

DUGOUT CHATTER

On the Internet: www.gsscs.org ... GSSC Hotline for Meeting Info: 491-1721

JULY 6 MEETING: GSSC FUTURE -- ASA OR SSUSA?

GSSC members won't want to miss the July 6 general meeting (at the Stockton Boulevard VFW Post 67 Hall, starting at 7:30 p.m.). Pros and cons on whether the club should continue under Amateur Softball Association (ASA) governance or switch to Senior Softball USA (SSUSA) will be discussed, and members' questions will be addressed. See Open Letters from advocates on either side, beginning on Page 4 of this Dugout Chatter. #

DINNY WATSON: "Stay active or get old and fall apart."

The oldest active player among the nearly 500 members of the Golden Seniors Softball Club is looking forward to his 89th summer. Dinny Watson plays in the outfield for Nielsen Real Estate Appraisal in League 1. A middle-of-the-lineup hitter, he said in a May 18 telephone interview that he had helped his team win earlier in the day, including plenty of pinch-running for sore-legged teammates.

It had been reported that he had suffered a mild stroke, but that wasn't slowing him down. He had his test results and passed them all with flying colors, enabling him to get back into the lineup for the Monday morning games at Howe Avenue park.

"I like the guys," he said of his love of the game. "I like people, and if you don't stay active, you're going to get old and fall apart."

A native of Australia, Dinny didn't play baseball or softball in high school, picking up softball after graduation. Following service in the U.S. Army, he returned to fast-pitch softball and water sports, including surfing, as a southern Californian. He was a competitive water skier. He also worked as a line splicer for General Telephone before moving to Northern California (Clear Lake) and working as a carpenter.

He played on tournament softball teams in national championship tourneys around the country, including Joe Kline's team of 80+ players recruited from the Northern California area. A national championship ring eluded Dinny, as he recalled that his teams would invariably finish behind those from Southern California and Arizona. He also played in the Sierra Valley League for 12 years, into his 70s. He said he stopped playing tournament ball because he had to cover too much ground in the outfield. "I was running my legs off," he said.

Dinny first joined the GSSC in 1980 when there was one league for players 50 and older.

According to the latest GSSC roster, there are 34 playing members who are 80 or older this year. Watson was 89 on Jan. 26. Fernando Navarro, who turned 88 on March 24, is second oldest. Bill Riehl turned 87 on Feb. 14. #

FREDDIE MILLER IS APPOINTED ACTING CLUB COMMISSIONER -- SEE STORY ON PAGE 2

MILLER STEPS UP AS ACTING CLUB COMMISSIONER; BOARD OFFICER NOMINATIONS DUE AT JULY 6 MEETING

With Club Commissioner Dave Vargo sidelined by scheduled surgeries on both knees, Freddie Miller agreed to step in as acting club commissioner, effective June 1. Club President Ray Mendonsa made the appointment, which was announced May 21 in messages to league commissioners.

Vargo, whose "iron man" status as a multi-league player has made him a legendary GSSC member, said, "Due to my travel and health-related unavailability, President Ray Mendonsa has appointed Freddie Miller as acting club commissioner. Freddie, who served with distinction as club commissioner in 2008, has graciously offered to help out in any way he can. I'm confident he will provide each league commissioner excellent support and he can count on your cooperation in this time of multiple challenges and changes for our club."

Vargo added: "Behind the scenes, I will work toward a seamless and smooth transition."

BOARD OFFICER NOMINATIONS

Nominations for club officers are scheduled at the July 6 general meeting. Nomination Committee Chair John Mizerak (332-5511) is compiling names of nominees. Nominees also will be accepted from the floor at the July meeting. Incumbents (see back page) are running for all offices except club commissioner and secretary. The 2009-10 board will be elected at the August meeting. #

GSSC STATS QUIZ: CAN YOU NAME A GSSC HOME RUN LEADER WHO WEIGHS LESS THAN 160 POUNDS? IS UNDER FIVE-FEET-FIVE? Check out the stats on the Golden Seniors Web Site (www.gsscs.org).

2009 General Meetings Schedule: (No June Meeting) -- **July 6** (Nominations for 2009-10 Board of Directors) 7:30 P.M., VFW Hall, 2784 Stockton Blvd. -- **August 3** (Election of 2009-10 Board of Directors) VFW Hall, 2784 Stockton Blvd. -- **September 19** (in conjunction with the annual Picnic/Leagues Championship Playoff Games at the Sacramento Softball Complex) #

PICNIC DAY CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYOFFS SCHEDULE

The following schedule has been adopted for league championship games on Saturday, Sept. 19:

Field #1 -- 8:30 Tuesday L2. 9:45 Wednesday Night L4. 11:00 Monday L1.

