



COP CORNER

with Jeff Blair

Cop Corner

2012 Season Preview

When I was a teenager back in the early 80's there was a song they played on a local Los Angeles radio station by a little known new-wave band called The Nails, titled "88 Lines about 44 Women." In the spirit of that song, here is my 2012 police softball season preview. I call it "88 Lines about 44 Teams." The teams are listed in their final 2011 rank in their respective regional conference.

WEST CONFERENCE

SoCal Alliance: In 2011 the team played in eight tournaments and won seven of them, compiling a ridiculous 54-3 overall record. Although they are still "the team to beat", pending job transfers, injuries and other factors will most likely

prevent the team from repeating their historic 2011 campaign.

SIN CITY COMBO: By 2011 they had already clearly established themselves amongst the nation's elite but they underperformed at two major tournaments; West Palm Beach, Fl. and the World Series. They added some talented players in the off-season and notched an impressive tournament championship at the Blondie's Sin City Classic so they are in the hunt for the heavyweight title in the West Conference this season.

CONCORD COMBO: They made a strong statement by sending the Ohio Lawmen into the loser's bracket in the World Series but fell short of advancing into the final five. They should battle the new Cal-Showtime team to claim the NorCal top dog status which was surrendered by the now defunct (40+ Masters only) Cal-Quake squad.

LAPD BLUE: They lost some key players this past off-season so



MIKE SNYDER: SOCAL ALLIANCE



TREVOR NEVILLE: SIN CITY COMBO



GREAT LAKES LAWMEN

they are full-speed ahead into rebuilding mode. The pickup of crafty pitcher Steve Wrathall coupled with the addition of some younger players should bring a new, athletic dimension to the team.

DEA COMBO: The Combo boasts more depth than any other team in the West and they got even deeper with the off-season additions of David Braun (see Cop Corner, Young Guns Part Deux) and veteran Ken Dawley. With Hall of Famer Keith Benjamin anchoring the infield and batting lead-off, this team is stacked from 1-11 in the line-up so we expect big things from them this season.

SoCAL LOCKDOWN: Lockdown was a top offensive team but issues with defense, pitching and team speed prevented them from winning big tournaments against the circuit heavyweights. Team leader Brandon St. Aubin went "all in" this offseason and completely overhauled the team by bringing in nine new starters to address those concerns, so this could be their year!

WEST COAST AFTERSHOCK: The Aftershock formed in 2007 after several players, including team leader Jim Lemmon parted ways with the Cal-Quake who were defending World Series Champions at that time. This year was a sense of homecoming as the Quake team folded and Lemmon brought on several of his former Quake teammates including Tom Laroque, Derwin Longmire and Lester Lawson.

RED REPUBLIC: You could fill an all-star team of former Red players. Red was poised to make a strong run this season but by the second tournament they were struggling to field a team so regardless of having seemingly limitless talent pool to draw talent from they still have an unlucky cloud that follows them.

NORCAL CHOIR BOYS: Many teams spent the off-season hunting down talented players to add to their rosters, but the Choir Boys stood fast. The stability with the roster should contribute to team chemistry but they will have to play far more consistently if they intend on cracking the top five in the WC rankings.

HARDCOR: It's hard to believe these former World Series champions finished outside the top 10 last season, but they did. Fortunately last season is only a memory and based on their 2012 performances in the DEA Kickoff and Blondie's Sin City Classic they look to be in prime 2009 form once again.

VEGAS HEAT: They forced an "IF" game in the Gold Division in the 2011 World Series and ultimately finished in second place. Their performance was so impressive they are getting bumped into the Majors Division this season, but we don't think they will miss a beat because their off-season additions are all impressive ball players.

NITRO2GO HITMEN: Team manager Lyle Reyes has become one of the most respected leaders in the circuit as he always works hard to field a competitive team. This year Lyle will field what should be the strongest Nitro team ever so we expect them to be a strong contender for the Gold Division championship in the World Series.

SoCAL RIOT: They have been a steady force in the Gold Division the past few years and remain one of the more active SoCal based teams. 2012 holds a lot of promise for Riot as they have already committed to playing in several police softball circuit tournaments including the World Series.

