeeping games. He was always such a gentleman, on the field and off. He always behaved kindly, and was never angry with players or umpires,” said Sharon Withrow.

“This news tears my heart to pieces. I’m at a loss for words,” said Mike Arisman.

“Art shared that the cancer was back, but seemed to feel it could be controlled and he would be back. It’s a good reminder to cherish each day we have in this world. He was one of the friendliest, supportive and dedicated managers I have played for. I’ve been battling my cancer for over 14 years, and he would encourage me often by saying, “remember Rob, we’re going to be playing softball into our 80s together. Sadly, that won’t happen, but the memories we created

"To misquote a classic, the 2026 Rock 'n' Reno Championships had the best of weather and the worst of weather," said Terry Hennessy, SSUSA's chief executive officer.

"The second session of 65-85 divisions saw rain, hail, cold temperatures and wind thrown in for good measure. The third session was beautiful blue skies, little wind and perfect temperatures," he said. "But the competition was close, with a number of one-run games."

Results:

Women's 40+ Major: After splitting two close seeding games, the fifth-seeded Redz/Ikonic/Cali Bat Co./PT of North Carolina (photo below) got on a roll in bracket play, capped by a 21-15 championship victory over seventh-seeded Royal-T Real Estate of Washington. Sixth-seeded I.S.S.U.E. of California nabbed third in the seven-team division.



Women's 40+ Silver: Top-seeded Mood Swings, a 40 AAA team from California, won five games in a row before losing the first championship game 17-14 to second-seeded Pest Seniors of California. Mood Swings turned the table in the if-need title game by winning 17-14 to claim the 11-team division. Fourth-seeded POP- Past Our Prime of California earned third place.

Women's 50+ Major: Top-seeded OnFire/Afoa Insurance of California blazed through the tournament unbeaten in five games, including a 4-2 championship victory over fourth-seeded GBA of California. That proved to be the lowest-scoring game among 17 played in the five-team division. Second-seeded TWB of California placed third.

Women's 50+ AAA: After starting 1-2 overall, the third-seeded Idaho Spirit 50s (photo below, orange abd blue jerseys) won three in a row, including 17-14 and 21-17 championship victories over second-seeded Mood Swings 50 of California (photo below, black and white jerseys). Top-seeded Vintage 208 50s of Idaho finished third in the three-team division.



Women's 55+ Gold: Top-seeded Takin’ Chances, a 55+ AAA team from California, dominated this four-team division. It capped a 6-0 tournament with a 17-2 title-game triumph over second-seeded Old Nasty Curves of California. Third-seeded Bomb Threats of North Carolina took third.

Women's 60+ Gold: Top-seeded Castawaz, a AAA team from Nevada, lost its unbeaten streak in the first title game, which the Lady Scorpions of Arizona won. The Scorpions forfeited the if-needed game, which gave Castawaz a 5-1 overall record and

together are priceless," said Rob Minner.

Information provided by John Parisi.

Larry Marquez



Larry Abraham Marquez, 65, a long-time El Paso area umpire, died on May 19.

Larry officiated for leagues in El Paso and Las Cruses, and tournaments in New Mexico and Texas.

In his youth, he often played softball. "When he got older you would always see him umpiring," according to his online obituary. "He had a love for baseball, softball, his kids and an appetite for living."

SSUSA Texas State Director and Chili Pepper Classic director Don Brooks remembers Larry: "I've known Larry as an umpire for the last 15 years. He umpired in local leagues and my Chili Pepper Classic out of El Paso."

Outside of senior softball and officiating, Larry enjoyed traveling with friends and family, and knew someone everywhere he went.

the division championship. The fourth-seeded Scrubs of California took third in the six-team division.

Men's 40+ Major Plus: Playing a best-of-three format, Supreme Athletics/Anarchy Bats of California swept Cheap Suits/Republic Realty of California 39-25 and 32-30. Supreme finished 5-0 overall.