Field #2 -- 8:30 Tuesday Night L3. 9:45 Tuesday Select 60+ L6. 11:00 Thursday Night L5.

Field #3 -- 9:45 Tuesday Select 70+ L7. #

CLUB LEAGUE COMMISSIONERS FOR 2009

League 1 -- Jim McNamara (424-1402), Asst. George Hodsdon (481-9304); League 2 -- Cloicec Wade (393-5809), Asst. Jim Wait (455-4440); League 3 -- Jerry Toenyas (354-4126), Asst. Bill Knoblauch (408-5501); League 4 -- Dick Mathews (530-672-2689); League 5 -- Monta Litle (606-4776); League 6 -- Victor Torres (784-7910); League 7 -- Larry Campbell (485-4843). #

SUNSHINE & HEALTH

Former GSSC President and current L1 Manager **Jerry Jodice**, the club's safety chairman, is battling aggressive colon cancer and is scheduled for another surgery on Friday, June 26. Our thoughts and prayers are with you, Jerry.

Club Commissioner **Dave Vargo** was scheduled on June 11 to have surgery on both knees.

Harley Doughty's niece, Cynthia Nunes Ruark, passed away on May 8.

Jim Wait (L2 assistant commissioner) was scheduled to have shoulder surgery on June 1. #

CAUGHT ON THE FLY

SUNDAY DOUBLE HEADER LEAGUE IS IN PLANNING STAGES

Golden Senior Dave Avery is negotiating with Fair Oaks Park for a late Sunday afternoon Doubleheader League for players 55 and over. It would run from roughly Sept. 20 through the end of October. "Details are being ironed out now," Avery said. Interested? Call Dave at 203-6702. #

NOTICE TO 9,000 LOCAL SENIORS

Taking the initiative, Larry Campbell has included an article in the 2009 Summer Brochure published for some 9,000 local seniors by the city Park and Recreation Department. Go to Page 48 of the brochure (www.cityofsacramento.org). Members also can sign up to receive this brochure and take advantage of some of the activities offered.

Announced in the brochure is "Golden Senior Drop In Softball" with GSSC members volunteering to teach the game at local parks. Dante Ciardella is ready to serve, Campbell reported. #

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#

OPEN LETTER TO ASA -- ASA CONCERNS, SSUSA SOLUTIONS

ASA softball rules cover the youngest children to the oldest seniors. This results in ASA enforcing on senior recreational players the game restrictions directed at young adult ASA championship players. **Many seniors have had enough of game restrictions and higher costs of ASA affiliation. We favor a change to SSUSA affiliation for the following reasons.**

There are many other softball associations that serve players with less restrictions, like ISA, ISF, ISSA, NSA, SSUSA, USSSA, etc. Some specialize only in senior softball. SSUSA allows seniors to play with the least restrictions. It invites GSSCS to join it for more freedom and enjoyment at lower cost.

Only ASA has the most restrictive rules that keep increasing. Prior to 2000, all softball associations used the same 1.20 BPF softball bat standard that is displayed on all your bats. Now, only ASA uses different bat standards and disallows many bats that still meet the 1.20 BPF standard. ASA changed its 2000 bat tests in 2004 and again in 2008. With each change, ASA disallows more bats by increasing restrictions.

ASA bat standards are very costly to players. The ASA-banned Miken Ultra II is a popular 1.20 BPF bat approved by SSUSA and other associations. It retails for about \$200. The popular red ASA-certified Miken Recoil retails for about \$350. ASA-certified and restricted performance bats cost \$150 more than better bats made by the same company that are approved by SSUSA and others. ASA charges bat and ball makers a high licensing fee to display the ASA-certified mark on each restricted performance bat and ball. ASA-Bollinger provides insurance that costs more than SSUSA insurance. Players pay those costs added to our game by ASA. When ASA revokes prior bat approvals, as it did in 2008, only players pay the high cost, not bat makers' profits, not ASA licensing fees, not retailers' profits.

ASA bat approvals cannot be trusted. Many 2004 bat models made after July 1, 2003 complied with ASA's first standards then in effect. ASA changed its bat test standards in 2004 and approved the late 2003 bats on condition that no more be made after June 30, 2004. Bat makers complied. Players bought thousands of them at high cost. ASA revised its bat tests a third time in 2008 and revoked many previously approved bats. ASA continues to field test bats after approval and can revoke more "approved" bats at any time. Players can no longer trust that ASA approved bats will not be disallowed after we buy restricted bats at higher cost.

