

The return to Zenoff field on June 17 was emotional on many levels for Team USA. After the 2004 game, Team USA Coach Mike Candreau lost his wife to an aneurysm at CWA on their flight home and now, still at the helm of Team USA, he had to return to the site painful memories. In July of 2005, the International Olympic Committee voted 52-52 (a majority vote was needed to keep softball in the Olympic lineup) to eliminate softball from the Olympics after 2008. The IOC said they would revisit the decision in October, 2009 after evaluating the 2008 Olympics. This 2008 “Bound 4 Beijing” tour was a critical step for Team USA to build support for maintaining softball as an Olympic event.

The Midwest All-Stars again was built with a strong foundation from Portage County, with Tom Drohner (SPASH) coaching, and many local players from Pacelli, SPASH and UWSP joining the team. Although the All-Stars fell to Team USA 20-1 in 6 innings, the final score was a footnote compared to the experience of being on the field with the 3-time defending Olympic gold medalist team. According to Drohner, “it was flat out impressive” to share the field with Team USA. Korryn Brooks, former SPASH and UWSP catcher, drove in the lone run for the All-Stars with a sacrifice fly in the top of the 6th inning.

“This was a once in a lifetime experience. I was glad to have this opportunity. It was cool to be on the same field,” noted Beth Boden. Whether playing on the field or watching from the stands, it was an experience many people in Portage County will treasure for the rest of their lives, to watch or play against the best fast pitch team in the world.

Coaching Staff:
Coach Tom Drohner – SPASH

Local Athletes:
Beth Boden – Pacelli
Stephanie Fischer – Pacelli
Katie Maultra – SPASH
Korryn Brooks – SPASH, UWSP
Laura Van Abel - UWSP

Stevens Point Journal June 18, 2008

Decision to dump softball an ‘insult’

Team USA furious sport will be dropped from Olympics



Team USA's Jessica Mendoza is tagged out by catcher Korryn Brooks of the Midwest All-Stars during Tuesday's exhibition game at Zenoff Park in Stevens Point.

By SCOTT WILLIAMS
JOURNAL STAFF
SCOTT.WILLIAMS@CWNEWS.NET

Jennie Finch and Jessica Mendoza have been playing softball for as long as they can remember. That goes for every player on the national team.

So imagine the reaction of the Team USA players when they learned fast-pitch softball would no longer be an Olympic sport starting in 2012.

In a July meeting in 2005, the International Olympic Committee voted 52-52, with one abstention to cut softball from the Olympics after 2008. Softball needed a majority vote to remain a part of the Summer Games.

“It definitely was a total shock. It came out of the blue. It was like they punched me in the stomach,” said Finch, a standout pitcher who joined Team USA in Stevens Point for an exhibition game as part of its Bound-4-Beijing Tour. “Why would they put a damper on something so great?”

The decision — one that will be revisited by the IOC in October 2009 — has left Team USA players dealing with a wide spectrum of emotions.

Among those expressed by national team members are anger, frustration, disappointment, contempt and disbelief, just to name a few.

At the heart of their confusion is that no real reasons have been given

for softball being the first sport cut from the Olympics since polo in 1936.

“We would like some answers because we really haven’t been given any real concrete reasoning for the decision,” said Mendoza. “Some IOC people should come and sit in the stands and see all the little kids here.”

For whatever reason, the IOC lumped softball with baseball, which also was voted out of future Olympic competitions over concerns about steroid use.

Part of the arguments made for eliminating softball centered around there not being enough talent depth worldwide to merit inclusion in the Olympics.

“It was an insult to our sport to be lumped with baseball. Not one softball player has ever tested for any banned substance,” said Mendoza. “Softball is what the Olympics are all about and they want to kick us out.”

There are some concerns that not having softball be part of the 2012 Summer Games might hurt the participation at the youth levels.

Judging by the comments of young softball players on hand to watch Team USA play the Midwest College All-Stars on Tuesday, nothing will change.

My goal was to make the Olympic team, so I’m pretty disappointed,” said 12-year-old Brooke Gajewski of Kronenwetter. “But I don’t think it’s going to

Team USA dominates game

Stevens Point Area Senior High softball coach Tom Drohner is usually on the other end of outcomes like this one.

