



3n2/D2E Lawmen

by **JEFF BLAIR,**
POLICESOFTBALL.COM

Photos courtesy of David Stevens

I received the phone call on a Sunday afternoon in January 2012. It was from an old friend of mine who had his finger on the pulse of the cop softball circuit as he knew all the inner workings of teams, particularly those based in the Southeast. He wished to remain anonymous, so for purposes of this article I will refer to him as Confidential Informant #612. (This is cop jargon as we typically refer to our CI's by number when authoring police reports.)

He told me about a juggernaut that was going to be released on the circuit that season and he promised they would immediately be a top-caliber team. As a matter of fact, he boasted that by mid-year they would leapfrog the then-defending world champion Great Lakes Lawmen. The team would be known as the Down2Earth/D2E Lawmen based out of South Florida and the roster would consist of former South Florida Lawmen, Jacksonville Police Softball, and Miami Metro Red players.

It was truly a stacked lineup loaded with both established veterans and youngsters ascending in the sport's hierarchy. Word of the team spread like wildfire and it seemed all eyes were on D2E as they opened the season in Orlando playing in the Aseton Memorial. There were not too many "big dogs" competing in the



“3N2 has been a partner with Police Softball over the last five years and through this relationship we met Dennis Leonard who helped set-up the 3N2/D2E Lawmen relationship. Dennis has always been good to 3N2 and we appreciate him approaching us about this opportunity. The Lawmen not only are serving and protecting our communities, they are a heck of a slowpitch team. Both their on and off the field performance made this sponsorship a no brainer. 3N2/D2E Lawmen are head to toe with 3N2 uniforms, gloves and hats!”

**-Sean Murphy
Chief Executive Officer, 3N2**



event so the only question was, how bad would D2E smash the competition? Things did not go as planned; frankly, things went about as far from planned as possible. D2E finished tied for fifth out of nine teams, which added fire to skeptics who claimed they would not live up to the hype.

Team leader Mike Bracci rallied the players and used strong words of encouragement to inspire confidence in the team. Collectively they knew the poor opener was only a fluke and not an omen. They bounced back with a strong performance in the West Palm Beach Bacon Ball tournament, finishing second to the (eventual) world champions, the SoCal Alliance. Then things really started to click for the team. They attended the National Law Enforcement Championship in Dayton, Ohio, and emerged victorious in the event that was known for its tradition and prestige. It seemed ironic that a brand-new team would win the NPSC, which would be like a rookie golfer winning the British Open.

Individually, these were certainly no rookies. The roster read like an all-star lineup, but collectively they were still a “new” team. In the big dance, the Police Softball World Series, the team finished third in a field of 60. They finished higher than any other team from the East Conference and as a result, they did exactly what Confidential Informant #612 had promised. They leapfrogged all of the East Conference top teams, including the Great Lakes Lawmen, NYPD Blues, Ohio Lawmen, Shamrock Enforcers, Minnesota Lawmen, etc., and emerged as the 2012 number one-ranked team in the East Conference!

In 2013 the team acquired a few more players and added Hall of Famer Dennis Leonard to the roster, which brought a vast amount of knowledge to the team of helping handle both on-the-field decisions as well as the day-to-day operational side of the team. The result was a first place finish in West Palm, a fourth place finish in New York, and a second place finish at the World Series. The team ran into a tough SoCal Alliance team that was pretty much unstoppable. But always being the positive, glass-is-half-full coach that he is, Mike Bracci simply stated, "We finished better than we did the previous year." In 2013 the team was once again ranked the number one team in the East Conference. Some teams try for years aspiring to crack the top 20, or maybe dream of being top ten. D2E burst onto the scene and took the top seat on the totem pole their first two years in existence!

Honestly, those in the know didn't expect anything less from ANY team run by Mike Bracci. As a leader, Bracci is to cop softball what Vince Lombardi was to the NFL. He simply knows how to field a winning team. When he previously ran the Miami Metro Red team, he took them to the World Series and never finished lower than fifth out of 60 teams. When the Miami team folded, Bracci joined the South Florida Lawmen management team and that year they won the largest East Conference tournament, Virginia Beach, and cracked the top ten at the World Series. Bracci's stay with South Florida was brief because the opportunity to run the D2E Lawmen was knocking on the door and Bracci was quick to answer.

What does 2014 hold for the team? Before the season began they inked a new sponsor in 3n2 Sports. According to Bracci, "We have a great relationship with both of our sponsors, 3n2 and D2E. They have been with us since our inception and have helped us when sponsorships are tough to come by." The team officially changed its name to the 3n2/D2E Lawmen this season and they will be debuting some new uniforms soon. How

about on the field? In this young season the team has entered two tournaments and won them both. They boat-raced teams to win the Aselton Memorial kickoff and then double-dipped the heralded Shamrock Enforcers to win the West Palm Beach Bacon Ball event.

I asked Bracci about his goals and he was very humble in his response. "To compete at the highest level in each tournament we enter while representing our profession being the most important aspect of our team's mission. Our on-the-field goal is the same as many other teams—to win the Police Softball World Series."

When Bracci assembled the roster, his overarching goal was to create a team that consisted of individuals who were willing to put the team first and their pride and egos second in order to create a comfortable atmosphere. This is one reason Bracci recruited John Scollo. Scollo is a team-first player who is also known as one of police softball's overall "good guys." Scollo calls it like he sees it and does not pull any punches. He has no trouble "outing" a selfish player, and he would give you the shirt off his back.

Another huge presence is Hall of Famer Dennis Leonard. Very few people in the history of the sport are as accomplished and decorated as Leonard and he simply knows how to win. Leonard is truly an ambassador for our sport. Bracci knew that if he could assemble the right people with the right mindset, it would ultimately lead to success on the field and friendships off the field, both personally and professionally.

Many people criticized the group early on, saying there was no way they could keep it together with that many talented players and the investable team killer—big egos. This team has proved that it not only can keep it together, but they are sending a message that their focus and team mindset is simple, as coach Bracci stated at the end of last season, "finish better than we did last year at the World Series." Mission accomplished, Mr. Bracci!

So what does 2014 hold? If they maintain their yearly goal of finishing better than they did at last year's World Series, you should be reading all about their 2014 world championship finish in the first edition of *Softball Magazine* next year.

3n2/D2E Lawmen Roster: Mike Bracci, Manager; Joel Bello; Jimmy Black; John Borden; Shaun Bridger; Paul Cullen; Doug Cullen; Alain Cruz; Christopher Giles; Tim Grundmann; Clint Hart; Dennis Leonard, Assistant Player/Manager; Robbie Nelson; Jason Newlin; Mike "Ogie" Ogliaruso; Ryan Register; John Scollo; Matt Tindell; Chris Villano; Allan Westfall; Brandon Worrall.

