

POLICE SOFTBALL



WORLD SERIES X



By Jeff Blair

POLICE SOFTBALL WORLD SERIES X

The end of the 2014 season marked the 10-year anniversary of the Police Softball World Series. Those who have been along for the ride since the first World Series have seen it grow from 32 teams in Palm Springs to a record 70 teams in Las Vegas. For the first year ever, the Open Division (Majors/Gold) completely sold out at 60 teams. Majors featured the 24 best teams in the nation, whereas the Gold Division was larger, boasting 36 teams. It was once again a bat-provided event courtesy of Brett Helmer and Easton Sports, Denny Crine and Miken, and Police Softball Hall of Famer Terry Dugan, who provided DeMarini bats courtesy of his Lockdown Sports business.

The opening ceremony was the best-attended to date as the Big League Dreams facility reported a gate tally of more than 1,200. The Home Run Derby came down to two relatively unknown players to the circuit. Team Louisiana slugger Dustin Lavergne emerged from the pack to represent the East Conference, while Nitro2Go rookie Luis Velasquez came out on top to represent the West Conference. In their head-to-head matchup, Velasquez's power was too much for Lavergne to overcome and Velasquez was declared "King." Later, King Velasquez and Lavergne teamed up in a "Pros vs. Joes" contest against Denny Crine (Miken) and Bryson Baker (Easton). The Pros put on a fireworks display, which only solidified why they get paid to play and the Joes are cops.

Our season award winners were presented plaques courtesy of the Sacramento County Sheriff's Association. The All-Decade team was recognized along with individual team MVPs. The Police Softball Hall of Fame welcomed new members: Ken Dawley - DEA Combo, Jimmy Sanders - HardCor, Mark Tolliver - HardCor, Jaime Caterino - Steel City Lawmen, Jimmy Cavuto - New York Metro, Tim Conroy - Suffolk County NY - NY Metro, Butch Crozier - NYPD Blues, Paul Cullen - Jacksonville Police Softball Club - 3N2/D2E, Scott "Sami" Samis - Shamrock Lawmen New Jersey.

There was a twist to the round robin this year as Majors/Gold teams were mixed and matched and the Majors teams had to face a seven-run handicap. As predicted it kept games much closer and there were even some upsets. Gold teams Wayne Oakland and SoCal Riot defeated Majors teams Battle Born and Minnesota Lawmen (in respective order). One of the most intense round-robin games featured the Gold Division rising stars Team Louisiana pushing former Majors world champions to the limit. It took some walk-off magic for HardCor to finally secure a one-run victory over the fiery Louisiana squad.

MAJORS DIVISION PLAYOFFS

Under the new format there would be no "gimme games" in the Majors Division. From game one every team would be facing a heavyweight contender with a similar talent level to their own team. In round one, HardCor couldn't get the offense going against the cagey pitching of the Maryland Young Gunz veteran Ron Breeden, but they did hold on long enough to post a 17-14 victory to force the Young Gunz into the losers' bracket early. Another former world champion, the Ohio Lawmen (World Series I), sent the Iowa Lawmen down to visit the Young Gunz. The Iowa Lawmen finished third in the Gold Division last year, so they are to be commended for playing up with the Majors this year.

The Shamrock Enforcers were having their best year to date and they continued to add to it with a convincing victory over the NorCal-based Stanislaus team. North Florida bested the Border Patrol Arsenal in a close game, while the local Vegas-based Battle Born overcame a very talented Team Texas. OH50 handled the Central California Connection, who were making their World Series debut, and promptly earned a berth into the Majors Division.

The team that had many people talking early, the San Antonio Law, gave the favored Minnesota Lawmen everything they could handle, but Minnesota eventually prevailed, 20-16. California Showtime plated 28 runs against 20 runs for their NorCal counterparts, West Coast United.

Round two introduced some big guns into the mix that had earlier earned byes due to their performance in the round robin. The biggest surprise of the tournament, the Mid-Atlantic DeMarini Lawmen, inked a big upset over a flat HardCor team, 15-3. The most anticipated round two game was between the loaded Los Angeles-based DEA Combo and the Ohio Lawmen, who brought their best team in years. The teams did not disappoint, and in the end, the DEA prevailed, 31-21. SoCal Lockdown was also having their best year to date, so their win over the equally hot Shamrock Enforcers was not necessarily an upset, but those who had followed Lockdown throughout the year knew they had the ability to take down the favored Shamrocks.