Of course, Drohner, who just won his fifth Division 1 state championship in eight years, never served as the head coach against Team USA before.

So coming out on the short end of a 20-1 verdict over the Midwest All-Stars in six innings wasn’t completely unexpected even with credentials like Drohner owns in his 11 seasons at the helm of SPASH.

“That was flat out impressive. You take a ton of things from something like this and learn,” said Drohner, adding the last time one of his teams was a victim of the 10-run rule was in his first year of coaching.

The final score was simply a footnote compared to the experience of being on the same field with the three-time defending Olympic gold medalists.

For Stephanie Fischer and Beth Boden of Pacelli, along with the SPASH tandem of Katie Maultra and Korryn Brooks, there was no place like Zenoff Park to have some fun.

Fun in this case didn’t mean beating up on teams in their conference. Instead, the local quartet got a chance to go head-to-head against the best fast-pitch softball team in the world.

“This was another step up type of thing,” said Boden, who played her college ball at Tennessee Tech and now plays professionally for the Rockford Thunder. “This was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I was glad to have this opportunity. It was cool to be on the same field with them.”

Brooks has quite a story to tell her children and grandchildren some day.

The former University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point athlete drove in the lone run for the All-Stars with a sacrifice fly in the top of the sixth.

Only the 2,000-plus softball fans on hand have to know Maultra started the inning on third base to help Team USA work on situational strategy.

“I just tried to time her and see the ball off her hip. I was able to get the bat on the ball even though it wasn’t a hit. That felt good,” Brooks said.

— Scott Williams, Journal staff

continue to be part of the Summer Games.

“Softball is a major sport and should be in the Olympics. A lot of people look up to the players on Team USA,” said Hebda, who received an “A” on her paper. “I think girls are still going to play softball because they have fun and enjoy it.”

afect anybody who plays softball. There is still professional fast-pitch leagues.”

When Stevens Point Pacelli junior pitcher Michelle Hebda learned of the news about softball no longer being an Olympic sport, she wrote a paper for school about why the sport should

Sue, died after suffering a brain aneurysm while at Central Wisconsin Airport.

Though the team will return to the area with heavy hearts, Nuve-man said she is looking at the return as an opportunity to thank members of the Stevens Point softball community for the support they offered the Candrea family during the tragedy.

“The way (Stevens Point Softball Association president) Mike Disher and the ASA family took the

Candreas under their wing and looked out for them at a terrible time was amazing,” said Nuve-man in a phone interview prior to boarding a flight to Austin, Texas, for promotional work for Nike. “They looked after the family, when they could have just said, ‘we’re sorry,’ and moved on. They stayed with coach, were there when the rest of the family arrived and supported them at an absolutely devastating time.

“I hope to be able to say

“Thank you” to people for that.”

The game, slated for 7 p.m. at Zenoff Park, is part of Team USA’s “Bound 4 Beijing” Tour. The tour travels to 40 cities as the team prepares for this summer’s Olympics.

Coach Candrea, who often speaks publicly about returning to Stevens Point, declined to talk about the day his wife suffered an aneurysm.

In other interviews, Candrea has said it will be a difficult trip, but one

he knows he needs to make. In December 2006, Candrea remarried and his new wife will be making the stop in Stevens Point, just as she has been at the other games.

The team took a bus from Normal, Ill., where it played two games on Saturday, to Stevens Point on Sunday to avoid the airport where Sue Candrea suffered the aneurysm. After Tuesday’s game, the team will bus 350 miles to its next game in South Bend, Ind.

Four players — including Nuve-man — won’t be able to avoid going through CWA, though, because of the side trip to Austin.

“We weren’t so lucky,” said Nuve-man. “It’s going to be hard. The first thing I thought of when I knew we had to go Austin was that we would have to fly into Central Wisconsin (Airport) and go through the airport where it happened. But, it’s what we have to do to play in the game and we are going to be with our team.”

Stevens Point Journal June 17, 2008

Chance of a lifetime

Former SPASH, UWSP softball star excited for opportunity against Team USA

By SCOTT WILLIAMS
JOURNAL STAFF
SCOTT.WILLIAMS@CWNEWS.NET

STEVENS POINT — Korryn Brooks hasn’t been sleeping very well the last couple of nights.

