

# COP CORNER

With Jeff Blair



Ask any major league baseball player and they will tell you there is a certain mystique when playing against the New York Yankees. The

## Team Profile New York Police Department Blues



NYPD Blue. NYPD Blue was an Emmy Award-winning television police drama set in New York City. It was created by Steven Bochco and David Milch and inspired by Milch's relationship with a former member of the NYPD, Bill Clark (who eventually became one of the show's producers). Bill is the former partner of NYPD Blues softball team founder Rick Tirelli. Rick and Bill were detectives together before Bill relocated to Hollywood for fame and fortune in showbiz. While Bill was in Tinsel Town ducking the paparazzi, Rick was working high profile investigations such as the "College Point Massacre", the "Zodiac Killings" and the murder of Police Officer George Shieu. Although Bill had become a successful producer he did not forget his

Enforcement tournament. Of the original team only a handful of players remain active and they include veterans Dan Spinelli, Andy Kunz, James Roucchio and Jimmy Raab. Although the names and faces have come and gone the team results have remained consistent. The Blues have won the National Championships in Dayton, Ohio in 2002 and 2004 and finished in second place in that event in 1998, 1999, 2001, 2005 and 2006. They have also notched big tournament wins in venues in Tennessee, New Hampshire and Connecticut.

Tirelli credits his players as the key to the team's success. In addition to the founding veterans his current roster also includes Eddie Bartnick, Brad Beamer, John Catuosco, Frank Ciofrone, Sean Conway, Jose Diaz,



## New York Police Department Blues

Yankees are a storied franchise, steeped in tradition and more decorated than a parade float. Opposing teams appear to be mentally defeated before the first pitch is ever thrown. If you ask any cop softball player they will probably tell you that same mystique is felt when facing the NYPD Blues police softball team. Teams playing against the Blues know that to defeat them you have to elevate your game and remain focused for a full seven innings, because they will never give up.

Just as there is an interesting story behind the Yankees there is also an interesting story behind the Blues. The Blues are named after the hit television show

old pal Rick. Bill hired Rick to be a special consultant for the show and Rick would provide story lines based on actual investigations. Essentially, Rick was getting paid to tell war stories...now that is my kind of gig!

Rick currently wears many hats: high profile detective, secretary in the police union, aspiring Hollywood consultant and coach of the NYPD Blues softball team. Rick formed the Blues in 1998 and made an immediate impact on the circuit by winning the annual Houston, Texas Law



Gary Giersbach, Brian Hilt, Jason Iorio, Kevin Medina, Nat Tauber, Gary Villecres, and Kevin Wahlig. Team Captain Dan Spinelli provides the on-field inspiration as Tirelli referred to him as, "The most intense competitor in the game." Dan's personality is infectious and



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MARKETING MANAGER, DEMARINI BATS

bleeds over into his teammates. You will rarely see a Blues player sitting down in the dugout. Typically they will all be standing on the fence shouting words of encouragement to their teammates. Occasionally they might shout a word of "displeasure" to the umpire, but these guys work in areas like the Bronx, Queens and Harlem so they get a little more verbal leeway than other teams. Part of the mystique I told you about. In addition to not seeing a Blues player sitting on the bench in the dugout, you won't see any of them lollygagging on the base paths either. These guys go full speed on every play all game. Remember what I told you earlier...they never give up!

**2007 Ranking  
Tournament Results**

- DEA Kickoff Chino Hills, Ca.
  1. SoCal Alliance/Easton
  2. LAPD Blue/Easton
  - 3t. DEA Combo/Easton
- Bacon Ball Las Vegas, Nv.
  1. SoCal Alliance/Easton
  2. Michigan Lawmen
  3. Miami Metro Red
- Rick Hall Memorial Jacksonville, Fl.
  1. Jacksonville PSC
  2. Ohio Lawmen
  3. New York Metro
- PSPOA Palm Springs, Ca.
  1. SoCal Alliance/Easton
  2. Riverside Sheriff Red
  - 3t. CDC Hardcore
- 3t. San Diego Excessive Force
- Virginia Beach Annual Virginia Beach, Va.
  1. Delaware Association of Police/DAP
  2. New Jersey G-Boys
  3. Dirty Jersey Boyz
- Concord Invitational Manteca, Ca.
  1. CDC Hardcore
  2. SoCal Alliance/Easton
  3. CHP Choir Boys