The Missouri Lawmen played clutch softball and squeaked by North Florida Showdown, 26-25. In yet another nail-biter, the Great Lakes Lawmen bested Battle Born, 21-19. The top team in the nation heading into the event was the NYPD Blues. They had won four consecutive tournaments and were riding a 25-game win streak. They crushed their opponents in the round robin and carried that momentum into their matchup against OH50, which they won convincingly. The Minnesota Lawmen sent the defending two-time, back-to-back world champions SoCal Alliance into the losers' bracket early. The team many had picked to win it all, 3N2/D2E Lawmen, didn't quite look like they were firing on all cylinders, but they had enough in the tank to defeat California Showtime.

In round three, Mid-Atlantic/DeMarini received a wake-up call at the hands of the DEA Combo. It was one of the more "spirited" games and the feisty Mid-Atlantic squad kept chipping away all game to keep it close, but the DEA Combo managed to hold them off. The Missouri Lawmen were considered a dark horse to go deep into the tournament, but their victory over SoCal Lockdown had people all over the park talking about how strong they looked. The NYPD Blues continued their winning ways, sending the Great Lakes Lawmen (2011 world champions) into the losers' bracket. In yet another "upset," the Minnesota Lawmen offed 3N2/D2E Lawmen. In the majors no team had started slower than Minnesota, and as fate would have it, nobody had gotten hotter at the right time.

The final four in the Majors featured DEA Combo defeating the Missouri Lawmen and the NYPD Blues narrowly getting by Minnesota. The stage was set in another classic East vs. West matchup, and it was no surprise the teams involved were DEA Combo and the NYPD Blues. Many had projected these two teams to be in the big dance, so their collision course seemed inevitable. The stands were packed, emotion was high, and the talent level displayed by both teams was beyond impressive. In the undefeated game, DEA Combo seemed destined as they handed the NYPD Blues their first loss since March! If any team could come back to double-dip the Combo, the NYPD Blues had the ability to do just that, but they had to earn a shot at it.

In the losers' bracket the SoCal Alliance, who lost their first playoff game, were no strangers in doing the death march through the lower rungs. In 2012 that is exactly what they did as they peeled off nine straight wins and double-dipped the undefeated team en route to their third World title. The next year, they took the easier path, going undefeated to win their fourth. It looked like that might play out again this year as they posted victories over Stanislaus, California Showtime, Mid-Atlantic and Battle Born and gained revenge against Minnesota. Their luck ended with five straight wins when an inspired Great Lakes Lawmen eliminated the defending champs. Great Lakes could not maintain the hot hand as the NYPD Blues eliminated them the very next game.

The stage was set for a rematch between the undefeated DEA Combo and the highly motivated NYPD Blues. It was getting late into the night and the ballpark was filled with fans who were hoping for an exciting game. Both teams played inspired softball, but on this date the DEA Combo could not be denied. The DEA Combo was declared world champions for the first time ever and the players and coaches celebrated with champagne showers and powerful man hugs. Although the NYPD Blues had registered one of the most successful years on police softball history, on this day it was the DEA Combo who wore the crown of world champion.

Majors Division: 1. DEA Combo - World Champions; 2. NYPD Blues; 3. Great Lakes Lawmen; 4. SoCal Alliance; T5. Missouri Lawmen; T5. Minnesota Lawmen; T7. 3N2/D2E Lawmen; T7. Battle Born; T9. Mid-Atlantic/DeMarini; T9. Team Texas; T9. North Florida Showdown; T9. SoCal Lockdown; T13. Cal Showtime; T13. OH50; T13. Ohio Lawmen; T13. San Antonio Law; T17. BP Arsenal; T17. Stanislaus; T17. Iowa Lawmen; T17. Maryland Young Gunz; T17. West Coast United; T17. Shamrock Enforcers; T17. Central Cal Connection; T17. HardCor. MVP: Mike McMorro - DEA Combo; All World Honors: Jerry Boyd, Andy Gonzalez, Keith Habig - DEA Combo; Gold Glove: Kevin Mort - DEA Combo; All World Honors: Richie Gili, Jimmy Gnew, Jerry Smith - NYPD Blues; All World Honors: Ty Rubio, Adam Orozco, Derek Ward - Great Lakes Lawmen.

GOLD DIVISION PLAYOFFS

The Gold Division today is what the Majors Division was just a few short years ago. There were some truly talented teams in the Gold Division and many would have had a chance to win Majors in past years. The Gold Division was once considered the "lower" division but after watching the games, the line between Gold and Majors is very blurred. Not only is the Gold Division very talented, it is also the larger division as it swelled to 36 teams this year! Winning the Gold Division this year would be a tall order due to the sheer number of wins a team would need to record in order to claim the title.