Then again, the prospect of standing in the batter’s box against Team USA pitchers Cat Osterman, Jennie Finch and Monica Abbot could give any mortal softball player insomnia.

Brooks, a former Stevens Point Area Senior High athlete, will be part of a college all-star team that will face Team USA in an exhibition game tonight at Zenoff Park.

“I’m already having trouble; I hope I can sleep tonight (Monday) because I need to be rested,” said Brooks. “I’m definitely excited. You try not to get nervous because you play better when you’re relaxed. I’m just hoping I don’t strike out every time.”

Brooks, who played her college softball at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, will help bring a strong local flavor to the all-star team.

She’ll be joined by her former SPASH teammate Katie Maultra, along with former Pacelli standouts Stephanie Fischer and Beth Boden. In addition, UW-Stevens Point’s Laura Van Abel is scheduled to play.

The reunion of hometown players brings back fond memories of their days playing youth softball together.

“I played with Korryn in youth softball,” said Fischer, who, along with Boden, is taking a short sabbatical from the Rockford Thunder of the professional softball ranks.

“It’s nice to be able to come back to Stevens Point where I haven’t played since my days at Pacelli,” she added. “I love playing in front of a big crowd, and to do it in your hometown is really neat.”

Competing against softball greats such as Osterman, Finch,



Former University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point catcher Korryn Brooks looks a baserunner back to third.

If you go

Who: Team USA vs. College All-Stars

When: 7 p.m. today. Gates are scheduled to open around 3:30 p.m.

Where: Zenoff Park, Stevens Point

What: An exhibition game as part of the national team’s Bound-4-Beijing tour in preparation for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in China.

Ticket info: The game is a sell-out.

Abbot and Crystal Bustos to name a few Team USA members, can be intimidating.

For her part, at least Fischer has some experience trying to hit against former University of Tennessee ace Abbot during her playing days at Tennessee Tech.

Getting to face an Abbot or Osterman is one thing. Having success is another as Fischer can attest after collecting one hit in nine or 10 at-bats against Abbot.

“Playing with Rockford has prepared me for tomorrow. We face good pitchers every game,” Fischer said. “Pitchers like them (Team USA) throw a lot harder than anybody else, and the ball moves so late.”

Speaking of sleeping, Brooks admits knocking off arguably

the best fast-pitch softball team in the world is probably a pipe dream.

But that doesn’t mean the college all-stars can’t give Team USA a competitive game. Not all that far-fetched considering four years ago the college all-stars played the national team to a 5-0 verdict at Zenoff Park.

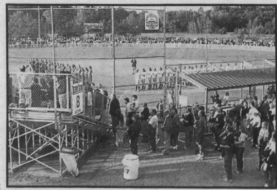
Of course, Team USA did beat Division 1 national powerhouse Arizona 17-0 on its recent exhibition tour.

“We want to make it worthwhile for them to come to town,” Brooks said. “It’s a great ending to my fast-pitch career. It’s going to be cool to get to be on the same field against a team I’ve been watching on TV.”

Stevens Point Journal June 27, 2008

POINT FASTPITCH

Youth Girls Softball Association would like to thank Mike Disher and his Stevens Point Softball Association staff for bringing the 2008 US Olympic Softball team to Stevens Point for a fantastic evening of World Class Fastpitch Softball.



We would also like to congratulate our Area High School teams on their great seasons.

Mike Drohner -
SPASH Div. 1 State Champions
Ann Molski -
Pacelli Div. 3 Regional Finalists
Tom Fields -
Rosholt Div. 4 Sectional Finalists

Stevens Point Journal June 16, 2008

Emotional return to Point for Team USA

By CHRIS SCHULTE
JOURNAL STAFF
CSCHULTE@WDHPRINT.COM

Team USA softball catcher Stacey Nuve-man is emotional about returning to Stevens Point for Tuesday’s game against a group of college all-stars.

On one hand, she doesn’t want to go. On the other, she’s looking forward to returning.

Four years ago when Team USA was in Stevens Point, coach Mike Candrea’s wife,