STANISLAUS COMBO: There are not many guarantees in life but some include; taxes, death and that Stanislaus will lock you down with defense every time they step on the field. Last year in their nine World Series games they gave up a paltry 88 runs (less than 10 per game) largely due to the workmanship of Travis Hudson on the bump with Ryan McClay, James McCarthy and Steve Newsome up the middle behind him.

CENCAL SYNDICATE: We had some concerns about the viability of this team toward the end of last season because several players had jumped ship and the upstart Valley of Syn was heavily recruiting all the talent in the region. CenCal quietly put rumors of their demise to rest as they re-signed talented Mario Barroso (see Cop Corner, Young Guns Part Deux) and brought in some fresh talent this off-season.

TEAM VARGAS: This team is comprised exclusively of United States Border Patrol Agents. They have all the ingredients for success: strong management, chemistry along with a mix of young players and experienced veterans so they should make a strong run in the Gold Division this year.

NORCAL SHOCKERS: They are a newer team on the circuit, but new doesn't mean "green" as their line-up is chock full of veterans with big game experience. They had an epic run in the World Series last year and did so with a skeleton crew so with a committed roster we should see them climb the rankings this season.

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NORCAL ELITE: The NorCal region is loaded with talent and Elite has done a great job bringing in some of the top players from that area. This is a well rounded team with no glaring weaknesses at any position so if they stay active they could flirt with Top 10 status this season.

CALIFORNIA SHOWTIME: Rarely does a brand new team crack the top 10 but they boast an all-star line-up and anything less than top five would be a disappointment. Essentially, they took two Majors teams; Direct Impact & Cal-Quake and merged them into one monster squad.

BORDER PATROL ARSENAL: Team leader Ed Leal had a difficult time fielding a full squad of Southwest Elite players last season so he made some changes. Ed's new Arsenal team is the real deal and their pitcher (new to the circuit) is clearly one of the best police softball has to offer...welcome to the Majors Division gentlemen.

SO CAL WAR PIGS: If you haven't had a chance to check the Police Softball Brett Helmer Home Run Challenge on YouTube please do so because the War Pigs have a monster who tied Brett with nine home runs on 10 swings...he's a beast. They came on late and hard last season, and they continued to roll this year with back to back Gold championship game appearances at the DEA Kickoff and Blondie's Sin City Madness.

SO CAL DAWGZ: They took a brief hiatus from the circuit last year but they are back again this year. They brought back some talented players who were on a "leave of absence" so we think they might be able to string together a nice run in the World Series Gold Division if they get all their guys to commit.

ALAMEDA'S MOST WANTED: To begin with, these are all cops from the same agency so that alone is impressive. They jumped into the spotlight by advancing to the Majors Division in their first major tournament of the 2012 season, the DEA Kickoff, so we expect more of the same the rest of the season.

EAST CONFERENCE

GREAT LAKES LAWMEN: The reigning World Series champions. It's said it is easier to win the title than it is to repeat...let's find out how they will perform with everyone gunning for them!

THE OHIO LAWMEN: They have what many (most) consider the most talented roster in the police softball circuit. We don't expect anything less



DUSTY BOWLING: OHIO LAWMEN

than a stellar year for the former World Champs and Vegas already has them as odds on favorites to win their second title in October.

MINNESOTA LAWMEN: Unquestionably the most popular team on the circuit who boast a great mix of young studs and seasoned veterans. They do have one glaring weakness in that they are "geographically challenged" so they don't get to as many tourneys as other teams...and given the state of the economy it might be even less so this year.

NYPD BLUES: The 2010 World Champions certainly know when to bring their "A" game as they came close to repeating in 2011. Now that NY Metro has folded, Rick Tirelli is officially "king" of the Big Apple and he has full control over all the talent in that region so they will truly be "Beasts from the East" this season.

SHAMROCK ENFORCERS: Had it not been for a World Series meltdown this team could have been in the mix for top dog status in the East rankings. They are absolutely loaded with talent so they HAVE to be in the discussion for favorites to win any tournament they enter this season.

SOUTH FLORIDA LAWMEN: Off-season drama including a split in management and player defections overshadowed a great 2011 season for the squad. Manager Mike Kletzky rebuilt the team and served up some humble pie to the doubters when his team opened the season 7-0 to win the Aselton tournament in Orlando, FL.

