



**EUROPEAN
SOFTBALL
FEDERATION**

NEWSFLASH

September 2011



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear Sportfriends,

All the 2011 ESF Tournaments have come to an end and we would like to congratulate all the Champions with their titles and all the participants for their sportmanship and enthusiasm.

I would like to express my congratulations for the European Championship at Ronchi. This was a big celebration for softball.

Without officials.....there would be no tournaments. Every year the ESF organises between 10 to 11 Tournaments and at each of them we ask the TC's, UIC's, umpires and scorekeepers to invest their free time to make these Tournaments possible.

From all of us, we want to thank all officials for their contribution.

Speaking about scorekeeping, for the first time in our ESF history, all games at all tournaments were live on our website with play-by-play.

In another article in this newsletter we will have the official figures as to the number of hits/visitors on those play-by play games but I can tell you that our initial indication is very promising for future marketing plans.

The scorekeeping commission did a great job with scorekeeping clinics before the tournaments and all technical arrangements at the venues to make it possible.

A scorekeeping manual will be ready at the end of this year.

It is well known that during childhood is the best time for a person to learn. As children we can develop skills that will last a lifetime, sustainable skills.

However, at the same time children are dependent on guidance in everything they do, for instance in developing motor skills.

Unfortunately many of our children suffer from a severe lack of exercise. The few opportunities for exercising are often coupled with the increased stimuli they have from television and computers.

To give our children the best chances for their development and a high quality of life, exercise is becoming an ever more important component in forming their lives.

For that reason, the ESF and CEB development commissions are working together, as part of our agreement signed in Brussels earlier this year, to outline plans to enroll a Youth Development Plan for Europe for children of the ages 5 to 12 years old.

Former BeeBall pioneer Anton Kops and Charles van der Meijs from the CEB Development commission, are finalising the plan to start pilot projects with 5 Federations in 5 different regions.

The plan includes posters, flyers, guidelines, reward program for the children, starterkits and merchandise. Soon the Federations will be informed about these plans and timeline.

As we already introduced Anton Kops as new member of Toton Sanna's development commission, we are very happy to announce that Ruud van Zetten, former Dutch Federation President and Marketing specialist, joined the Marketing Commission and will assist Michael Schmidt on future marketing plans.

Ruud's first assignment, will be the liaison between the ESF and the possible organisers of the World Championship Women in 2014. They will plan a strategy to involve the European Federations in this Championship, The first ever in Europe.

Many Federations and ESF Board members are preparing their visit to the ISF congress in Oklahoma City at the end of October 2011.

The Agenda of this important congress includes many changes to the Constitution with a proposed change to delete the article to separate Baseball and Softball as joint Federations, a decision about the cooperation between the ISF and IBAF for a joint bid and campaign for reinstatement to the Olympics and a hopefully an healthy agreement about the financial future of the ISF for the years to come.

On Friday evening before the congress, we will have a European meeting where we will discuss with all the European Federations about the amendments, plans and ideas.

Take care
André

2011 ESF COMPETITIONS END - A STATISTIC REVIEW OF THE 2011 SEASON

Competitions and Medals

The 2011 ESF Competitions are history. Between July 11th and August 27th, ten tournaments in five countries were played. Here are some interesting statistics.

Gold medalists came from six different federations. Four titles were won by teams from the Netherlands (Team Netherlands - EChWA, Team Netherland - EChCG, Tex Town Tigers – ECWA and HSV Spikes – ECWCM). Great Britain produced two gold medal teams (Team GB – EchCS, Chromies – ECCS), followed by one each from the Czech Republic (Team Czech – ECHJB), Denmark (Hurricanes – ECM), Italy (Fiorini Forli – ECWCWA) and the Ukraine (Nika Duhl – ECWB) with one each.

Beside those six countries, teams from France, Spain, Belgium, Ireland, Croatia, Slovenia and Russia won medals. The 386 games involved featured 102 Umpires from 25 ESF member federations.

ESF Media

At the 2012 EChW in Ronchi (ITA), the ESF, in cooperation with the FIBS, Enjoy it and TV production Company Videe, produced a

total of eight TV games. Those games were broadcast live via ESF Livestream. Also, the Semifinals and Final were broadcast live on RAI Sport (National Italian broadcast). The NOS (Dutch Sport Television) covered the games in summary manner.

