

COP CORNER

With Jeff Blair

The Outfielders



Have you ever noticed when an infielder boots a ball, his teammates tend to rally around him with encouraging words like, “good effort” or “shake it off?” But let an outfielder miss one and you are more likely to hear taunts such as, “nice route, Magellan” or “trade that glove in for a tuna net.” (I have been the recipient of both of those gems.)

Why do outfielders get the Cinderella treatment? One reason is because if an infielder commits an error

the batter usually ends up on first base. When an outfielder has a miscue it is the equivalent of giving up a double, triple or occasionally a home run. But there is another reason too. Generally speaking, shortstops are the flashy big name players. Second basemen are the quick handed magicians with dazzling footwork. Those who man the hot corner are gritty, hard nose players with cannons for throwing arms who typically have nicknames like “Rock.” First basemen are usually behemoths who get their fame launching home runs and batting clean up in the batting order. The infielders get to chitchat with each other and get to know more about the other team because they are up close and personal.

The outfielders, on the other hand, are physically positioned way out in the softball Serengeti. Outfielders can rarely hear anything that is being said in the dirt and have no one to talk to but themselves. When you put aside all the glamour and glory, games are won and lost in the outfield. Strong teams have outfielders who can run down balls, split runners, and make hitters think twice about where to place the ball.

It’s about time outfielders get some credit and that is just what I am going to do in this installment of the Cop Corner. This is a special tribute to the Soldiers of the Shag, the Gazelles of the Grass, the Superstars of the St. Augustine...the outfielder! Ladies and Gentlemen let me introduce you to some of the finest outfielders in the law enforcement softball circuit!

Andrew McCormick

Team: DEA Combo/Easton
Position: LF
Agency: Tempe Police Department (Arizona)
Sports Background: College baseball at Grand Canyon University and two years in Toronto Blue Jays Organization
Greatest Strength: Speed
Area of Improvement: Would like a stronger throwing arm
Awards/Achievements: 2006Policesoftball.Com All-National Team Award and many championships with the DEA Combo
Comments: I have been playing with DEA Combo for about five or six years now. I



not only enjoy playing softball, but also the friendships that I have with the players on my team and on other teams. I have been married for nine years and we have three children. I have been employed by Tempe PD for ten years and I am currently a patrol Sgt. I am also the tactical Sgt. in charge of our sniper team. My Father retired from Tempe PD and my older sister and

younger brother are also currently police officers in Tempe. I also love to hunt and fish with my two boys.

Alfonso Trujillo

Team: SoCal Alliance/Easton
Position: CF
Agency: El Dorado County Sheriff’s Department (California)
Softball Background: Played with K&C/Easton last two seasons at the “A” level. The team finished 5th at the USSSA Major Worlds in ‘05, began playing in the law enforcement softball circuit in 2005.
Opinion on what makes a good outfielder: “I believe speed, instinct, and getting good jumps on balls is the key to a successful outfielder.”
Strengths/Areas of Improvement: “My biggest strength is speed, and I think I can improve my game



by becoming more familiar with the hitters so I can better position myself.”
Training Routine: “Zo” is a workout fanatic and built like an Olympic sprinter. He can bench press 365 lbs. while weighing only 180 lbs. He works out with weights five days per week but doesn’t do much cardio work because he has a hard time keeping weight on. He also plays as much softball as possible and hits twice a week.
Awards/Achievements: Named All-Tourney at the USSSA Major Dudley NIT in Minnesota in 2006, 2006 Policesoftball.Com All-National Team, 2005 Policesoftball.Com All-Star Game participant.

Scott Czopek

Team: Michigan Lawmen
Position: LF (but begging the coach for a move to the infield)
Agency: Southgate Police Department (Michigan)
Sports Background: In addition to playing with the Michigan Lawmen, Czopek plays civilian softball for Team Bud Light/Easton USSSA class-B and previously played for the 2006 USSSA class-C World Champions Line Drive-Pole Position. “I grew up the old fash-



Brian Key

Team: Ohio Lawmen
 Position: CF/LC
 Agency: Cincinnati Police Department (Ohio)
 Sports Background: Two-year basketball All-American at Cumberland College. Since 2004 played civilian softball with Graystone/Posey's Posse Div. A/B. Played with the Cincinnati lawmen 1998-2000. Ohio Lawmen since 2004.

