

cop corner

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Wouters/Sawyers Memorial Coverage



Liberty Park in Sterling Heights, Michigan was once again the venue for the annual Wouters/Sawyers Memorial softball tournament. This year, tournament directors Kevin Reese and Andy Wurm were able to sweeten the bounty by securing World Tournament status through USSSA. Although this tournament is rich in tradition, the upgraded status would stand to be an impressive entry on the dossier for whatever team managed to win. Kevin Reese also announced that it would be his final year directing the event and Andy Wurm and Andy Pawlik would assume the reigns beginning next year.

My assignment for the weekend was two-fold. First, I was playing for my team, the SoCal Alliance. Although we pieced together an impressive season in 2007, we were bridesmaids to the powerful Jacksonville PSC at this event last year. Needless to say the guys on the squad really wanted to claim the title this time around. Secondly, I was serving as a traveling reporter for Softball Magazine. I knew I would be covering this tournament in this Cop Corner article so I had to pay close attention to all the happenings over the weekend.

When I suited up and arrived at the park on Friday evening I quickly realized my two-fold assignment was actually subordinate to a much greater cause the brotherhood of law enforcement. I was greeted by players from all over the country who I have come to know and befriend over the past few years. We stood shoulder to shoulder on the chalked foul lines to pay tribute to Warren Police Officer Christopher Wouters and Sterling Heights Police Officer Mark Sawyers who had been killed in the line of duty. Although the event was held in their names, we also recognized every law enforcement officer who had been killed in the line of duty during the past year. Sadly, the list was long. A twenty-one gun salute raised goose bumps to those in attendance and the bagpipes bellowing Amazing Grace caused eyes to well. Indeed, this weekend was more than just about softball. It was also a celebration of the law enforcement brotherhood and the game of softball was merely our arena.

Several well deserving players got inducted into the Policesoftware.com Hall of Fame including: Carl Gaskins (Concord), John "Soup" Anderson (Michigan Lawmen), Scott Affholter (Michigan Lawmen), Don Fradette (Wayne-Oakland) and Dan Spinelli (NYPD Blue's). I could go on and on about examples of the brotherhood but I recognize I am writing for a softball magazine and my space is limited so here is how it all went down between the lines.

All teams played two round robin games for double-elimination playoff seeding. The playoffs opened with the Steel City Enforcers inking a 20-9 win over the Greene County Ohio squad. Wayne-Oakland nipped the St. Louis Lawmen, 8-7. Minnesota posted a 24-10 victory over the Motor City Blues. Jacksonville PSC rolled



Concord 34-6. The Bluegrass Lawmen upset hometown favorites the Michigan Lawmen 15-13. NYPD Blues posted an impressive 23-6 mark over Team Five-O (Georgia). The South Florida Lawmen defense held the Ohio Lawmen to 4 runs in a low scoring 8-4 win. The SoCal Alliance matched up against the Buckeye Lawmen for the first time since the two teams faced off in the Policesoftware.Com World Series last October. The Alliance came out on top 26-11 in a game that was very close into the fifth inning.

In the winners' bracket, Wayne-Oakland won another low scoring affair by besting the Steel City Enforcers 7-4. In a true heavyweight match-up Jacksonville PSC prevailed over the Minnesota Lawmen 18-11. NYPD Blues steamrolled the Bluegrass Lawmen 21-6. SoCal Alliance battled South Florida Lawmen to a 22-12 victory.

The losers' bracket witnessed some surprising early exits by teams expected to go deep in this tournament. The Michigan Lawmen suffered an upset at the hands of Team Five-O and were eliminated. In the battle of the Buckeye State, the Buckeye Lawmen eliminated the 2005 World Series Champions the Ohio Lawmen, 11-4. Afterward, several of the Ohio Lawmen players commented that this was their most disappointing performance in team history and they vowed to show up for the World Series re-focused and dialed in. Concord eliminated the hometown Motor City Blues 25-7 and the St. Louis Lawmen sent Greene County



packing 22-8.

As the day progressed, so did the number of teams being eliminated. The St. Louis Lawmen fell to South Florida Lawmen 20-18. Bluegrass off'd Concord 23-13 and the Minnesota Lawmen nipped Team Five-O, 10-7. The Buckeye Lawmen bested the Steel City Enforcers, 15-12.

