



## COP CORNER

with Jeff Blair

Generally speaking the policesoftball.com circuit is divided with teams either being classified as East or West based on geography. Typically West teams play in tournaments held in California or Nevada. Meanwhile the East teams play in tournaments ranging from New York to Florida and from Virginia to Ohio. West teams have the luxury to be within driving distance of all the major West

tournaments while East teams usually have only one or two major East tournaments within driving distance. The West season kicks off with the annual DEA Kickoff in Chino Hills, Ca. every February. Meanwhile the East fires up in April with the Bacon Ball West Palm Beach, Florida event hosted by SoFlorida Lawmen player John Scollo and sponsored by Jack Olsen. Come October teams from all over the country come to Las Vegas for the World Series.

This year's West Palm Beach tournament was highly anticipated because the line-up was chock full of the top caliber teams. Essentially it was a virtual who's who of heavyweight contenders and all of them wanted to get positive momentum rolling into the 2011 season. The tournament began with the family of slain Delray Beach police officer Adam Rosenthal throwing out ceremonial first pitches and a helicopter fly-over in Adam's honor.

Since the line-up was loaded most of the bracket match-ups were very evenly matched. Although bracket play did not count toward the ultimate tournament finish, teams did strive to win their bracket games in order to secure a high seed and favorable first round playoff matchups.



Bracket winners included: Defending World Champions NYPD Blues, former two-time World Champions SoCal Alliance, former World Champions Ohio Lawmen, and the legendary New York Metro. Bracket runners up included: the host South Florida Lawmen, three-time top ranked East team Jacksonville Police Softball Club, pre-season top 3 ranked team the Shamrock (Jersey-Delaware) Enforcers, and the reloaded Team Jersey. Meanwhile the shorthanded Sin City Combo suffered two heartbreaking losses and would have their work cut out for them come playoff time. But that is an example of just how tough the competition was because Sin City was the 2010 top ranked team in the West. Others settling in with three seeds included: the underrated but very impressive Palm Beach Sheriff squad, arguably the best single agency team in the nation the Montgomery County Young Guns and the up-n-coming Oh50 (Ohio). Miami Metro Blue, Palm Beach PD, Florida Enforcers and West Palm Combo rounded out the last four seeds.

The stakes were raised come playoff time as the first round went as most would have predicted. NYPD Blues, South Florida Lawmen, NY Metro, Ohio Lawmen, Jacksonville PSC, Shamrock Enforcers and the SoCal Alliance all advanced against opponents they were favored over. The most interesting first round match up saw the Sin City Combo come out of their funk to post a nice victory over the higher seeded Team Jersey.

The gloves were off in round two of the winner's bracket because every team was a national top 10 ranked team. In a 2010 World Series rematch NYPD Blues defeated the Sin City Combo, South Florida bested NY Metro, the Ohio Lawmen took down Jacksonville PSC and finally the SoCal Alliance got by the Shamrock Enforcers.

Come Sunday morning only four teams remained perfect in the playoffs. The first game featured a bracket rematch between two friendly rivals NYPD Blues and the South Florida Lawmen. In this game South Florida was too hot to handle and they handed the Blues their first loss since September 2010 prior to their perfect 7-0 run to win the World Series in October. The other matchup featured what many considered the two most talented teams in the nation. Both teams are loaded with players who have extensive civilian tournament ball experience from notable teams such as: Watanabe/Blitz, Columbus Pipe, Bud Light/Easton, K&C Drywall, West Coast Blaze etc. It was a see-saw affair as these teams seemed to mirror each other at the plate and in the field but when the dust settled it was the SoCal Alliance who advanced to the winner's bracket final. SoCal would then advance to the championship game with a win over the South Florida Lawmen. It would take a double-dip to claim the 'ship from SoCal which would be a tall order considering the team has claimed the 'ship at this event both of the times they had played here before.

In the loser bracket Team Jersey made an epic run after their first round defeat. They battled through the bracket to eliminate the following teams: Florida Enforcers, Shamrock Enforcers, Jacksonville PSC, and the NYPD Blues before they finally gassed and gave way



to the Ohio Lawmen. Team Jersey was clearly an underdog coming into the tournament but this fourth place finish and wins over star studded teams catapulted them back into the East spotlight once again. Meanwhile the Ohio Lawmen got back to business by eliminating NY Metro and Jersey before falling to the South Florida Lawmen. The Ohio Lawmen earned a third place finish and once again proved why they are considered among the nation's elite police softball teams.

The championship game featured the host South Florida Lawmen looking to double dip the SoCal Alliance. SoCal had been having an epic year by posting back-to-back tournament wins at two big West tournaments, the DEA Kickoff and Las Vegas Bacon Ball. The team was so hot they had yet to lose a single game this 2011 season. Early on it looked like there would be an "IF" game because SoCal burned through their allotted six home-runs by the second inning with untimely two-run shots. Meanwhile South Florida was in the driver's seat as they chased by only seven runs going into the third inning but still had five home runs to use. By mid-game the inevitable lead change occurred as South Florida blasted some three run bombs to put SoCal in a bad spot. Amazingly SoCal took their game to a new level by plating consecutive innings of 13 runs and eight runs by spraying line drives into the gaps and using their team speed to leg out doubles and triples. This wild game came to a head in the top of the seventh inning with the home team SoCal leading South Florida 35-30. South Florida had one homer left to use and they used it early in the inning. A hard line drive into the glove of SoCal left fielder Kevin Burger ended the game with SoCal holding on 35-33 and in doing so claiming their third consecutive tournament championship and pushing their season record to 21-0.

Although West Palm Beach played host to a great weekend of softball, it was even a greater weekend of brotherhood and friendships. Although all the teams came for the



purpose of playing in a softball tournament it was the forging of new friendships and strengthening of existing friendships that overshadowed the game itself.

1. SoCal Alliance- Champions; 2. South Florida Lawmen; 3. Ohio Lawmen; 4. Team Jersey; 5t. NYPD Blues; 5t. NY Metro; 7t. Jacksonville PSC; 7t. Palm Beach Sheriff; 9t. Sin City Combo; 9t. Montgomery County Young Guns; 9t. Shamrock Enforcers; 9t. Miami Metro Blue; 13t. OH50; 13t. Florida Enforcers; 13t. West Palm Beach PD; 13t. Palm Beach Combo; MVP: Kris Ulibarri SoCal Alliance; All Tourneys SoCal Alliance: Kevin Burger, George Reyes, Danny Wells, Mitch Brouillette; All Tourneys South Florida Lawmen: Mike Donovan, Alan Westfall, John Scollo, Carl Sanabria; All Tourneys Ohio Lawmen: Team deferred; All Tourneys Team Jersey: Mike Reeves, Herman Colbert, Anthony Sanchez.