The New York Police Department employs over 30,000 sworn police officers so with a work force larger than the entire population of most cities there is plenty of talent to choose from. The Blues have a tradition of only recruiting NYPD officers to play on the team unlike their regional rivals who pool talent from the entire New York area. Even though there is plenty of competition

in the Northeast with teams such as the New York Metro, NYPD Shields, New Jersey G-Boys and others, the Blues still view the Jacksonville team as their biggest on-field rivals. The stage for the showdown between these heavyweights has typically been at the Dayton Nationals where both teams have flip flopped between champion and runner-up. This year with some added young talent, Tirelli eyes knocking off defending champs, Jacksonville Police Softball Club in Ohio and rolling that positive momentum into Palm Springs, California in October to win the Policesoftball.Com World Series.

Tirelli credits the World Series as the flash-point for putting law enforcement softball on the map. Tirelli feels he has the right personnel to accomplish his lofty goals. If things go as planned the team that wins the World Series this year will be from New York...and we aren't talking about the Yankees, we are talking about the Blues!

**SPONSORSHIP IS A PARTNERSHIP**

Every serious slow-pitch player knows the game can be expensive. With entry fees and travel expenses, tournaments aren't cheap. Players have to dish out money to eat and sleep away from home. And, of course, uniforms and equipment can run a team into the tens of thousands.

So, it can be frustrating to see other teams strut onto the field with brand new gear. You may get a bit envious to see the name of a generous sponsor printed in bold letters across their shirts. That's when you decide that by next season you'll be sponsored. But, before you knock on doors or pick up the phone, there are some important points to keep in mind about how to woo prospective sponsors.

It all starts with the correct mindset. Sponsorship is not a handout. It's a partnership. That means you should be helping the sponsor generate business as much as the sponsor is helping you pay to play softball. Be organized, think ahead, and get creative. For example, in exchange for a florist's sponsorship, one team vowed to only buy their wives flowers from that shop on every holiday.

Athletes must remember that companies are looking for good ambassadors. Sponsors will do their homework by asking league directors and sports complex managers about the character of a team or player. If you have players who cuss out the umps, get drunk and rowdy, or don't pay their entry fee on time, you can forget it. You are a walking advertisement for the company printed on your shirt, so you must conduct yourself accordingly—even off the field.

The sad truth is that too many players take advantage of the company footing the bill for those top-notch bats, bags, and gloves. Some players have even been caught selling their donated

gear on the internet, or giving it away to unapproved players. Others have been known to intentionally break their gear at the end of the season, thinking they can get something new. Think again! This is a guaranteed way to ruin all sponsorship opportunities forever.

Here are some suggestions to get you started:

- **Do your homework.** Never approach a business without knowing what it's about. Learn the company's history, products, and objectives before introducing yourself.
- **Send your team's best spokesperson.** Poor speaking and writing skills can ruin a relationship before it begins. Make sure the best communicator is the one making contact with a business.
- **Think small.** Don't ask for the moon. Consider not asking for money at all. Simply establishing a relationship this year could earn you a sponsorship next year. Ask about a team purchase program to direct business toward a local retailer. You can earn product points for your team, and build the sponsor's trust and respect.
- **Follow through.** Be accountable for your end of the deal. If you promise to do something for your sponsor—do it! You must continue to be the stand-up players your sponsors agreed to support. Once you get a contribution, your job is not done. You must make a clear effort to maintain the relationship even after you finally have that sweet gear.

Until next time, don't be afraid to take a walk, and if you do swing, always swing for the fence.

Jerry Garnett

**DEMARINI MEANS SLOWPITCH™**

Longtime friend and teammate of the late Ray DeMarini, Jerry Garnett has worked for DeMarini Sports since 1987. Garnett has played slowpitch at the major division and continues to play in competitive adult leagues in Portland, Oregon.