Men's 40+ Major: This 19-team division – the tournament's largest – was captured by the fifth-seeded BT Bombers/Six Pac of California, which defeated seventh-seeded Throwdown Softball of California 26-22 in the title tilt. The Bombers averaged 26 runs per game in bracket play. Throwdown won five elimination games to reach the finals. Seeded 15th, Yellow Dragon/Expert Auto Care/AG Construction of California reached the third-place game before being eliminated 28-27 by Throwdown.



Unloaded 40s (CA) vs. Sudden Impact NM, Saturday morning of the Men's 40+ Major division, the largest division at the 2026 Reno Cup.

Men's 40+ AAA: Seeded ninth entering bracket play, Ol Dirty Ballerz of California lost one bracket game by one run before double-dipping 11th-seeded T.N.T. 40s of California 22-18 and 20-16 to claim the crown in this 11-team division. Fourth-seeded War Pigs of Washington nabbed third.

Men's 50+ Major: Fourth-seeded No Excuses 50 of California capped a 5-1 tournament with a 26-20 championship victory over third-seeded A&B Plumbing 50 of California. Fifth-seeded PRMI of Idaho won three elimination games to finish third in the seven-team division.

Men's 50+ AAA: Seeded ninth of 13 teams following pool play, the Garbage Pail Kids of Nevada won all five of their bracket games, including a 24-23 nail-bitter over fifth-seeded Band of Brothers 50 of Utah. It marked the Kids' third one-run victory in the bracket. Band of Brothers won three elimination games to reach the finals. Third-seeded CaliGold 50 earned third place.

Men's 50/55+ Major Plus: Playing a best-of-three format, the 50+ Major Plus team Gold Nation Hustle 50s of California swept its 55+ Major Plus counterpart, Battleborn of Nevada, 16-4 and 9-8 to finish as unbeaten champions.

Men's 55+ Major: The third-seeded NW Jokers of Washington played two thrilling title games against top-seeded A-1 Pavement Marking 55s of California, with A-1 capturing the first game 21-19 before the Jokers triumphed 28-27 in the finale. Second-seeded Factory DeMarini of Washington nabbed third in the six-team division.

Men's 55+ AAA: Seeded fourth of 14 teams, Cali Gold 55 went 5-1 in bracket play, where it lost the first title game 24-16 before subduing Team Imperial of Idaho 21-18 in the if-needed championship bout. Sixth-seeded Khaos of California finished third.

Men's 55+ AA: Emerald City of Washington (photo below) lost the first game in a best-of-three bracket format 25-24 before capturing 34-29 and 24-17 championship victories over Bob Basher's/Big Dawg 55 of California.



Men's 60+ Major Plus: Playing a best-of-three format, Tough Monkey/Onyx/Elite of California (photo below) blew away Acme 60s of California 42-24 and 24-9. Tough Monkey finished 4-1 overall.



Men's 60+ Major: Top-seeded and unbeaten Jayco 60 of Idaho dispatched all comers, including runner-up North Valley Seniors of California 28-15 in the title game. Second-seeded Chelu 60s of Oregon finished third in the five-team division.

Men's 60+ Silver: The second-seeded and unbeaten AAA team Sacramento Flash (photo below) won its final two games by a total of three runs, including a 24-23 title triumph over the fourth-seeded Warriors 60 of California. The third-seeded Six Five O's of California took third in the 10-team bracket.



Men's 65+ Major Plus: Top-seeded and unbeaten Cal Energy 65 averaged 30 runs per game, outscored its competition 150-108, and claimed the championship with a 25-23 victory over second-seeded Texas Crush Sixty Fives. Third-seeded Samurai 65 of California finished third in the four-team division.

Men's 65+ Major: Top-seeded New Dawn Awning 65 of California averaged 28 runs per game and capped a 5-0 tournament with a 26-24 title-game triumph over second-seeded Arizona Old School 65. Third-seeded Vegas Elite/ Vault took third in the four-team division.

Men's 65+ AAA: Top-seeded Chelu 65s of Oregon won all six games it played, including a 26-10 runaway in the championship game against the second-seeded SportStan/Islanders 65s of California. Chelu's average margin of victory was 10 runs.

