



COP CORNER

with Jeff Blair

Policesoftball.com/ Easton Summer Classic

The Policesoftball.com/Easton Summer Classic was played on July 31st through August 1st at the Big League Dreams venue in Mira Loma, California. The Inland Empire area of Southern California is usually very hot this time of the year, but as luck would have it, the conditions were fairly mild. This facility boasts seven softball fields with a variety of dimensions ranging from the monster Pawtucket field (330-340-330) to the cozy Vero Beach (265-270-265). This tournament was one of two California World Series qualifiers which meant team rosters were strictly adhered to. Teams had to win or lose with their roster players and not ringers brought specifically to win a berth. This was a provided bat tournament courtesy of Easton Sports and Real Skilz president Armando Acosta. Once again, the provided bats meant there would be no allegations of shenanigans and everyone had the proverbial level playing field.

Friday night was the traditional player's party but instead of going to a local eatery, the party was held at Goodwin Field at Cal-State Fullerton. The Orange County Flyers minor league baseball team was hosting law enforcement appreciation night and all law enforcement employees and family got in for free.

Immediately following the game a select group of participants were allowed onto the baseball field for a home run derby. The participants were: Brandon St. Aubin - SoCal Lockdown, Eric Pennekamp - Team Kentucky-Ohio, George Reyes - SoCal Alliance, John Sunia - DEA Combo, Chad Howard - DEA Combo, Tim O'Leary - San Diego Excessive Force, Mitch Brouillette - SoCal Alliance, Danny Ruiz - SouthWest Elite and Chad Johnson - HardCor. The field dimensions were intimidating as we all know it is difficult to hit a softball out of a baseball field that is listed as 385' in the power alleys and 400' to center. The single most impressive shot this year was courtesy of Danny Ruiz (see past Cop Corner Young Gunz II article) who cleared the left center scoreboard by 25' and landed somewhere in the middle of the parking lot. In the end, it was the veteran John Sunia who rose to the occasion. His compact left-handed power stroke got dialed in and he launched bomb after bomb over the right field wall and ended the night with 6 homeruns. John was the overall winner of the event, while the ever consistent George Reyes finished a solid second place just behind Sunia.

The actual tournament began on Saturday morning and it featured 21 teams with players from California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Ohio and Kentucky. Teams played two round robin games for seeding purposes and then all teams advanced to the double elimination playoffs. The marquee round robin game featured a familiar East vs West rivalry. TKO was the invading army trying to single handedly claim East dominance while the NorCal based Concord Combo was tasked with protecting their home turf in California. The game was everything it was hyped to be and there were several highlights including a game momentum



Tommy Hayes



Eric Pennekamp

changing bang-bang play at the plate involving a head first slide by TKO's Eric Pennekamp ahead of the throw. But, the umpire ruled Pennekamp had missed the plate and it ended the inning. The other highlight was a TKO decision to intentionally walk the bases loaded in order to face slugger Chris Oliver (see Cop Corner Young Gunz I article). Oliver turned to the announcer and said, "This is the first time a team has intentionally walked someone to face me." With pride on the line, Oliver delivered a clutch grand slam to put Concord ahead by 4 and deny TKO another chance to bat. The final score was Concord 20, TKO 15. That win inked Concord as the bracket winner and dropped TKO down to the #9 overall seed for the playoffs.

Other bracket winners included LAPD Blue 2-0, Sin City 2-0, SoCal Alliance 2-0, DEA Combo 2-0, Cal-Quake 2-0, and

in a shocker the SoCal Dawgz defeated the defending World Champs HardCor to win the bracket.

After bracket play there was a provided bat HR derby that featured 36 of the game's best power hitters. When the dust settled it was a relative underdog who claimed the title this year. SoCal Alliance third baseman Tommy Hayes out-slugged guys twice his size to claim the crown. He would also later go on to win the tournament gold glove award.

Here is a blow by blow breakdown of the playoffs:

Winners' Bracket: Nitro2Go def. Combat, Aftershock def. LAPD Lawmen, Quit Resisting def. SoCal Riot, San Diego Excessive Force def. Lockdown, RSD Red def. DVI Gladiators.

Winners' Bracket Round 2: HardCor avenged their earlier loss by def. SoCal Dawgz, Sin City def. Nitro2Go, SoCal Alliance def. Aftershock, Concord def. Team Vargas, DEA Combo def. Quit Resisting, San Diego Excessive Force def. LAPD Blue, Quake def. RSD Red, and TKO def. Southwest Elite.

Losers' Bracket (losing teams eliminated and tie for 17th place): SoCal Dawgz def. SoCal Riot, Lockdown def. Nitro2Go, DVI Gladiators def. Team Vargas, LAPD Blue def. Combat, Southwest Elite def. LAPD Lawmen.

Losers' Bracket Round 2 (losing teams eliminated and tie for 13th place): SoCal Dawgz def. Lockdown, Aftershock def. DVI Gladiators, LAPD Blue def. Quit Resisting, RSD Red def. Southwest Elite.

Winners' Bracket Round 3: Sin City def. HardCor, SoCal Alliance def. Concord, DEA Combo def. San Diego Excessive Force, and Quake def. TKO.

Losers' Bracket Round 3 (losing teams eliminated and tie for 9th place): TKO def. SoCal Dawgz, Aftershock def. San Diego Excessive Force, Concord def. LAPD Blue, and RSD Red def. HardCor.

Winners' Bracket Round 4 SUNDAY: SoCal Alliance def. Sin City and DEA Combo def. Quake.

Losers' Bracket Round 5 (losing team eliminated and tie for 7th place):

TKO def. Aftershock and RSD Red def. Concord.

Losers' Bracket Round 6 (losing team eliminated and tie for 5th place): Sin City def. TKO and Quake def. RSD Red on a walk off home run by Quake's Scott Spaulding.

Undefeated Game: DEA Combo def. SoCal Alliance. DEA advances to championship game and must be beaten twice in a row. Alliance sent to loser bracket.

Losers' Bracket Round 7 (losing team eliminated and finish in 4th place): Quake def. Sin City.

Losers' Bracket Round 8 (losing team eliminated and finish in 3rd place): SoCal Alliance def. Quake.

Championship Game: SoCal Alliance def. DEA Combo. "IF" Championship Game: SoCal Alliance def. DEA Combo.

TOURNAMENT CHAMPS: SoCal Alliance; SoCal Alliance MVP was Alfonso Trujillo. Trujillo hit .857 on the tournament, went 12 for 12 in the championship and "if" games and went 22 for 23 on Sunday.

ALL TOURNAMENT PLAYERS: Ray Ghiliotti - SoCal Alliance; George Reyes - SoCal Alliance; Ryan Coe - SoCal Alliance; Steve Leone - DEA; Dave "D2" Ayala - DEA; Robert Mason - DEA; Matthew Boykin - Quake; Michael Mayer - Quake; Guillermo "G.G." Guerra - Quake

GOLD GLOVE: Tommy Hayes - SoCal Alliance; Johnny Sunia - DEA; Ronnie Connor - Quake; The following teams won World Series berths: Concord; SoCal Dawgz; San Diego Excessive Force; Lockdown; DVI Gladiators; Quit Resisting; Nitro2Go.



Dave Ayala



A.J. Biama