



**EUROPEAN  
SOFTBALL  
FEDERATION**

## **NEWSFLASH** Christmas 2012

### **THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTMAS**

Christmas is celebrated all over the World. You recognise this when travelling during these few weeks and visit other countries.

Some people see this day as a good reason to exchange gifts within the family, buying a Christmas tree for a special atmosphere at home, being together as a family to have Christmas dinner or to remind us the day of birth of Jesus Christ.

This day of birth is in many religions the deeper meaning of Christmas and more general the day of birth in our lives. Actually the day of birth is the most fundamental event in our lives as a new beginning.

The hectic distractions of our day to day life, often allows for getting the mystery of birth. It is the biggest secret in our life.

Our birth and entire life is given for free and when we think about it, it is the source for gratitude but at the same time of fear and uncertainty.

### **SOFTBALL IN LITHUANIA**

*by Andre van Overbeek, ESF*

At the ESF congress in Malta last year, the Lithuanian Baseball Federation requested to join the ESF as a combined Baseball and Softball Federation.

The request was gladly accepted and they were granted the status of Provisional Member. The last step in their affiliation will be presented to the Congress in Bled for the approval to become an affiliated member.

Meetings in the city of Vilnius between the Board of the Lithuanian Federation, the Olympic Committee and the Sport Ministry were conducted in December and was the official start of our new Federation.

During our stay in Vilnius, we visited 2 indoor training facilities of the Baseball and Softball Academy where both Baseball and Softball athletes are working up to 6 days a week on their skills. Athletes from this Academy have been signed for MLB organisations and others will follow in the future as a result of this training program.

One of these training facilities is an Indoor Hall where it will be possible to play Arena Softball without limitations as to field dimensions. Arena Softball became an official discipline within the International Softball Federation and will be an important developmental discipline in the coming years.

Both the beginning and the end of our earthly life is completely unpredictable. We can't control this and this reminds me of friends we have lost in the past year and the innocent victims of the recent shooting at the Sandy Hook Elementary School.

All these families are in deep grief and for them there will be no Christmas this year.

Christmas is an awareness of the mystery of our lives, of our birth and being a child. The moments in our lives which touched us and the moments which kept us silent for a while. Those are the moments to save in your heart and to remember when it becomes dark in your life. That is the secret of Christmas.

I wish all of you a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year.

Andre van Overbeek, ESF President

As part of the official launch of Softball in Lithuania, the first Lithuanian softball game will be played on the 15th of December between teams of Panteros and Vilkaites.

The game will be on the same date and facility where the first European BeeBall clinic will be held by Anton Kops and Hans Snel, the Dutch coach for the Lithuanian Junior team at the European Championships in Rosmalen in 2012.

The following BeeBall clinics are planned in the beginning of 2013 in several European regions. European BeeBall is a cooperation development program between CEB and ESF for our youngest youth.



## SLOVENIA: LJUBLJANA, A CENTRE FOR SLOW PITCH SOFTBALL IN WINTER

By John Austin, ESF Slow Pitch Development Commissioner

The weekend of the 15th and 16th of December saw a hive of slow pitch activity in Ljubljana, Slovenia with two indoor tournaments and pitching clinics.

Saturday's tournament, part of a monthly development programme called "Softball for All" organised by the Dream Team consisted of 8 competing teams with over 100 players taking part.

Participant's skill levels ranged from the complete beginner to the seasoned player with an age profile of 12 to 55 years. There were also a few non Slovenian players representing Ireland (yes me!), Austria, and Croatia.

The mix of skill levels in one tournament is enabled by the choice of incrediball or sponge ball given to the managers prior to each game. According to the event organiser, Darja Grimsic, "With this we reduce the chance of injury and rookies can play without fear of injury. As we were shown from our past experience they much rather come back to tournaments because of this fact".

I held a pitching clinic during the tournament for 20 eager pitchers where I was able to demonstrate and explain some important pitching drills that the players could take away and practise on their own. It was great to see them try and practise their new found knowledge during the second half of the tournament.

After 10 hours of play the final standing were:

- 1) Buldogi Novo Mesto
- 2) Ježica Ljubljana
- 3) Dream Team Ljubljana
- 4) Zajki Ljubljana
- 5) Legende Ljubljana
- 6) Brainiacs Dobrova
- 7) Bloody Bats Št. Jurij
- 8) Super Geeks Ljubljana.

Sunday saw another busy day of indoor slow pitch softball. Organised directly by the Slovenian Federation, there were 6 participating teams.

Billed more as an indoor championships, this tournament catered

for the more experienced player. Hard fought games and great skills levels were the order of the day.

During the tournament I was able to run another slow pitch pitching clinic to another group of 20 enthusiastic pitchers.

Again the objective was to demonstrate and explain some take away exercises for them to use as part of their pitching practise. This approach was well received by the participants and the general consensus was that not enough time is given to practise other than batting practise.

According to the tournament organiser, Savina Golcnik, "The clinic gave us some new insight into the technique and dynamics of slowpitch pitching and in the end left us hungry for more".

Final standings after 6 hours of intense play were:

- 1) Buldogi
- 2) Lisicke
- 3) Jezica
- 4) Zajcki
- 5) Foxy Teens
- 6) Lindau Hawks

Over it was great to see and participate with so many enthusiastic slow pitch softballers. It is also good to know that slow pitch development is alive and thriving in the off season in Slovenia.



## INDOORCUP IN THE NETHERLANDS

by Andre van Overbeek, ESF President

The Indoor Cup (,the Cup') history in the Netherlands goes way back to 1996, when the founder Kirt Whiteside, decided to bring a US Softball team for a trip to Europe.

The first Tournament was held in Lyon, France. Along with the US selection team, this first Tournament also had participants from France, Swiss and British teams.

Over the years the Cup developed with more participants. The US team changed into an International Selection of athletes from both Canada and the US who came with 4 teams to Europe and each year there was more interest from European teams. Teams from Germany, Switzerland, France and the Netherlands participated.

In 2000 "The Cup" continued to prosper with National team participation from Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, GB and the French National team. Several new teams from across Europe in addition to the 4 North American Select Teams (NAST) and a



group of 2 Ohio based teams along with supporters filled out the tournament slots.

In 2002 the Cup moved to Schiedam, the Netherlands as the facility in Lyon could not accommodate the increase of participants. The Cup 2002 turned out to be a huge success not only because of the change in venue but also the increase of the talent level was 10 fold.

The Indoor Softball game is different in many ways as it is played in a number of "soccer" halls. The teams play with 8 defensive players, an "Indoor" ball and some rules changed for "Indoor" play!

This game is a game of speed! Even more strategy and speed are needed in performing well at this tournament.

Each team has a guaranteed amount of games for "pool" play with all advancing to tournament play. With the 3 halls, games run quickly and smoothly with the beginning of the tournament played on Saturday morning and ending an up to 7 game stretch on Sunday evening.

The upcoming 18th edition of the Cup will be played again from 18th - 20th of January 2013 and will host teams and players from all over Europe and North America. 1 German team, 2 Czech teams, 2 National Dutch Youth teams, 5 Dutch club teams and 6 selection teams from US and Canada will participate.