

Braking News

The Official Newsletter of the Stratford Brakettes, Junior Brakettes, and Select Brakettes

Volume 3, Issue 4

Written by Bob Baird (203) 218-1066

March 2021

PANDEMIC GROUNDS TEAM USA SOFTBALL TOUR AND JUNE 18 VISIT TO DELUCA

Thousands of area softball fans are disappointed with the news the USA Olympic Softball team will not be conducting a pre-Olympic Games Tour this year. Continuing fear of the COVID-19 virus and travel concerns has led USA Softball to err on the side of caution.

Aside from a few, and far between exhibition games, Team USA will head to Japan without the big sendoff the 'Stand Beside Her Tour' was designed to do in 2020. The postponement of The Games until July 23-August 8 this summer, and the tour's cancellation, means the earliest we will get to see the USA Olympic Softball team in person will be 2028. Last year's tour had a June 19, 2020 date at DeLuca Field, which was tentatively rescheduled for June 18 this season.

Softball is not on the Olympic docket for 2024 in Paris and it is not scheduled to return until 2028 in Los Angeles. The last time Team USA played at DeLuca was 2008. Softball sat out the 2012 and 2016 Games. One of the new sports in 2024 is Break Dancing, to be known as Breaking, which contributed to the demise of softball. How could the Paris Organizing Committee pick that over softball? What's next, Cornhole as an Olympic sport?

Rumors ran rampant the Olympic Games may be cancelled. Although the Japanese government and Olympic officials have stated they plan to go ahead, recently it was announced that foreign visitors would be banned from attending the Tokyo Olympics. Hopefully, they have plenty of cardboard cutouts to put in the bleacher seats.

Information on Ticket Refunds

Pat Patusky, President of Stratford Softball Tournament, Inc., the local organizing group sponsoring the event, recently delivered the bad news to her committee. "There's nothing to say except the fact that everyone is disappointed," said Patusky. While some of last year's sellout crowd sought refunds following the 2020 postponement, the majority had not. "We have begun processing refunds," added Patusky. Fans are asked to utilize the website info@stratfordteamusa.com if they have not received information pertaining to their refund. "It's a real shame, especially for the members of Team USA, Stratford Brakettes players, our fans and the thousands of young girls who aspire to walk in their shoes someday," said Brakettes Field Manager John Stratton. "We all have learned this past year to be flexible and that nothing is guaranteed."

BRACKETTES WEB EXTENDS TO TEAM USA OLYMPIC COACHING STAFF

Team USA was able to play seven games earlier this month. They swept a three-game series from Mexico, one of the six teams competing for Olympic gold in Tokyo. They also played three exhibitions against the University of South Florida and one against Florida during a 16-day training camp at Eddie C. Moore Complex in Clearwater, FL. USA Olympic coach **Ken Ericksen** is also the head coach at USF, where Junior Brakettes standout **Abby Ota**, of Redding and Joel Barlow High School, recently signed a National Letter of Intent to play softball next year. Three members of the 18-player Olympic roster- Rachel Garcia, Dejah Mulipola and Bubba Nickles- along with assistant coaches Laura Berg, Howard Dobson, Tairia Flowers and Heather Tarr will remain with their respective collegiate teams during the spring. Ericksen brought in several coaches to assist during the training camp, including Yale assistant **Laura Ricciardone** and ex-Olympian **Kelly Kretschman**,

both former Brakettes standouts. Harvard grad Ricciardone pitched for the 2015 Brakettes and Kretschman (2003, 2006) was an All-America outfielder. Ricciardone was an assistant for ex-Brakettes second baseman and BU head coach **Ashley Waters** before joining Ericksen's staff. When Yale head coach **Jen Goodwin** (1996 Brakettes first baseman) had an opening, she selected Ricciardone. With Yale and Ivy League are not playing in 2021, Ricciardone was available to help. Ex-Brakettes pitcher **Cat Osterman** and current Olympian announced she will retire playing after the Olympics.

BRAKETTES/JOAN JOYCE 'PITCH & PUTT' GOLF TOURNAMENT SLATED FOR JUNE 26

The fourth annual Brakettes/Joan Joyce 'Pitch and Putt' Golf tournament will be staged Saturday, June 26 at the Short Beach Par-3 Golf Course in Stratford. All proceeds from the tournament go directly to the operating expenses of the Stratford, Junior, and Select Brakettes softball teams.