ASA bat standards are inconsistent. Players all over the nation rate bats on the internet. Players find some currently ASA-certified bats perform better than most bats ASA revoked in 2008. They are clearly better than the revoked Louisville Slugger and Worth models. Upon our request, ASA and the Sacramento Softball Complex refused to show us ASA bat test results to support bat revocations in 2008. Bat approvals and revocations based on secret or non-existent ASA tests are highly suspect when they disagree substantially with most players experience that players report openly for all to see.

ASA rules disallow our bats on technicalities. Bats are made with ultra thin handles. They are fine for young, strong hands. Some players remove original bat grips to (*See Page 5*)

Open Letter to ASA, From Page 4)

replace them with one thinner layer of tape. ASA has no objections. Seniors' with arthritic hands, damaged fingers, or who played with wood bats, have difficulty controlling a bat with thin handles. We increase bat control by increasing bat handle thickness with tape, cones, flares, tapers, etc. However, ASA rules disallow our bats as **illegally altered**, calls us out and perhaps even ejected, the same as if we had disguised an illegal bat, or removed the end cap and shaved the barrel.

ASA changes many rules each year, but gives us no rule books with our ASA team registration and insurance payments. How can players learn and comply with continually changing rules when we receive no updated ASA rule books?

ASA bat tests are unfair to seniors. ASA tests bat "pop" by clamping the handle in a device and firing softballs from a cannon at **110 mph to simulate the fast bat speed of strong batters, not the slower bat speed of seniors.** If the ball rebounds or pops off the bat at more than 98 mph, the bat fails ASA's test for stronger batters, **but not for seniors.** ASA declares bats to be illegal for all ASA players, regardless of who swings the bat. We accept that 98 mph is a good limit for balls to be hit in softball. Will ASA agree that a player's bat speed determines the speed of the batted ball far more than the physical properties of the bat? Most seniors could use the very best bat and not exceed a 98 mph batted ball speed. But, it would allow seniors to get more hits and enjoy the game longer. That's why SSUSA and other associations accept senior bats.

ASA could add a second slower cannon ball test to simulate seniors' slower bat

speed for bats limited to senior play, if it wanted to serve senior players. SSUSA and other associations accepted senior bats 20 years ago. It's past time for seniors to recognize that we are affiliated with an association that has less interest in seniors.

If kids can hit home runs and protect themselves from hard baseballs, then seniors who sign liability waivers, can protect themselves from low compression softballs, or wear safety equipment, or not assume the risk of playing one the safest team sports. **Is there any age, 50, 60, 70, 80, at which seniors merit the use of better approved 1.20 BPF senior bats?** ASA says, NO, NEVER! **SSUSA says, YES, ALWAYS!**

We play senior softball for recreation, not for ASA championships. Many of us are retired. We've endured the worst problems life provides. Many play with aches, pains, heart pacemakers, and artificial joints in knees, hips or shoulders. The bat speed of our youth is gone. Many players drop out each year. The end of playing is near. **May we please just enjoy more freedom and fun in the game that keeps seniors physically and socially active longer?**

SSUSA would give us the most freedom to enjoy senior softball at a lower cost. It has the same safety and liability concerns. It has insurance companies and attorneys to serve senior softball players. **Will the Greater Sacramento Softball Association, local unit of ASA, help us enjoy senior softball, as we would if we switched to SSUSA?**

-- Larry Campbell, 75, for all concerned senior softball players. #

ASA RESPONSE TO LARRY CAMPBELL'S OPEN LETTER:

May 28, 2009

Dear Sacramento Golden Seniors,

I have been asked to respond to a letter and concern that your organization is thinking about changing affiliations from the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) to another softball organization. In my opinion this is 99% due to restrictions that ASA has placed on bat and softball manufacturers and the only effort to provide the safest recreational opportunity for softball athletes.

There is an old saying, "It is not what you sell, but what you stand for." ASA stands for Amateur Softball Association and is the only organization that has a volunteer group of Commissioners that represent the softball community. ASA is the only organization that tests bats and balls. They do this to provide the safest possible game for our athletes. ASA has spent hundred's of thousands of dollars on sophisticated bat testing equipment to ensure the game is fair and as safe as possible. As a note, the National High School and NCAA follow and use the ASA bat standard. I will try and outline the benefits of participating with the ASA program. Even with that said, it is important to set a few things straight.

ASA Fees

Registration fees for the ASA program are \$20 per team period. That entitles all teams to rule books, scorebooks and other program benefits. These materials are provided to the field owners (Sacramento Complex) in February. In addition your registration provides additionally insured coverage to all field owners that provide you facilities. All that is required is for you to ask for and print the certificates.

