

# COP CORNER

With Jeff Blair



## Tournament Results



Since my last article there have been several prestigious tournaments that have been played so I wanted to get everyone caught up on what has been going on in the law enforcement softball circuit.

The 36th Annual Dayton, Ohio tournament was played on July 13th through the 15th, 2007. The number of teams attending was at twenty-four this year, down from as many as 76

in previous years. Many attribute this to the combining of teams in order to be more competitive. Although the overall number of teams might be dwindling, by all accounts the talent level is rising. There were no teams from California competing this year as several had pre-committed to playing in the Sterling Heights, Michigan tournament the following month.

Here is how the action went down in the double elimination contest. The NY Metro defeated their cross-town rivals the NYPD Shields. It was one of the most anticipated match ups as both fans and players were touched by the recent series of tragedies experienced by the Shields squad. The Shields dedicated the tourney to their veteran player Ari Figueroa who days earlier had passed away as a result of an injury occurred while boating. Ari's jersey was hung in the dugout for all to see and remember. Ari wasn't the only person in their thoughts. Shields All-Star James Price had recently been diagnosed with double kidney failure. Many in attendance were pulling for the Shields to win this year, but softball is still softball and they could not overcome a focused and talented NY Metro team. Jacksonville PSC bested Columbus, the Ohio Lawmen defeated the Buckeye Lawmen, Maryland took down the Kentucky Bluegrass Lawmen, Minnesota pounded Team Texas, Central Ohio defeated Illinois Police Association, and the NYPD Blues squared the St. Louis Top Guns. In another heated rivalry, the Wayne-Oakland squad defeated their intra-state rivals the Michigan Lawmen. The Michigan Lawmen team disbanded immediately after this tournament and players were shuffled to a variety of teams in the Michigan/Ohio region.

Saturday afternoon saw some classic match ups in the winners' bracket. The momentum was surging for NY Metro as they sent the defending champs, Jacksonville PSC into the losers' bracket. Ohio Lawmen were the talk of the tourney as they scored an impressive win over the Maryland State Police. Minnesota looked possessed as they defeated Wayne-Oakland. The Central Ohio Lawmen notched a nice upset win over the NYPD Blues.

Saturday evening had some great loser bracket match-ups. The most intense were definitely the NYPD Shields vs. NYPD Blues. It was a seesaw affair but when the dust cleared the re-vamped Shields stood victorious. It was the first time in many years, maybe ever, that the Blues did not see Sunday action. The vastly improved Buckeye Lawmen eliminated Wayne-Oakland. Maryland State Police eliminated Team Texas while Jacksonville PSC sent the St. Louis Top Guns home. The next round of the losers' bracket ended the Shields quest at the hands of the Buckeye Lawmen and Jacksonville PSC eliminated the Maryland State Police.

The final games on Saturday evening featured the winners' bracket. Minnesota posted a great win over Central Ohio while the red hot NY Metro sent the Ohio Lawmen into the losers' bracket. Eventually there were six teams left alive to see Sunday.

Sunday morning opened up with a heavily favored Ohio Lawmen team matching up against the "other" team from Ohio, the Buckeye Lawmen. There is a reason the game is played on the field and not on paper and the Buckeyes proved why by eliminating Ohio. Another Ohio team, Central Ohio was eliminated at the hands of Jacksonville PSC. The next match-up was the

last two unbeaten teams, Minnesota vs. NY Metro. Minnesota's hit parade continued and they sent NY Metro into the losers' bracket. Minnesota was clearly the hottest team between the lines on Sunday. The question is who would battle NY Metro for a shot at Minnesota in the dance? In the biggest upset of the tournament the Buckeyes wore Cinderella's glass slipper and ended the reign of Jacksonville PSC.

The final losers' bracket game saw the underdog Buckeye Lawmen match up against the cagey veterans NY Metro. The Buckeyes were playing on emotion, but emotion was not enough to carry them to victory over the Metro who know what it is like to be in big games. The rematch in the championship game was set - NY Metro vs. Minnesota.

Then the skies opened up and flooded the fields so the dance was delayed several hours. When the sun broke through, the teams were back at it. Minnesota had been an absolute steamroller all weekend and they were not to be denied on this day. They claimed victory and with that came their third Dayton Championship. The Minnesota Lawmen can now add 2007 to their championship banner to go along with their 1999 and 2000 titles. Other teams had nothing but praise for Minnesota and it was clear it was a well-deserved victory. The results were 1. Minnesota Lawmen; 2. NY Metro; 3. Buckeye Lawmen; 4. Jacksonville PSC; 5. Ohio Lawmen; 5. Central Ohio.