By late Saturday afternoon there were still four unbeaten teams in the winners' bracket. In what many would consider a huge upset, the scrappy Wayne-Oakland squad rallied in the seventh inning to defeat the defending champs, Jacksonville PSC 26-25. The SoCal Alliance continued their winning ways by defeating the NYPD Blues 16-7. On Sunday morning in the undefeated game, the SoCal Alliance posted an impressive 22-7 win against the Wayne-Oakland juggernaut. SoCal would now wait for the losers' bracket to be played out.

In the losers' bracket, the Bluegrass Lawmen eliminated the South Florida Lawmen 14-13, while Minnesota took down the Buckeye Lawmen, 14-11. Jacksonville PSC was intent on making it back to "the dance" and they later eliminated Bluegrass 21-6. Minnesota defeated NYPD Blues in a slugfest 25-17. Jacksonville PSC and Minnesota faced off in one of the most see-saw battles of the tournament. Minnesota had a chance to slam the door in the bottom of the seventh and the winning run on second base with only one out but the Jacksonville PSC defense had other plans and held on to force extra innings. In the eighth inning, Jacksonville PSC plated too many runs for Minnesota to answer which left Minnesota in fourth place. Jacksonville PSC squared off against Wayne-Oakland in a heavily anticipated rematch and this game lived up to the hype. It went a full seven innings and once again. Wayne-



Oakland pulled a rabbit out of the cap to advance with a 20-19 win.

The championship game pitted the local favorites Wayne-Oakland against the SoCal Alliance. Wayne-Oakland would need to double-dip the SoCal crew but that was not beyond the realm of possibility since double dipping has already happened at other events a few times this year on the cop circuit. SoCal knew they had their hands full with the fiery Wayne-Oakland squad, but the odds favored SoCal which was boasting a 35-3 record on the year. SoCal opened with a strong first inning but Wayne-Oakland answered. It appeared the game was going to be a high scoring affair but then the bats fell quiet. Both teams played solid defense and denied the other of big numbers inning after inning.

When the dust settled the balanced attack of the SoCal Alliance overcame the gutsy efforts of Wayne-Oakland and SoCal claimed the championship with a 16-9 victory.

The team celebrated by dousing coach Del Pickney with a bucket of ice water. Pickney said, "Tournament directors Kevin Reese and Andy Wurm did another outstanding job coordinating a great weekend. I saw some very talented teams play throughout the weekend and on any given day there were at least a dozen of them who could have won this. Fortunately my guys stepped up against some very tough competition. Big thanks to our sponsor Zada Enterprises for affording us this opportunity and Easton for supplying our equipment."

Overall it was a great weekend for the cop brotherhood and for cop softball in general as teams gobbled up points for ranking purposes before the year-end gala, the Policesoftball.com World Series in Palm Springs, California.

The 2008 season is racing by at a breakneck pace and the only remaining ranking tournaments before the World Series are Battle of the Badges in Cincinnati, Bacon Ball Long Island, and the Desert Classic in California. The team who ends up atop the points heap will win a set of Boombah uniforms so they will look sharp to start the '09 season.

Final Results: 1. SoCal Alliance; 2. Wayne-Oakland; 3. Jacksonville PSC; 4. Minnesota Lawmen; 5t. NYPD Blues; 5t. Bluegrass Lawmen; 7t. Buckeye Lawmen; 7t. South Florida Lawmen.

Current Top 10 Point Leaders:

East: 1t. Jacksonville PSC - 49; 1t. New York Metro - 49; 3. Maryland State Police - 46; 4t. NYPD Blues - 36; 4t. Ohio Lawmen - 36; 6. Michigan Lawmen - 34; 7. Wayne-Oakland - 33; 8. Minnesota Lawmen - 26; 9t. Buckeye Lawmen - 24; 9t. New Jersey Shamrock Enforcers - 24; 9t. South Florida Lawmen - 24.

West: 1t. California Quake - 56; 1t. SoCal Alliance - 56; 3. A1 Towing/HardCor - 48; 4. Sacramento Police Softball - 38; 5. West Coast Aftershock - 37; 6. Concord Combo - 35; 7. State Razed - 33; 8. LAPD Blue - 30; 9. DEA Combo - 29; 10. Sacramento Razorbacks - 26.



SoCal Alliance



Wayne-Oakland