The tournament is named in honor of Joan Joyce, the former Raybestos Brakettes Hall of Fame pitcher from Waterbury. She was a 15-time ASA All-America with the Brakettes and she is the first and only softball coach at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, FL, where she has led the Owls to 12 conference titles. **Joan also will be attending the tournament to offer golfing tips and talk softball and golf.**

An eight-time ASA tournament most valuable player, Joyce won 429 games with the Brakettes and remains No. 1 in all-time strikeouts with 5,677. Following her softball playing career, Joyce participated on the LPGA tour for 19 years. She is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records for the lowest number of putts (17) in a single round for both men and women golfers.

The tournament is a Four-Person Scramble, Shot Gun format with three flights scheduled for 8 and 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. Every year the entire field has been filled. Awards are presented to the winning team in each flight and to the lowest scoring women's foursome in the tournament. Breakfast and buffet lunch are included as well as raffles and giveaways. The entry fee is \$200 per foursome or \$60 per player registering by themselves. For additional information and to make reservations contact Brakettes Softball General Manager Bob Baird at (203) 218-1066, or via e-mail at brakettesgm@gmail.com. Tournament brochures may be found on the team's website at Brakettes.com. June 20 is the entry deadline unless all three flights are filled earlier. The rain date is July 10. We will register parents of our Select Brakettes for the 8 a.m. flight since the team is playing in Meriden later that day.

DELUCA FIELD PRESS BOX NAMED IN HONOR OF OUR LATE P.A. ANNOUNER HAL BAIRD

It is official. The press box at Frank DeLuca Hall of Fame Field now has a name. It will now be known as the Harold 'Hal' Baird Press Box, named in honor and memory of the late long-time public address announcer for the Stratford Brakettes.

"We are grateful to Stratford Mayor Laura Hoydick and the entire Stratford Town Council for voting unanimously on the recommendation to name it for Hal Baird," said Brakettes General Manager Bob Baird, who has been a lifelong friend with Hal although they are not related.

The zoom Town Council meeting was held March 8. Councilmen Chris Pia, First District, and William O'Brien, Ninth District, co-sponsored the recommendation that was submitted by Bob Baird in February. There will be a ceremony prior to the season opener June 4 and a permanent plaque recognizing Hal Baird will be placed inside the press box on the wall next to the seat he occupied for 1,265 Stratford Brakettes home games since 1988.

BRAKETTES FACING A FINANCIAL HIT WITH CANCELLATION OF TEAM USA VISIT

Albert Einstein said, 'For every action, there is a reaction.' What does the cancellation of the softball tour mean for the Brakettes? "In a nutshell it means that we will have to dig deep and come up with additional revenue streams to help overcome the projected \$10,000 budget shortfall," said Brakettes General Manager Bob Baird. The Brakettes would have received a good portion of all receipts from the doubleheader that was scheduled for June 19 at Frank DeLuca Hall of Fame Field. "Stratford Softball Tournament, Inc., the local sponsoring group, has been a staunch supporter of Brakettes

Softball for nearly three decades. In addition to receiving a healthy cut of the gate, raffle, and souvenir program book sales from SSTI, we would have done extremely well with our concession stand and our souvenir sales.”

Baird added, “We have a great booster club membership and strong local following. Hopefully, they will visit our website (brakettes.com) and see the various fund-raising opportunities we offer. There are forms for season tickets, outfield fence banners, and the 4th annual Joan Joyce/Brakettes ‘Pitch & Putt’ golf tournament June 26 at the Short Beach par-3 course. And we have never been known to reject a donation.” Brakettes Softball is a registered 501c(3) non-profit. Contact Baird at brakettesgm@gmail.com, or call (203) 218-1066 if you would like to assist. The 2021 season will mark the sixth year in a row the Brakettes will be operating without a major sponsor.

JUNIOR BRAKETTES COLLEGIATE PLAYERS FEATURED HERE

Normally by the time the college softball season rolls into April, teams are fully engaged in conference play and they have already played 25 to 30 games. The 2021 season is anything but normal. Everyone is happy they are playing softball or will be very soon. Today we will preview the players on the Junior Brakettes. Before I get into the batter’s box, I wanted to drop a quick quiz on everyone. Can you name the high school that currently has five of its alumni in the Brakettes program? Also, which college program has five Brakettes players on its roster. Find the answer at the end of the report.

