

COP CORNER

by Jeff Blair • Sponsored by Mizuno



"The Shot Callers"

I have been writing the Cop Corner for over three years now and I have profiled many powerhouse teams from around the nation and giving plenty of ink to the hotshot players. This month is different. I decided to give some press to the real M.V.P.'s, and those are the guys behind the scenes...the true leaders of our game. Chances are, if it weren't for your team's manager/coach, there would not be a team. Most law enforcement agencies are modeled after a semi-militaristic chain-of-command where there is a defined rank structure such as Captain, Lieutenant, Sergeant, Officer, etc. When it comes to cop softball, that all goes out the window. The guy calling the shots is the team coach and regardless of rank, he is the leader. He is the glue that keeps the team together. He handles the checkbook, reserves the hotel rooms, books the rental cars, secures sponsors, etc. and that is just the stuff he does away from the field. He does most of the work but gets very little of the glory. As a matter of fact, he is the target of most of the anger and criticism, and that is just from his own players! There are so many talented coaches on the cop circuit that I couldn't profile them all, but here are a few guys who exemplify what being a leader is all about. This month the Cop Corner salutes all the coaches out there. Here is a tribute to you, the field

general...wait this is starting to sound like one of those Budweiser Real Men of Genius Commercials...ah heck, forget it, just enjoy your moment of glory!

CHRIS MOORE coaches the Tri-County Lawmen team from Ohio. He is a Deputy for the Green's County Sheriff's Office and has been running the team since its inception 4 years ago. He carries 18+ guys on his roster which is necessary in cop softball due to the very nature of shift work. Chris admits there are many challenges to coaching but the biggest is keeping everyone happy with playing time and promoting the team concept. Although he is considered to be one of the top coaches in the game, he isn't perfect. He reflected back on his biggest coaching blunder as the time he was trying to save money by putting the team up in a cheap hotel on the seedy side of town. Upon arrival, the team walked into a room that had just been the scene of a murder. The only thing missing was the chalk outline of the body. Chris replied, "Crime scene cleaners did not do a very good job." I asked Chris what his source of inspiration was and he said, "As with most, if not all, law enforcement teams we play in many non-LE type tournaments. At the non-LE tournaments, it's just a typical day at the ball park. You arrive, go to the field, warm up and compete. Something special is in the air when a police tournament starts up. In Sterling Heights, for example, the names of all fallen officers in the last year are read with their end of watch (deceased) dates called out. An officer in class-A dress uniform plays Amazing Grace on the bag pipes. An honor guard gives a 21 gun salute. The families of Sgt. Chris Wouters and Officer Mark Sawyers gather at the mound to throw out the first pitch. As the lump in your



throat grows, you know why we are all there. To enjoy a brotherhood that cannot be explained but only felt."

STEVE MARGETTS is a cop softball coaching legend on the West Coast. I have known him only through softball but he looks like a cop. Steve is a huge man and carries a command presence that many old school coppers did back in the day.

Steve and his kind could take

control of the most chaotic situations merely by stepping out of the squad car. Steve worked 36 years for the San Diego Police Department before retiring, but he is still contributing to the law enforcement community by coaching the San Diego Gray softball team. Dealing with cops on the softball field can be a challenge (some of us have big egos...at least that is what I hear). Steve has to figure out a way to balance the needs of the team with the wants of the players. He has to put his own ego aside, admit when he makes a mistake and move on. I asked Steve what he thought was more important; talent or chemistry. He answered, "Chemistry over the long run, but you still need to have some good players if you want to win. Winning and/or playing well develops good chemistry." Whatever the ingredients are, Steve has figured out the recipe for success because the majority of his team has played together for 20 years and they keep stacking up championships.

JOHN BARRERA is in a unique situation. To begin with his team, Oregon Disturbance is comprised exclusively of corrections officers (prison guards etc.). John is a Transportation Officer for the Oregon Department of Corrections. There are very few corrections teams that are regulars in the cop softball circuit and even fewer hail from the great Pacific North-West. Since there aren't many law enforcement tournaments in Oregon, John has to load up and travel south to California or north to Washington if he wants to play cop ball. The travel makes it difficult for him to get his squad on the field often but he is undeterred. He took a page from the script of the movie "The Longest Yard" and he scrimmages his team against the inmates! John said it keeps his team sharp because the middle is always wide open and the slides into second base always come in spikes high. John says he plays fair though and allows the inmates to use the same high end composite bats that his team uses...except they have to return them after the game. John's proudest coaching moment did not come from coaching adults but rather from taking a losing little league team over mid-season and turning them into champions. John's key to success is leading by example and doing his best to insure there is a positive atmosphere in the dugout.

Gentlemen, in the name of Tommy Lasorda I hereby declare October 26th to be National Coaches Day. Now if somehow we could convince the government to recognize it, we could all have the day off and complain about how we don't get enough playing time or how you imbeciles screwed up the batting order again.