Sixth-seeded QC Rebel's/Hopkins Financial of Idaho captured third in the nine-team division.

Men's 65+ AA: Playing a best-of-three format, Ranalls Realty 65 of Arizona swept Classics 65 of Utah 24-21 and 17-15.

Men's 70+ Platinum: Fourth-seeded NorthWest Stampede of Oregon won its five bracket games by a total of eight runs (23-22, 22-18, 19-18 and 11-9) to claim this eight-team mixed division and earn the 70+ Major Plus TOC berth. Third-seeded Cal Energy 70 finished second and received the 70+ Major TOC berth. Top-seeded Last Call 70 of Nevada grabbed third.

Men's 70+ AAA: The top-seeded and unbeaten Utah Coyotes (photo below) held opponents to single digits three times, including a 15-5 championship victory over 11th-seeded Kona Lawa Kua Nui of Hawaii. The second-seeded Playmakers 70 of Wisconsin captured third in the 13-team bracket.



Men's 70+ AA: The second-seeded Cascade Thunder of Oregon capped a 5-0 tournament by edging fifth-seeded East-West Aircraft Sales 70 of Idaho 15-14 in the title game. The top-seeded Scrap Iron Diamonds 70 of Colorado finished third in the five-team division.

Men's 75+ Major Plus: Top-seeded Omen 75 of California convincingly won all its games and finished unbeaten in capturing this three-team division. Third-seeded Enviro-Vac Marauders of British Columbia, Canada, took second. The Animals 75s of California finished third.

Men's 75+ AAA: Undefeated Please Don't Bug Me of California swept Triple Play 75 of California 17-2 and 19-9 to win this best-of-three bracket contest.

Men's 75+ AA: Top-seeded Northwest Sage of Washington captured this three-team division by winning bracket games 29-17 and 7-0. The Sacramento Buds placed second, and the California Oaks 75s took third.

Men's 75/80+ Platinum: Third-seeded Omen 80, a Major Plus team from California, won all four of its bracket games to capture the title of this seven-team division. The second-place Oregon Crabs earned the 75+ Major TOC berth. Top-seeded Texas Express 75s placed third.

Men's 80/85+ Platinum: Second-seeded Omen 85 of California captured the 85+ Major Plus TOC berth when it knocked off top-seeded Sidewinders 80s of Arizona 26-18 in the title game. The Sidewinders grabbed the 80+ Major TOC berth. Fifth-seeded Last Call 80 of Nevada finished third in the five-team division.

Men's 80/85+ Gold: The five teams in this division played a full round-robin, after which the top four teams played for first, second, third and fourth. Git-R-Done 80 AAA of California edged Balance of Nature 80s of Utah 18-17 in the title game. The Top Gun Blue Angels 85 team from California won the third-place game against the Jaguars of California.

Eight States Represented at the 2026 Steve Simmons/Northern Champs in Minnesota

By Donna McGuire
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Forty-three teams from eight states battled three days just outside the Twin Cities to determine who would earn bragging rights for their performance in the 2026 Steve Simmons Memorial/Northern Championships.

"I want to thank the teams that came and played as many games were close with only the open inning determining the outcome," Tournament Director Mike Hula said.

Bad weather only impacted the tournament Saturday morning, when games had to be delayed one hour, he said. That allowed all 11 divisions to finish on time.

After the dust settled at Sand Creek Athletic Complex in Coon Rapids, Minn., 14 teams had captured berths to the 2027 Tournament of Champions to be played in Polk County, Fla.

Eleven of those teams also claimed division championships, including two that survived one-run title bouts. One highlight involved Isle Edge Trucking, a 60+ AAA team, winning six consecutive elimination games to claim the 60+ AAA crown.



Men's 60+ AAA Championship game, with champions Isle Edge Trucking 60s (WI) defeating finalists, Alliance/Scrap Iron 60s (CO). Photo by Clover Schultz.

Results:

Men's 50+ Major: Unbeaten DucTech/All American of Minnesota (photo below) swept Elite Realty/KR Signs of Minnesota 24-11 and 21-11 in a best-of-three bracket match up.