Eight lower-seeded teams (29-36) did not earn a bye so they had to win a game to get to the first round. Those games were as follows: Mid West Heat over Oakland PD, Guard Dogs defeated Thin Blue Line, Team Vargas bested Detroit PD, and the Central Coast Heroes over the Chino Knuckle Draggers.

Round one would either make or break teams. Going into the losers' bracket at this stage would mean a team would need to win a whopping 11 straight games to claim the championship. The odds of any team doing that are slim to none. So here is how it played out: Cali-Force defeated fellow NorCal ballers the El Dorado Cartel. The loaded Florida Enforcers handled the Texas Cartel. The Canadian Regina Cyclones were the round-robin surprise, going 2-0, but they were quickly dispatched by the Mid West Heat. Miami Metro Dawgz defeated the NorCal Shockers and Louisville Metro put the wood to the SoCal-based San Bernardino Hit Squad. SoCal Riot stayed red-hot by smashing the Guard Dogs and Nitro2Go beat Dayton Metro in a high-scoring



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affair. Toronto Takedown stood victorious over the Seattle-based North West Shakedown. Charles County looked strong in round robin, but they were overtaken by the Kansas City Guns, who coincidentally did not look nearly as sharp in round robin. The defending Gold Division world champions Chicago Metro looked very rusty in round robin (0-2) but dropped 49 runs on the Port Authority Twins/PAPD Twins to open the playoffs. Metro Detroit looked dialed in with a win over Team Vargas. In a very tight game, the Steel City Enforcers snuck away with a 20-19 victory over the Maryland Outlaws. In another close one, the favored LA Lawmen pulled a rabbit out of the hat to defeat Arizona Ablaze, 19-18. The Michigan-based Wayne-Oakland squad was making its first appearance at the World Series in more than five years and they looked as sharp as ever with an impressive win over the Central Coast Heroes. NorCal Elite defeated the Kansas City Pigsters in a low-scoring game, and Team Louisiana sent the DMV Lawmen (formerly known as the DC Enforcers) into the losers' bracket.

The next round saw Cali-Force defeat the Florida Enforcers (first appearance as a team); Miami Metro Dawgz 15-13 over Mid West Heat; the sizzling SoCal Riot 16-15 over Louisville Metro; Nitro2Go put the boots to Toronto Takedown; the Kansas City Guns sent the defending champs Chicago Metro into the losers' bracket, 18-17; Steel City caught a very flat Metro Detroit's Finest and inked a 17-2 win; in yet another one-run game, Wayne-Oakland 13 LA Lawmen 12; and finally Team Louisiana easily handled NorCal Elite.

As the day progressed on Friday, so did Cali-Force. They completed their perfect day with a win over the surprising Miami Metro Dawgz. SoCal Riot's hot streak ended at the hands of Nitro2Go. The Steel City Enforcers cooled down the Kansas City Guns and Team Louisiana bested Wayne-Oakland. On Saturday morning, the Elite Four squared off as Cali-Force sent cross-state rivals Nitro2Go into the losers'

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bracket and Steel City derailed Team Louisiana. The undefeated game between Cali-Force and Steel City was held at six on Saturday evening and the stands were packed as they took center stage on Angel Field. In a close game, Cali-Force emerged victorious and earned their ticket to the big show. They were in the driver's seat and would need to be double-dipped by whoever came out of the losers' bracket.

In this case, just as it was in the Majors, the team that lost the undefeated game battled back to earn a shot at the title. Steel City defeated Miami Metro Dawgz and in doing so they set the stage for a rematch against Cali-Force. Steel City seemed to be in control throughout the game. Tournament director Jeff Blair asked Cali-Force manager Eddie Russell if there would need to be an "if" game and Eddie confidently responded, "No, we got this." It seemed like a tall order as they were chasing eight in the fifth inning, but just as Eddie predicted, they did indeed have it. Cali-Force responded with a couple big innings en route to defeating the Steel City Enforcers and claiming the title of Gold Division World Series champions! It was a great run for both teams as they both played with heart and determination.