The DVD of the eight games shown will be available for distribution/sale as soon shortly.

Save for the ECM in Denmark, the games of all ESF Competitions were covered by play by play game stats.

More than 70 Media representatives were accredited by the ESF for our 2011 tournaments. This generated a significant amount of coverage on the internet and in papers, radio and TV.

In total, we had over four million pages in impressions. The EChW in Ronchi alone generated 1,5 million pages. The highest day for coverage was 4 August with more than 1,3 million contacts.

The numbers of RAI Sport broadcast were strong. About 600.000 receiving units, which is a market share of about 0,15%, followed the Semifinals and Finals – both time NED-ITA - broadcast live.

by Michael Schmidt, ESF

OUTSTANDING NUMBERS FOR THE EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP WOMEN 2011

by Andrea Marcon

The Organising Committee has put together all the sums of numbers related to the European Championship of Softball.

Enjoy it! the association which was in charge of organising the 17th European Softball Championship (EChW2011) had a meeting to sum up a relative indication of the competition which was held between the 31st July and the 6th August on the fields of Staranzano, Ronchi dei Legionari and Redipuglia.

The numbers which emerged from this account certainly indicate a small record for the baseball and softball world of Friuli Venezia Giulia region.

22,000 people followed the week of preliminary games at the 4 softball fields, while at the end of the tournament the final was in fact followed by 4,500 spectators.

The data which was taken by Auditel during the live games showed by Rai Sport reached 600,000, while the hits on the tournament's website rose above the value of 15,000 from all corners of the globe.

The numerical data which represents what the tournament must have been like from an organisational aspect are also very impressive.

Collectively almost 2,000 people were hosted, while on the fields of Staranzano and Ronchi dei Legionari 4,340 meals were prepared for the teams, the umpires and the spectators... 11,400 are the km covered by the transport which took teams and umpires from their accommodation to the fields.

But looking beyond the numbers generated by the tournament, the Organising Committees' greatest satisfaction was seeing the response that the tournament generated within both local and national press, the praise received by the political and sporting authorities of all Europe, and most of all the great interest shown by people who got to be part of the world of softball for the first time in their lives.

The association Enjoy it! received a lot of support from TurismoFvg, ESF, FIBS, Regional Committee FVG, the local councils of Ronchi dei Legionari, Staranzano and Redipuglia, the clubs of Rangers Redipuglia, New Black Panthers and Staranzano Ducks, (the latter two sport clubs took care of the logistics related to the maintenance of the main fields of Ronchi dei Legionari and Staranzano).

Finally the last number to mention is also the most important one - 98.

This was the total number of volunteers who arrived from every corner of Italy, but also from France, Romania and Malta! It was their dedication and time that made this adventure an unforgettable one.

It is cause of these great volunteers that Enjoy It! has decided to celebrate the success of the European Championship by organising the 'Torneo del Porco' (www.torneodelporco.it), an amateur fastpitch tournament which will be taking place from the 26th September to the 2nd October at Castions di Strada (UD).

11 teams will be taking part: even this, in it's own way, is a record!

A lot of Changes - A very personal season review

by Michael Schmidt, ESF

The 2011 season has brought us many changes: new regulations for tournaments, new formats for competitions and new media regulations.

The new media/accreditation regulation and the broadcast for participating teams (scouting) requirements were added to address insurance and liability reasons.

We have learned much about these two topics this year. In the coming days and weeks, we plan to review and improve these regulations.

If you have views on these, please send them to me ASAP so that we can consider them and try to get even better regulations ready for the 2012 season.

The new format of the ECHW was a huge success from the standpoint of marketing.

We had at the Ronchi games 1,5 Million page in impressions for our play by play, a large interest in live stream watchers and Live TV visitors and a large number of media representatives.

The tournament was well organized by Andrea Marcon and his team – they deserve our continued thanks. We showed how big Softball is in Europe.

Ronchi featured more than 500 players, coaches and officials. All of the participating teams had their fans for support, in person and on line. The evening games were attended by large numbers of spectators. It was the first of several “big” European Softball events.

So far, we have had only two negative responses about the difference in the level of competition/ playing ability of the teams involved and “all these mercy rule games”.

We heard that, with „luck“, a team ended up in an “easier” group, while others had more difficult opponents.

