

## **Annual Chicago 16 Inch Softball Hall of Fame 2010 Inductees Plaque Unveiling Event at PARK DISTRICT OF FOREST PARK July 24<sup>th</sup>.**

The Park District of Forest Park—the epicenter of 16-inch slow-pitch softball today —designated as a historic “Field of Dreams” site by the Chicago 16-Inch Softball Hall of Fame...will be the site of the annual plaque unveiling at the Hall of Fame’s Inductee Park, sponsored by March Manufacturing. The annual inductee ceremony is scheduled to be Sunday July 24<sup>th</sup> at noon...followed by a ball game between the North and South Hall of Famers. Park is located at Des Plaines and Harrison in Forest Park.

The Hall of Fame honors both men and women—players, historic teams, organizers, managers and umpires—who since the 1920s have “excelled at their craft, provided thrills and memories and have set the benchmark for future generations. Most of the 2010 inductees who were inducted into the Hall at the annual dinner on April 4<sup>th</sup> are expected to be there, and the co-ed game is always a highlight for them and the fans...it’s a lot of fun” said Ron Kubicki, president of the Chicago 16-Inch Softball Hall of Fame.

Details on the 2010 Chicago 16-Inch Softball Hall of Fame honorees follow:

### **Wall of Fame**

- Austin Ware played softball for more than 45 years with such teams as the Van Dykes, Safari Tigers, the Bandits, and California Gold.
- Donald Martina played in leagues throughout Chicago and the suburbs with the Rizza Rockers, Doctors, and Bat and Brew.

### **Women**

- Besides playing locally for Rose-N-Crown, Smooth Over, and Y-Me, Julie Iverson played in USSSA tournaments around the United States from 1981-1985.

### **1950-1963 Era**

- Ray Blumenthal played third base with top North Side teams, including the Tom Greens and the Fleck Republicans.
- Eugene Mathis played in the legendary Daddy-O-Daylie League and the South Side Tavern League with the Gaylords, the Chicago Rockets, and the Iron Men.

### **1964-1979 Era**

- Willie Kemp played shortstop for more than four decades with the Kuppenheimer/Senators. He won numerous MVP awards at the local, state, and national levels.
- Greg (Speedy) Burzynski played right field for the Lyons 45s and for the Second City. Although known for his fleet feet, he won the batting title at a tournament in Santa Clara, CA.
- Bobby Russ, Sr., won Forest Park titles with the Stompers and Ottos. Legendary Russ, one of 16-inch softball's great hitters, also played for the Olympics, the 45s, and the Rogues.

### **1980-1991 Era**

- Tim Flanagan played with some of the top teams of the 1980s and 1990s. He competed in 15 ASA National tournaments and won the Forest Park title with Ottos and with Lettuce.
- Randy Filkins played with the Cougars, Ringers, and Sports Station. He was MVP of the Grant Park Tournament in 1982.
- George Kelleher pitched for the Stickmen, Sports Channel and Crush. One of 16-inch softball's great pitchers, Kelleher has a lifetime record of 2,000 wins versus 700 losses.

### **1992-Current Era**

- Tom Balek helped Touch and Aces win National titles in 1985 and 1987, respectively. He helped form Jynx and they won the NSA title in 2000.
- Bobby Lopez played 26 years of major softball, winning six ASA National titles and numerous Forest Park and Grant Park championships.

### **Organizers**

- Richard Klein organized DRESL (Downtown Real Estate Softball League) in 1979. It is still going strong today with 16 teams competing at Chicago's Lincoln Park and other locations.
- Frank Fiorito was Rookie of the Year Director of USSSA Softball in 1995, but is probably best known as the organizer on the Terry Moran Tournament from 1995 to 2010.

### **Umpire**

- Mike Zizzi started umpiring in 1982 and has officiated more than 4000 games at the local, state, and national levels.

### **Manager**

- Joel Zimberoff played softball with the Dwarfs from 1959 to 1973 but is best known as one of the founders and managers of the Lettuce softball dynasty during the 1990s.

### **Field of Dreams**

- The Park District of Forest Park sponsors the No Gloves Nationals, a tournament that many softball veterans consider to be one of the most important tournaments of each season.

### **Mayor Daley Award**

- Alderwoman Ginger Rugai sponsors an annual Y-Me Tournament. This tournament attracts some of softball's great female players and raises money for breast cancer research.

### **Holan Award**

- Ray Prost played in the O'Hare Airport League before helping legendary Eddie Zolna run the Bobcats in 1982. He then played with the Levee Softball Team with numerous Hall of Fame players. He has been a spectator outside the right field fence

for every No Gloves National Tournament, often bringing refreshments for all the players. **Other Historic Teams**

- Doctors won the ASA Class "A" Nationals in 1988 and the 1989 NSA National Tournament. In 1990 they won the Class "A" ASA Metro qualifier and finished third at the ASA Class "A" Nationals.
- Since 1985, Crush has been an important force in 16-inch softball, growing from a team that competed in local parks to a powerhouse in "A" and Major National softball.
- Smooth Over won The Best of Western Tournament and the inaugural Ginger Rugai's Y-Me Tournament. They took first place there two straight years. They were the top-ranked team in the Kennedy Park League for three straight seasons, recording two undefeated seasons.

\*One of the more colorful historic 16-inch softball squads being inducted this year is Dog's Bite, a classic family-oriented North Side saloon team launched in 1975 by Joey Lucido, Chrissy D'Agostino, Smiley Herrera, Jack Nakanishi and other charter teammates. Originally sponsored by Red Kelly's saloon, the team initially played at Lake Shore Park, winning a championship in 1978. Building a dynasty between 1980 and 1988, the team won seven league titles at tough Hamlin Park.

Between 1996 and 2001, Dog's Bite won four league championships at Athletic Field Park, two titles at Welles Park. In 2006, the team won the Sunday League at Brooks Park.

"During our 36-year history, which continues today, more than 120 players have worn the Dog's Bite T-shirt," said Lucido. "Now, fathers play next to their sons and brothers play along side brothers. And, after the game, we all go to celebrate our efforts at our sponsor, the local saloon. This is what makes Dog's Bite a legendary local softball team."

For more information on the Hall of Fame event, please call Donna Levy at 630-544-5054, via e-mail: [dlevy@landon-farrey.com](mailto:dlevy@landon-farrey.com).

The Chicago 16-Inch Softball Hall of Fame is the premier organization for supporting and recognizing the game of 16-inch softball since 1996. For more information, visit: [www.16inchsoftballhof.com](http://www.16inchsoftballhof.com).

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*Don DeBat is a 1999 and 2008 Softball Hall of Fame inductee. In 2011 DeBat will be inducted for a third time as a player with the historic Dog's Bite team.*

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