Men's 50+ AAA: Top-seeded MN 50 Core got outplayed in the first title game, 14-7, against second-seeded Heroes 50s of Nebraska but rebounded to take the finale 23-17

and finish 5-1 overall. Oshkosh Ambassadors 50 of Wisconsin nabbed third in the five-team division.

Men's 50/55+ Silver: Top-seeded and unbeaten Isle Edge Trucking, a 55+ AAA team from Wisconsin, edged the second-seeded Oshkosh Ambassadors 55 of Wisconsin 19-18 for the title. Fourth-seeded Heroes NE 50s placed third and earned the 50+ AA berth to the TOC.

Men's 55/60+ Platinum: Top-seeded Escape Fire/Ancell, a 55+ Major team from Minnesota (photo below, by Clover Schultz), followed a 2-0 record in seeding games with a 3-0 mark in bracket play, including a 17-15 championship victory over third-seeded KC Elite 55s of Missouri.
Fourth-seeded Priority Construction Services/Lumberjacks 55s of Minnesota took third in the five-team division.



Men's 60+ AAA: In a division ripe with blow-out victories, a pair of close contests determined the champion. Second-seeded Isle Edge Trucking 60s of Wisconsin lost its first bracket game then won six in a row, capped by 19-18 and 21-18 championship victories over fourth-seeded Alliance/Scrap Iron 60 of Colorado. Third-seeded Paape Legends of Minnesota took third in the six-team division.

Men's 60/65+ Platinum: Top-seeded and unbeaten Iowa Demons, a 60+ Major team, (photo below) dispatched the second-seeded Minnesota Merchants 65+ team 16-13 in the title game. The Road Warriors 60 of Arizona finished third in the three-team division.



Men's 60/65+ Silver: The third-seeded Minnesota Road Warriors 65+ AAA team (photo below) knocked off the top-seeded Silver Lumberjacks 65+ AAA team from Minnesota 15-8 to claim the four-team division. Fourth-seeded Buddies, Sampson's, Mid-Michigan Merchants finished third.



Men's 70+ Major: Playing a best-of-three format, the Minnesota River Bats swept Doctors Care MD of Wisconsin 22-13 and 18-8. The River Bats finished 4-1 overall.

Men's 70+ Silver: The top-seeded AA team MN Lumberjacks 70s (photo below) went 3-0 in seeding games then lost their first bracket contest, 15-14, to the eventual runner-up Blizzard of Minnesota. The Lumberjacks then won four in a row, including 20-15 and 21-9 triumphs in the title games. The third-seeded Oshkosh Ambassadors 70 of Wisconsin took third in the four-team division.



Men's 75+ Gold: The Minnesota Norsemen, a 75+ Major team (photo below), won seeding games 18-13, 24-6, 23-20 and 19-4 before extending the unbeaten streak through bracket play, where the Norsemen dispatched runner-up Handeland Flooring 75s of Wisconsin 19-12 in the title game. Handeland Flooring earned the 75+ AAA TOC berth. The third-seeded MN Lumberjacks 75s took third in the three-team division.



Men's 75/80/85+ Gold: This mixed division pitted 85+, 80+ and 75+ teams against each other, with two 80+ teams making the finals. The second-seeded Minnesota Masters 80s earned the 80+ Major TOC berth and overall division title with a 7-0 triumph over top-seeded Dunns MKE of Wisconsin, which nabbed the 80+ AAA TOC berth. The fifth-seeded Badger Classics 75+ AA team from Wisconsin earned third in the five-team division.

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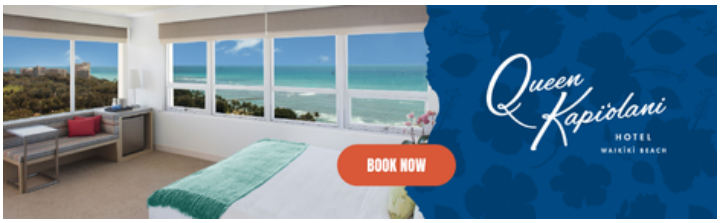

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