We also learned that the discrepancies in playing abilities among teams was so large that certain teams could not “learn” anything and/or improve.

I can't say anything against that – there were „mercy rule“ games. How could we address this? Would it be fair not to play certain games, limit tournament entries, split tournaments or even not play the final (since it was a mercy rule as well) or hand out just the medals?

We would like to hear your thoughts on how the ESF could address the issue of competition inequality leading to large numbers of „mercy rule“ games of course, but If we really would like to have teams play on „equal“ levels, we might need 4-5 tournaments (per category) where teams are matched on the basis of ability.

While this might address one problem, it creates another - how to build strong programmes, cut down the number of competitions, save money and promote Softball?

There is an element of luck in the draw where a team is placed – but we cannot forget that the draw is based on actual ranking (with, of course, results two years ago).

Apart from this, teams get better or worse from tournament to tournament, year to year. There is also the factor of injury. So, it might not only be luck, even luck is a big part of the sport as well.

Another way to view this is to ask about how strong teams do against other teams that are not so strong, or even weak?

Would the Netherlands improve their game, or weaken, if they played Austria or would Austria improve if they play the Netherlands? - who knows. Fact is - If they don't play each other, nothing changes for both.

Is it important for the ESF and its member federations if one single team improves or remains the same? What matters is to have meaningful competitions where teams play a good number of games and improve!

I believe that it is not possible for the ESF to improve the level of performance of clubs and national teams a lot (we can help with some clinics, bringing in coaches, help to implement school programs, etc.), but where we can make a contribution is able to develop Softball off the field – making our tournaments stronger (not mainly for the level of the game, but as an event) and more professional.

We seek to involve more people in Softball and play more games in more competitions – and bring Softball into offices and homes (TV, live stream). This will help Softball as teams strive to improve their on-field performance.

I know that not everything that the “ESF” does is the best – everyone makes mistakes, and we will make mistakes in the future. But in my opinion, we are learning, moving and improving.

To achieve this, it is important for us to get feedback on what was done – what worked, what did not work, what is missing, what has to be changed, etc. We need constructive input and suggestions and, yes, compliments (in case we did something right) are welcome as well.

I hope that many of you will contact me and give me your review of the season and our new regulations – not only member federations but anyone that has something to say. I will answer everyone.

Please keep in mind that the ESF is comprised of unpaid volunteers with limited time – not everything can be addressed on a „do this now!“ basis.

We want to avoid problems, missed issues and misinterpretations.

We want to keep everything working fine.

We know that there is always room for improvement – as long as everyone involved is able to talk, there is always a solution for an issue or room for improvement.

ESF GAME BALLS

by the ESF

As already done in the past year, we are ready to reorder the softballs for the 2012 season and we would like to offer to all our members the opportunity to get the game and practice balls through the ESF.

The ball is the high standard ESF Tournament ball used already in 2010 and 2011 seasons.

Description:

12" Yellow optic leather cover, 47cor, Poly Core

11" Yellow optic leather cover, 47cor, Poly Core

NB- Also in Men's Competitions will be used the Poly Core ball instead of the Cork Core ball in the future.

The balls can be ordered by our Members but also by any Club. The order shall be placed before October 10th.

For our in stock Balls the price will not change for orders until October 10th, afterwards there will be a little price raise due to the higher production and material cost.

To receive an offer or for more info, send an email to secretarygeneral@europeansoftball.org



IRELAND TAKE BRONZE AT THE ECHCS

by Softball Ireland

Ireland finished third at the European Co-ed Softball Championships in Bulgaria after losing to eventual champions Britain 15-7 at the semi-final stage.

Britain went on to beat Slovenia in the final, winning 22-5, which

means they retain their title for yet another year.

Ireland still ensured that they came away with honours as Irish player Emma Kilbride (appearing in her eighth championship) won the Female MVP of the Tournament award.

In addition, Steve Patterson, a member of the Britain coaching team, plays in Ireland for Oddsox Green in Leinster.



SKÖVDE SAINTS SWEDISH SOFTBALL CHAMPION

by Kristian Pälviä, Svenska Baseball och Softboll Förbundet

Photo: Magnus Hallqvist

For the sixth consecutive year, Skövde Saints claimed the Swedish Championships as the women's fastpitch season ended last weekend.

In the finals, Skövde swept the three-game series against Leksand and completed the sweep before a big crowd at the home field Billingeöv.