The University of Bridgeport features three Junior Brakettes. They are outfielder **Meg McFarland** of Monroe, who collected two hits in the sweep of D’Youville (Buffalo) last Saturday; pitcher **Samantha Schiebe**, the former Masuk All-Stater; and infielder **Kiana Robinson** of West Haven. UB is the pre-season the favorite to win the East Coast Conference. Stamford middle infielder **Dana Serrichio**, outfielder **Maggie Britt** of Bridgeport, and pitcher/captain **Gillian Kane** of New Canaan, all play for Springfield College (2-0), which plays again April 3 at Wheaton. **Jenna Geffert** of Seymour has worked 3.1 innings and has looked good thus far at Colgate, which plays four games April 3 & 4 at Boston University, where Stratford Brakettes pitcher **Ali DuBois** (9-0, 0.50 ERA, 62 K’s) has been nearly untouchable.

Newcomer **Caitlin DeAngelis** of Staten Island, NY, got on the diamond last week for Post University. The ex-St. Joseph by the Sea All-State shortstop is 4-for-10 with two home runs. She hit .547 as a high school junior. West Haven third baseman **Kailey Carrano** led Western New England University in power last year thru six games before COVID-19. WNE and the Commonwealth Coast Conference were just given the OK to begin play, which will be shortened, based on geography and weekends only. Freshmen pitchers **Sophia DiCocco** of Bozrah and Tufts University and **Maddie Procyk** of Masuk and Amherst College are in the same situation as their respective leagues will feature limited schedules.

Fairfield’s **Olivia Vadas** has appeared in 10 games for Sacred Heart and owns a 1-2 record with 13 strikeouts in 33 innings. The Pioneers are home April 7 against Merrimack in a twin-bill. Monroe’s **Alyssa Noce**, who played at St. Joseph High, is an outfielder for Quinnipiac of Hamden, while Bridgeport’s **GiGi Speers** has appeared in 10 games for streaking Fordham (15-3) and has scored five runs as a pinch-runner plus she has two stolen bases.

Coach **Mary Scigliompaglia’s** club features two of Connecticut’s top scholastic players in catcher **Cassi Barbato** of Milford, who plays at Trumbull High, and Redding infielder **Abby Ota** of Barlow High. Barbato was named the Basketball Player of the Year in FCIAC. Former St. Joseph High All-State catcher **Charlee Horton** of Stamford has transferred out of Fairfield and is looking at the JUCO route for next fall. She will also see action at first base for the Junior team this summer as 2020 starter **Claire McCann** of Easton (Joel Barlow) is out for the season at The College of Holy Cross with a torn ACL. She had a good chance of starting for the Crusaders. Outfielder **Katy Holly** of Hopkinton, MA, and Manhattan is recuperating at home after a prolonged intestinal illness. Her playing status this summer is uncertain. Both girls remain members of the Junior Brakettes even if their injury and illness prevent them from playing. Please keep them in your thoughts and prayers!

Answer to the Quiz: Five Barlow High graduates are in the program. They are Rebecca Mauro (Clark University) on the Select team, Ota and McCann on the Junior team, and Briana Marcelino (UConn) and Kristen Acocella (Dickinson College) on the Stratford Brakettes. Springfield College features five current Brakettes with Britt, Kane, and Serrichio on the Junior team and Berlin’s Callie Gendron and Roxbury’s Lucy Puskas on the Select team.

Scattering Shooting Around the Diamond

The Select Brakettes will be featured in the April Issue. Six players are freshmen in college and nine are high school seniors and we can not wait to see them in action! The 2021 schedules for all three teams are posted on our website. Always check the website for schedule updates. . . Marcelino and newcomer **Jana Sanden** of Riverton have led UConn to a 12-10 record thus far against some very tough competition. Marcelino was honored as the Big East Player of the Week

in early March and Sanden was the Rookie of the Week. Sanden has started all 22 games and is second in batting at .359 (23-64) and leads the Huskies with 18 RBI. Sanden also has won the honor the last two weeks . . . Outfielder **Courtney Cashman** of UMass-Lowell leads the Riverhawks with a .450 average (18-for-40) and 13 RBI . . . The players on the three Brakettes teams hail from 33 different towns and cities in our state. . . Stratford Brakettes lefty pitcher Sydney **Senerchia** of Northford got the start in St. Peter's 1-0, 12-inning loss to Manhattan in its opener. She pitched 11 strong innings, allowed only five base hits and struck out six. She did not get a decision. . . Brakettes catcher **Alexa Milius** of Thomaston hit a grand slam in Virginia Tech's 17-4 win over North Carolina State March 13. The game aired on the ACC Network. She is hitting .235 in 18 games with two home runs and seven RBI. . . **The annual five-year Reunion Weekend has been postponed until 2022 because of COVID concerns since many of our former players are in the age group that is most susceptible to the virus.**