Fielding Tips: Get a good jump on the ball when it comes off and try to remember what the hitter did the previous at bat.

Workout Routine: My team starts working out in January in a basketball gym. Our regime is sprints, laps, push ups, sit ups, ball drills, and swing once a week. We also go to the cages once a week.

Awards/Achievements: 2005 Policesoftball.com WorldSeries Champion and MVP, 2005 USSSA Black American



World Champion, 2006 Comp Black BASA World Champ and MVP, winner in the A-division in the biggest softball tourney in Ohio called the Cincinnati Metro.

Comments: I would like to thank the Ohio Lawmen and our coach Brad Borowy for the opportunity to play on one of the best law enforcement teams in the nation.

Rich Bengston

Team: LAPD Blue/Easton
 Position: LF
 Agency: Los Angeles Police Department (California)
 Sports Background: Lettered in four sports in high school and received a scholarship to UCSB for soccer. "I did not start playing competitive softball until after college. I started with the defunct LAPD Red softball team in 1996. In 1999, I switched to the LAPD BLUE team. I have only played a limited amount of civilian softball but I was fortunate to play on the SoCal based Johnny Blaze team for a short stint."



ion way of playing sports outside everyday, not dialed in every single second on video games. I played QB from the 4th grade until my final year in college."

Physical Conditioning: "I wish my body didn't hurt so much after each tournament. Outfielders' bodies take a lot of punishment throughout a tourney especially playing a three man OF. I try to stay in shape with cardio and weight training four days a week but the treadmill just doesn't give you the same conditioning as playing. Getting old really stinks but if you don't hurt then you're probably not playing hard. It's all part of the fun. I love this silly game."

Awards/Achievements: 2006 Policesoftball.Com All National Team, 2006 USSSA class "C" World Champion and Offensive MVP with Line Drive-Pole Position along with several All Tourney selections throughout the years.

Strengths/Areas of Improvement: "For strengths, getting a good jump on the ball. I am not the fastest outfielder in the game, but I am able to read the batters' swing in order to get a half-step jump on the ball. I would like to have a stronger, more accurate arm. I admire those guys that have cannon arms." (Author note: I have been a base running victim at the hands of Rich, believe me his arm is plenty strong enough.)

Awards/Achievements: "When it comes to awards and achievements, I like to keep my mouth shut. This is a team sport and it takes a team to win, not just an individual. If I did win any awards, it would be considered a team award and not an individual thing. For me to play my best, the other nine guys around me have to support me and I have to support them."

Ron Connor

Team: Cal-Quake
 Position: LC
 Agency: Torrance Police Department (California)
 Sports Background: Primarily football and track. At 18 years old, a relative who was playing A-Ball with a team called Continental Paper, introduced him to the world of softball and he served as a pinch runner.

The next year, his career started at the C level. He worked his way up through the class levels and since 1987 he has played with a variety of upper level teams including New York Life class-A, United Catering class-A, Taylor Made class-A. Started playing law enforcement softball with the LASD Red in 1991 followed by stints with the Torrance Combo and DEA Combo. **Training Routine:** "I think I'm at my best defensively as well as offensively when I can use my legs to make things happen, so I focus on conditioning. In the off-season and between tournaments, I condition with a track regimen of long-distance and speed work. In my role with the Quake, I'm not needed to be a homerun hitter so my weight-training is usually high reps instead of any heavy work."

Achievements/Awards: "As far as awards and achievements, like the other players on the list, I have had my success in civilian and LE tournaments to be named MVP and All-Tournament at every level, but I'm most proud of the success my teams have had and I like to think I bring a winning attitude to them and make the players around me better."



Jerry Harkins

Team: New York Metro
 Position: LC
 Agency: Port Washington Police Department (New York), previously NYPD for ten years
 Softball experience: Played with several B/C teams, currently playing with Giant Steel out of Long Island, New York and New York Metro

Key to his success: Always giving 100% and being surrounded by great teammates.

Training Routine: Cardio work, strength training and core exercises.

Awards/Achievements: 2006 Policesoftball.com All-National Team, 2006 East All-Star Team, 2005-2006 ASA Nationals, Several All-Tourney and MVP Awards
Comments from Jerry: "It is an honor to be recognized in Softball Magazine as one of the top outfielders in police softball. There are a lot of great players on this circuit, to be chosen for this is something special to me and to my family. My five girls (yikes) are real excited about this."