Last weekend, Skövde took a commanding 2-0 lead in the finals after beating Leksand away, 11-5 and 17-6.

In the home game, Skövde continued to batter the Leksand pitching, ending the game in the fifth inning with the final score being 17-2.

Former Leksand player Anna-Karin Solén Westling was one of the driving forces as Skövde beat her former club and was honored with the Most Valuable Player trophy.

The league finished its regular season with five participating teams:

Skövde 16-0
Enköping 10-6
Leksand 7-9
Sundsvall 5-11

Söder 2-14

Semifinals scores:

Skövde - Sundsvall 6-0, 13-3

Enköping - Leksand 2-1, 14-19, 7-9

The level of the Swedish softball league has unfortunately declined over the last few years and as the experienced Saints team mark their sixth consecutive title they could also look back on a season when no team in Sweden beat them over the 16 league games and five playoff games.

There are however some light at the horizon (as always during the Swedish summer) as Gothenburg seems prepared to return to the league next year after a 1,5 year hiatus, and also Gefle has a new fastpitch program and hopefully will be able to return to the league in 2012.

The SBSF will also increase the number of clinics in order to facilitate more quality instruction in fastpitch softball in Sweden, in order to raise the level of players and also increase the recruitment of new players through funds generated from the Swedish Sports Confederation.

With the league title, Skövde Saints, who were relegated from the European Cup A-pool previously this year, will make another run for the return to the top tier in Europe next year even though some of the experienced players on the team might have played their last game.

Leksand will hopefully be able to represent Sweden in the Cup-winners Cup B-pool in 2012.



ADVANCED FASTPITCH COACHES CLINIC IN ITALY IN NOVEMBER

by FIBS

The Italian Baseball and Softball Federation will organise an advanced clinic for softball coaches in TIRRENIA (Italy), November 25th until November 27th.

This clinic is open to all Coaches.

For more information please contact the Italian Federation at: cnt@fibs.it.

You will get more details about accommodation and transportation from and to Pisa airport then.

There is no entry fee for the clinic, only 10.00 Euro will be charged for various clinic items (i.e. papers, pencil, bag and copies).

The speaker of the the 3 days clinic will be Michelle Gromacki, who was the Head Coach of Cal State Fullerton the last 12 years.

Schedule of the Clinic

Friday, November 25th

08.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m.
Defense Strategy
10.45 a.m. - 12.45 p.m.
Defense Strategy
02.30 p.m. - 04.30 p.m.
Practicice Organization
04.45 p.m. - 06.45 p.m.
Practice Organization
09.00 p.m. - 10.00 p.m.



Offense Strategy - I

Saturday, November 26th

08.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. Baserunning
10.45 a.m. - 12.45 p.m. Infield - Outfield Play
02.30 p.m. - 04.30 p.m. Catcher Practise and Drills
04.45 p.m. - 06.45 p.m. Catcher & Pitcher working the Hitters
09.00 p.m. - 10.00 p.m. Offense Strategy - II

Sunday, November 27th

08.30 a.m. - 10.30 a.m. Hitters Strategy at the Plate
10.45 a.m. - 12.45 p.m. Game Plan
02.30 p.m. - 04.30 p.m. Scouting and Performance Analysis



SHARX ARE AUSTRIAN CHAMPION

by Sharx Austria

The Austrian All Time Champion Dornbirn Sharx beat in the ASL (AUSTRIAN SOFTBALL LEAGUE) Finals the 2010 winner St. Poelten Pee Wees.

The Sharx, ESF Championsleague Winner 2009, got their ninth Austrian title.

After loosing the Championship Finals 2010 the Sharx started to build up a new, young team, also after some older players retired. The target of the Team of the Lake of Constance region was to improve the new and young players. - at the end they didt more than that.

While loosing all 4 Round Robin games against the Pee Wees in 2011 and started the season with a 2-8 record, the team improved game by game.

The Sharx beat the Pee Wees in the Semifinal with 4:3 and went directly to the finals while the Pee Wees had to play the Vienna Wanderers for the second spot there.

In the Grand Final the Sharx faced again the Team of St. Poelten, who beat the Vienna Wanderers with 6:5.

In the final game of the season the Sharx proofed that they improved a lot during this season and didnt give the Pee Wees any chance, getting back the title with a 8:1 win.