The weekend of August 10th through the 12th, 2007 was special for the law enforcement softball circuit because the USSSA National Wouters/Sawyers Memorial tournament was held in Sterling Heights, Michigan. What made the event unique was there were four teams from California that made the trip for the first time and the competition was at an all time high. There were twenty-three participating teams and fifteen of them were ranked in the Top 20 in their respected regions.

On Friday afternoon, teams gathered at Liberty Park which is a huge softball complex featuring eleven full-size fields. Teams were asked to line the field for the opening ceremony and the field was packed with players decked out in their softball uniforms. Officer Chris Wouters was posthumously inducted into the Policesoftball.Com Hall of Fame. Afterward a helicopter landed on the field and dropped off Faith Sawyers, the mother of Officer Mark Sawyers who was also killed in the line of duty a few years ago. Family members of Wouters and Sawyers gathered around home plate while the names of other officers killed in the line of duty were read off in roll-call fashion. The bagpipes bellowed out Amazing Grace and a color guard twenty-one gun salute followed. The opening ceremony was very emotional and clearly touched those in attendance.

There was a home run derby that was played out, head to head, among those who qualified earlier in the day. In the end five hitters remained standing for a final cluster bomb round. The favored hitter was a mountain of a man, Randy Thiverage of the Buckeye Lawmen. In the qualifying rounds Randy's swing was dialed in and he was consistently launching balls over 400'. Mark

Jackson from CDC Hard-Cor, Mark Perez from Concord Combo and Scott Czopek from Wayne-Oakland also looked primed but Ryan Coe from SoCal Alliance eventually won the event by hitting three home runs with five swings.

The real action began Saturday morning during the double elimination playoffs. As the day progressed some very good teams were sent into the losers' bracket early. By evening there were only four undefeated teams remaining, California-Quake, SoCal Alliance, Jacksonville PSC and the South Florida Lawmen. In the battle of West Coasters the SoCal Alliance defeated the California-Quake. In the East Coast match up Jacksonville bested South Florida. Six teams were left standing come Sunday morning. The other two remaining teams were the St. Louis Top Guns and CDC Hard-Cor.

On Sunday morning in the losers' bracket, St. Louis advanced by posting an impressive win over a very strong South Florida squad. CDC Hard-Cor defeated their West Coast counterparts the California Quake. In the winners' bracket Jacksonville PSC downed the SoCal Alliance and handed the Alliance their first loss. The Alliance wanted another shot at Jacksonville PSC in the championship game but they would first have to get past CDC Hard-Cor who had moments earlier eliminated St. Louis. The Alliance and Hard-Cor traded leads a few times but in the end the Alliance was able to hold on and advance.

The Alliance would have to double-dip Jacksonville PSC but on this day Jacksonville was too strong. They posted a convincing win over the Alliance and Alliance Coach Del Pickney had this to say about Jacksonville, "They were the best team on the field today no doubt. It would have taken a superhuman effort to defeat them and even that might not have been enough. The win was well deserved."

The results were: 1. Jacksonville PSC; 2. SoCal Alliance/Easton; 3. CDC Hard-Cor; 4. St. Louis Top Guns; 5t. California Quake; 5t. South Florida Lawmen.



**Minnesota Lawmen**



**Jacksonville PSC**

**Current National Rankings/Point:**

West: 1. SoCal Alliance/Easton 43; 2. CDC Hard-Cor 33; 3. California Quake 27; 4t. Concord Police Softball 22; 4t. DEA Combo/Easton 22; 4t. Sierra Cartel 22; 7. Riverside Sheriff Red 21; 8. CHP Choir Boys 15; 9t. Central Valley Kings 11; 9t. LAPD Blue/Easton 11

East: 1. Jacksonville PSC 30; 2. Minnesota Lawmen 20; 3. New York Metro 19; 4. Buckeye Lawmen 16; 5t. Michigan Lawmen 14; 5t. Ohio Lawmen 14; 7t. Wayne-Oakland 11; 7t. Bluegrass Lawmen 11; 9t. NYPD Shields 10; 9t. St. Louis Top Guns 10; 9t. Maryland State Police 10; 9t. Delaware Assn. of Police 10.

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