TEAM JERSEY: The scouting report on Jersey is they are all offense and they might score 30 per game but give up 31. This off-season they maintained their offensive firepower but added some solid defenders in Rick Wahmann (former Suffolk County and NY Metro), Dave Monisera and Jay Pederson so that should add balance to the Jersey Shore boys. GTL baby!

STEEL CITY ENFORCERS: In their short history they have taken a very linear ascent in the rankings. They are making changes on the fly and adding a cadre of young guns to augment their cadre of veterans so if you were buying stock in a team, go "all in" on S.C.E.

SUFFOLK COUNTY LAWMEN: In past years they were often considered the third team in New York but times have changed and so has this Suffolk County team. Off-season additions of Brian MacDermott, Tim Conroy, Brian Klammer and Kevin Spence might be just enough to push them past the NYPD Blues in their rivalry to claim Big Apple supremacy.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY YOUNG GUNS: They are a true "tweener" team as they have bounced between the Gold and Majors divisions the past few years. We are not sure where they will land this year, but when they are firing on all cylinders they can slay dragons (just ask former World Series Champs HardCor as the Guns sent them packing in last year's World Series!)

CAPITAL CITY LAWMEN: They are constructed similar to the Young Guns, come from the same region, and to date have posted similar tournament results. Pitcher Ron Breeden can be a bear when his knuckleball is working and the addition of fiery Vic Ortalano should propel them into Top 10 status by mid-season.

METRO DETROIT'S FINEST: MDF is the reigning Gold Division World Champions so they will enter the 2012 season going from the hunter to the hunted. Their line-up is chock full of tested veteran players from a talent rich region so we don't anticipate them having any difficulty in the transition to the Majors Division.

GREENE COUNTY ENFORCERS: This is a blue collar team. They pack their lunches, roll up their sleeves, punch the time-card and when they step on the field they go to work. You won't read about them signing prima-donna players as they emphasize chemistry and teamwork which will be their recipe as they enter the 2012 season as the East Conference favorite to claim

the Gold Division heavyweight crown in Las Vegas.

MID-ATLANTIC LAWMEN: They are formerly known as the Virginia Lawmen, but after a disappointing run in the World Series they decided to shake things up. The name change isn't the only upgrade they made this off-season. The Mid-Atlantic Lawmen recognize the trend toward fielding a quicker, more athletic team and they jumped on the bandwagon with full force so accordingly, they have laser-like focus on cracking the Top 10 (and then some) this season.

IOWA LAWMEN: They are developing a sniper reputation on the circuit as they fly under the radar all year and then wait until the World Series to do their best work. Like Minnesota they are "geographically challenged" but we do hope to see more of them on the circuit this year because they are truly talented and deserve more exposure.

CHICAGO-METRO: They are true road warriors as they have been one of the most consistently active teams in the East Conference. They rolled into Las Vegas last October with high expectations from everyone including themselves but the dice came up snake eyes (Editors note: If you are a gambling man don't bet against them next time around.)

CHARLES COUNTY LAWMEN: In 2010 we had no idea what to expect of this team as they entered their first World Series but when the dust settled no team left a bigger impression on the policesoftball.com staff than the CC Lawmen. They are a small market team with a big game hunter mentality so expect them to carry that same mindset into the 2012 season.

MARYLAND OUTLAWS: A few years ago the Maryland State Police team cracked the Top 5 and seemed destined to claim top-dog status in the East Conference before the wheels fell off. The Maryland Outlaws are here to pick up the pieces and are dead-set on capturing the status that MSP came oh-so-close to obtaining.

TORONTO POLICE SOFTBALL: TPS is our first bona fide international team to become regulars on the circuit. They were a pleasant surprise in World Series VI and after last season they realize they need to be fully loaded when traveling to the big tournaments.

DETROIT PD SOFTBALL: About 7-8 years ago these guys were amongst the best in the nation but then they went dormant. They reappeared last year and now boast an open and masters team so we anticipate them being active in some form in the circuit this season.

DOWN TO EARTH LAWMEN: This is a new Florida based team that pooled talent from the former Jacksonville PSC team, Miami Metro Red and South Florida Lawmen. They had a rough opener in the Orlando tournament back in January, but with their stacked line-up it's hard to imagine them not fighting for a Top 5 ranking by mid-season.

There you have it, 88 lines about 44 teams. Now if I really had talent I would have made it all rhyme like the song!



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