If your organization purchases team or individual insurance (currently you do not) that would be an additional cost that goes directly to cover the insurance. As an example all youth players that participate in softball purchase a \$250 deductible insurance program at a minimal cost of \$9 per player. Again, in my opinion a very wise investment. Your organization has chosen not to provide this coverage.

That is it. There are no additional ASA fees.

Umpires

The ASA program has the finest umpire program in the world. The umpires you see at the Olympic Games are ASA trained umpires. While umpires are not perfect, they receive training, administrative support, rule books and clinics as part of their registration. They are also covered by the finest officials' insurance coverage that we know. Umpires are covered for losses of
(See Page 7)

ASA RESPONSE (Cont'd from Page 6)

wages due to injury and of course any injuries on the field. The rule book also includes a process for discipline and a hearing procedure for due process of both players and umpires.

Restrictions in Rules

While the ASA rule book is written for "Championship Play", nearly every softball program I know has modified the rules for their particular use. The Howe Park adult leagues use a strike mat. That is not in the rule book but is certainly acceptable within ASA rules. Senior leagues have all utilized "house" rules. Those are all acceptable with ASA. Every adult public agency in the Sacramento region utilizes the ASA rules with their own particular modifications. The statement that ASA rules are too restrictive is just not accurate.

Bats

Let's discuss the real reason this is being considered. ASA restricts bats through performance standards. For a bat to be considered approved in the ASA program the bat must meet rigorous bat testing standards. ASA has cooperated with numerous scientists and academic experts to determine that a ball coming off the bat at 98 MPH is the maximum speed for acceptable ASA play. Through this testing it was proven that the average player could react to a ball at that speed. Speeds higher than that were deemed unplayable by the average player.

The letter included mention of Bat Performance Factor (BPF) numbers. It has been determined by the ASA that these BPF numbers have no value. Can bat approvals be trusted? In my opinion yes. Has any other

softball organization spent any money on bat testing? To my knowledge there are no other bat tests. Will there be flaws? Of course but that is what happens when you lead the pack. There was mention of the slower bat speed of seniors. Well, I know many seniors that crush the ball. What worries me is the reaction time of the pitcher, third baseman or first baseman that has to catch that ball coming off these non approved bats.

The bottom line is always the newspaper headline or court test. It is not a matter of **if** a player will get hurt with a non approved bat. It is just a matter of **when**. If not in 2009, then in 2011 or 2012. I personally would not want to be on the witness stand and be asked this question:

Mr. Dubchansky, as a member of the Sacramento Golden Seniors Board, why did you allow this piece of equipment to be utilized in a recreational game of softball? Why is my dad, grandfather, friend, husband severely injured by this piece of equipment when the National Governing Body of softball, the ASA, has determined through vigorous bat testing that this piece of equipment does not meet the standard?

How do you answer that question?

As I said earlier, "It is not what you sell, but what you stand for." ASA stands for safety, quality and fairness in all softball play.

As an eleven-year sponsor of the Sacramento Golden Seniors I would be willing to attend a Board or General Membership meeting and answer any additional questions.

Most sincerely,

Jeff Dubchansky

Sacramento ASA Commissioner
Greater Sacramento Softball Association

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS -- 2008-2009

President **Ray Mendonsa** ... 686-3894

First Vice President **Fred Fischer** ... 685-5044
(Responsible for team sponsorships.)

Second Vice President **Pete Ward** ... 989-4722
(Responsible for team uniforms.)

Treasurer **Glen Cole** ... 966-4561

Secretary **Mickey Schleicher** ... 239-9230

Player Agent **Tom Sansone** ... 686-1654 (Responsible
for player applications, player substitutes, waiting lists.)

Acting Club Commissioner **Freddie Miller** ... 372-6864
(Responsible for league rules, oversees all league
commissioners.)

***NEXT GSSC GENERAL MEETING: MONDAY,
JULY 6, 7:30 P.M. SITE: VFW HALL, 2784
STOCKTON BLVD., SACRAMENTO***

TELEPHONE HOTLINES

Club Answering Machine

(managed by Don Shank):
491-1721 for meeting news
and field conditions.

Phone or Address Changes:

Henry Low 391-3938

Player Applications: Tom
Sansone 686-1654

Sunshine & Health: Trudy
Smartt 973-8269

GSSC #3912 Blood Bank:
456-1500

Safety: Jerry Jodice
349-8949

Entertainment: Lou Coppola
444-6138

Dugout Chatter: Ron
Roach, editor 422-2500
(coachrwr@comcast.net)

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