Gold Division final results: 1. Cali-Force-Champions; 2. Steel City Enforcers; 3. Miami Metro Dawgz; 4. Wayne Oakland; T5. Team Louisiana; T5. Nitro2Go Hitmen; T7. Texas Cartel; T7. Kansas City Guns; T9. Dayton Metro; T9. SoCal Riot; T9. Toronto Takedown; T9. Florida Enforcers; T13. Mid West Heat; T13. Metro Detroit's Finest; T13. LA Lawmen; T13. Louisville Metro; T17. Chicago Metro; T17. NorCal Shockers; T17. NorCal Elite; T17. SB Hit Squad; T17. Charles County Lawmen; T17. Maryland Outlaws; T17. Arizona Ablaze; T17. Kansas City Pigsters; T25. North West Shakedown; T25. Guard Dogs; T25. Regina Cyclones; T25. El Dorado Cartel; T25. DMV Lawmen; T25. Central Coast Heroes; T25. Team Vargas; T25. Port Authority Twins; T33. Detroit PD; T33. Chino Knuckle Draggers; T33. Oakland PD; T33. Thin Blue Line. MVP and Gold Glove: Michael Ricchiuto - Cali-Force; All World Honors: AJ Biama, Michael Feleppa and Jon Stephens - Cali-Force; All World Honors: Erik Fisher, Jordan Seese and Jason Semegy - Steel City Enforcers; All World Honors: Nelson Andreu, Jonathan Santana, and David San Juan - Miami Metro Dawgz.

SILVER DIVISION PLAYOFFS

The Silver Division was reserved for those 12 Gold teams that did not fare well come playoff time. It was a single-elimination event that saw North West Shakedown steamroll through three California-based teams in Central Coast Heroes, Team Vargas and Chino Knuckle Draggers en route to a perfect 3-0 championship run. MVP: Jeff Majjala - North West Shakedown; All World Honors: Mario Magnotti, Nathan Betts and Mike Thomas - North West Shakedown; Gold Glove: Jeff Majjala - North West Shakedown.



MASTERS DIVISION PLAYOFFS

With only five teams in Masters, it is one of the divisions that has seen a sharp decrease in participation since its inception, when the event averaged 14 teams. Since that time, the interest has steadily declined and the idea of putting the event on Sunday, after the open tournament, was not successful. For those teams that did play, they played a lot of games in a short period of time and the players seemed to really enjoy the compressed format.

The Garden State (Jersey-based) team crushed everyone in round robin, going 4-0. They beat the East Coast Lawmen in the semi-final playoffs and faced West Coast 40's in the championship. They had defeated the 40's earlier in the day and they stretched a full seven innings out of this game. It took a walk-off bomb by hulking Vegas slugger Rick Bass to secure the title for the West Coast 40's.

1. West Coast 40's- Champions; 2. Garden State Masters; 3. Ps.Com Free Agents; 4. East Coast Masters; 5. Excessive Force. MVP: Keith Habig - WC 40's; Gold Glove: Robbie Rosas - WC 40's; All World Honors: Tyson Becker, Jerry Boyd & Rick Bass - WC 40's.

WOMENS DIVISION PLAYOFFS

This year only four teams participated, which puts the event in jeopardy for next year. That said, those four teams that played had a blast. The two-time defending champions SoGal's Alliance went undefeated, 3-0, through round robin, and after defeating the San Bernardino Knockouts in the first playoff round, they seemed destined for a threepeat. But they caught the Sin City Betty's at the wrong time and the Betty's relentlessly pounded the ball against the SoGal's. When the dust settled, the Betty's recorded a major upset and became the 2014 Women's Division World Champions along the way!

1. Sin City Betty's; 2. SoGal's Alliance; 3. San Bernardino Knockouts; 4. DEA Combo. MVP: Tami Habig- Sin City Betty's; Gold Glove: Karly McCormack- Sin City Betty's; All World Honors: Brittany Burtner, Nicole Miller & Felicia Benjamins- Sin City Betty's.

CLOSING

Policesoftball.com (Del and Jeff) would like to thank several people for making this year's event such a huge success: Brett Helmer (Easton Sports), Terry Dugan (Lockdown Sports/DeMarini), Denny Crine (Miken), Ed Farmer and Chris Devlin (Big League Dreams), Tom Phundstein and Ernie Ono (USSSA-Las Vegas), Tracy Morgan (Golden Nugget), the Las Vegas Metro Police Honor Guard, Dennis Leonard (3N2), Carlos Vega (Elite), Gene and Luann (Softball Magazine) and our wives Michele (Del) and Anne Marie (Jeff). Lastly, thanks to all who attended for your continued support of www.policesoftball.com as without you there would be no World Series. We intend to make next year even better! So please ink the second weekend in October for World Series XI, which is tentatively set for October 8-10, 2015, in Las Vegas, Nevada, at the Big League Dreams facility once again.