

COP CORNER

by Jeff Blair • Sponsored by Mizuno
TPS Lawmen

One reason I enjoy playing cop softball is the opportunity to interact with fellow police officers from all around the nation. It doesn't matter where we work geographically because we automatically have at least two things in common. First, we like playing softball and second we share the same occupation. Don't get me wrong, it's not like we have some type of secret fraternity where we conspire to stick it to the taxpayers. I'm sure some defense attorneys and special interest groups would like to convince you otherwise, but the reality is we rarely have the occasion to interface. Cop tournament softball brings us together and affords us that opportunity. If you were to visit the clubhouse at one of the Big League Dreams' venues in California during a police/fire tournament, you'll see a "who's who" of public safety team names displayed across the jerseys of the competitors. You won't hear many guys talking about the big arrest they just made or the high-speed chase they were in the previous night. Instead, you'll find them talking about things like the durability of a certain bat or how they have been working on hitting to the opposite field. Just regular old softball stuff.

Recently, I was in that very situation and made a mental note of all the teams present...Corcoran, California, Prison Hardcore, L.A.P.D. Blue, U.S. Border Patrol Heat, Northwest (Seattle, Washington) Lawmen, Minnesota Lawmen, N.Y.P.D. Metro and the list went on and on. Certain teams draw a lot of attention. It seems everyone checks the scoreboard to find out how some of the powerhouse teams fared. If there happens to be an upset of David and Goliath proportions, word spreads like wildfire. Although the police softball circuit does not formally classify teams, there is an informal hierarchy that is understood. The TPS Lawmen based out of Louisville, Kentucky, are the cop circuit equivalent of a "super major" team. They are one of those teams that you look for on the scoreboard to see how they fared. Seeing them register a forty run game isn't uncommon. Seeing them run-rule a team after five innings isn't either. These guys are a legitimate powerhouse and they have the titles and championships to back it up.

When I first spoke to Louisville Metro Police Department Detective John Hackel, I was surprised how much we had in common. To begin with, we are both cops and we also really like

playing softball. (Hey, wait a minute I am beginning to see a theme here.) John is an informal leader on the TPS Lawmen squad but he is quick to identify Lieutenant Kelly Jones as the team manager and field general. When I asked Hackel to tell me about his team, he rightfully boasted about their sponsorship which is probably the most lucrative of any team on the cop circuit. They receive a full sponsorship from Louisville Slugger which includes two bats, one ball glove, one bat bag, uniform shirts and a handful of other goodies for every player at the beginning of every year. This might explain why Hackel was plugging the Louisville Slugger Catalyst as being the top bat on the market right now. My team, the SoCal Alliance, recently picked up a sponsorship by Mizuno so I felt compelled to educate him about the merits of the Mizuno Blur high performance softball bat, but that's a different story.

Jones formed the team in 1994 under



Kentucky. After the merger, the TPS team began racking up championships like no other. If you don't believe me, check out this list: 1995 ASA Law Enforcement National Champions, 1998 USSSA Law Enforcement World Champions, 2001 USSSA Law Enforcement World Champions, and the 2003 USSSA Law Enforcement World Champions. The TPS Lawmen went three straight seasons without a single loss in any tournament. If you check their team

website at <http://groups.msn.com/TPSLawmen>, you'll find a laundry list of titles and accomplishments.

The team currently boasts players from several states including Kentucky, Indiana, Georgia, Ohio, Florida, New Jersey, and Alabama. In addition to Hackel and Jones, their roster is deep and includes John "Guido" Antinoro, Derwin Brewer, Mike Coverson, Duke Donaldson, Lee Edwards, Robert Ford, Pat Green, Shawn Holtzclaw, Michael Ladd, Elmer Mason, Bobby McGhee, Chris Owens, Bill Unseld, Kelvin Watkins, Antonio Wise and Arthez Woodruff. Unfortunately, being the best comes at a price. The TPS team can no longer compete in the L.E.S.A circuit due to player eligibility

because new rules prohibit combining players from different states. Once again, the TPS boys are undeterred as they are now eyeing some tournaments on the West Coast and looking into playing in USSSA or NSA open softball organizations at the A/B level.

I asked Hackel to identify the team's strengths and he didn't hesitate to cite power hitting and defensive speed in the outfield which allows the team to play a 5-man infield. Hackel also cited intangibles as playing a role in their success. In addition to the best sponsorship in the cop softball circuit, Hackel feels he has the best fan support. George Lozar is a

retired Louisville Police Officer and he has followed the team since its inception. Retired Louisville Police Officer Willie Shelton also followed the team since its inception and even though he recently passed away, Willie's spirit still walks with the team. Hackel and Jones are looking forward to securing a few more titles in 2005 and that could spell trouble for a lot of other teams on the cop circuit. Based on their current streak I wouldn't bet against them.

This article is dedicated to the memory of Louisville Police Officer Willie Shelton E.O.W. 2003.



TPS Lawmen

the name Louisville Police Officer Association Softball. Through the years, the team would use the names Louisville Lawmen, Kentucky Lawmen and Louisville Slugger Lawmen before settling on the tag TPS Lawmen. In their infancy, they tried to compete in the L.E.S.A circuit but they didn't do too well against large agencies such as N.Y.P.D. or combo teams like the South Florida Lawmen. They didn't let the losses deter them and they continued to improve. It all came together in 1995 when Jones met up with Atlanta, Georgia Police Officer Ken Cullifer and the two decided to join forces. Cullifer brought his best players from the Georgia squad and Jones blended them with his boys from

DEA Combo 2005
Kickoff Tournament
Results
1. SoCal
Alliance/Mizuno
2. OCSD Hitmen
3t. NorCal Quake
3t. Corcoran Prison
Hardcore