

Braking News

The Official Newsletter of the Stratford Brakettes/Junior Brakettes

Volume 1, Issue 1

Editor: Bob Baird (203) 218-1066

October 2018

BRACKETTES ANNOUNCE FORMATION OF 18-U TEAM; MARY SCIGLIMPAGLIA NAMED COACH

The 2019 season promises to be a very busy one for the Stratford Brakettes and the members of its staff, following the announcement by General Manager **Bob Baird** that the organization is expanding its program to include an elite junior competitive softball team.

“We are not starting this as a showcase team, which has popularized the 18-under softball ranks for nearly two decades. Rather, we are looking for talented young players who are serious about playing competitive softball who may have already committed to play at a college or who will be completing their freshmen year in college and who are looking to play and are still within the age requirements,” said Baird.

The team will be known as the “Junior Brakettes” and play a 25-30 game schedule. They will participate in three or four invitational tournaments. “Basically, they will be playing many of the same opponents as the Stratford Brakettes,” added Baird. The Junior Brakettes will complete the 2019 season by playing in the 11th annual Women’s Major Softball National Championship tournament August 1-4.

The Junior Brakettes will play their home games at Frank DeLuca Hall of Fame Field and those games will be video webcast on the Brakettes softball network.

Former Norwalk High School and St. Joseph College (Hartford) softball standout **Mary Sciglimpaglia** will be the head coach of the Junior Brakettes. She will be assisted by her father Rob, who has been active in youth softball for years. Sciglimpaglia was a catcher on the 2015 and 2016

Stratford Brakettes for Manager **John Stratton**.

“Mary has a great softball sense and she will do an excellent job with the team.”

“This will offer many talented young players the opportunity to continue playing. The majority of 18-under teams now are strictly showcase teams. For players who prefer not to go that route again, this will provide them with an alternative. It is not our goal to raid existing showcase teams to fill our roster, but to provide additional opportunities for players. Many players don’t want to play showcase once they have made a college commitment,” said Stratton who recently guided the team to its eighth WMS championship in 10 years.

In addition to playing the Brakettes in a pair of doubleheaders next June and July, the Junior Brakettes will also play several preliminary games to the Stratford Brakettes.

From 1961-74 the former Raybestos Brakettes had a farm team, the Raybestos Robins. Stratton and his late wife **Micki Stratton** (formerly Rosemary Machietto and the first Brakettes player inducted into the National ASA Hall of Fame) both took turns assisting ex-Brakette standout and retired Foran High coaching legend **Edna Fraser**, the Robins’ 10-year head coach. The Robins produced 18 players who went on to play for the Brakettes, including National Hall of Fame catcher **Peggy Kellers** of Stratford.

(At press time the team was almost finished filling its roster. The entire roster will be featured in the December issue of *Braking News*.)

LAUREN PITNEY WINS TEAM BATTING TITLE AT .489

Lauren Pitney, of Ansonia, captured the 2018 Stratford Brakettes batting championship. She finished the year with a .489 batting average, collecting 64 hits in 131 official at bats.

Pitney was involved in a tight race for the crown until the final 13 games of the season when the former St. Joseph High School all-stater went 21-for-40 with 17 RBI, four home runs, and 16 runs scored. She also led with 22 bases on balls.

“Lauren came up big for us in many games last year, especially in the WMS,” said Manager **John Stratton**. “She was clutch in the championship game (7-3 Brakettes win) as she delivered the game-breaker, a two-run triple to give the Brakettes a 6-3 lead in the top of the sixth inning.

Pitney, who will be entering her senior year at Manhattan, was second in RBI (49) and hits (64) and third in runs scored (49). She also had 26 extra base hits, 13 doubles, two triples, and tied for the home run lead at 11 with first-year infielder **Alex Heinen**, who led the club with 65 RBI and hit .441.

Pitney, the slick-fielding second basemen, hit .364 in her rookie 2017 season, also was a WMS All-America. “While Lauren came through for us at the plate, she was outstanding in the field. I have to rank her right up there with the best second baseman in team history,” added Stratton.

To be eligible for the batting crown a player must have at least two plate appearances for each game the team has played. Last year the batting champ needed at least 102 appearances.

Other team leaders were: hits (**Jolie Duffner**, 71); doubles (**Denise Denis**, 15); triples (Heinen, 3); runs scored (**Val Suto**, 60); stolen bases (Suto, 20); pitching record (**Kaysee Talcik**, 15-0); strikeouts (Talcik, 142); ERA (**Raeanne Geffert**, 0.73).

JEN PAWOL FIRST MLB FEMALE UMPIRE?

Look for the feature in the December Issue on Jen Pawol’s quest to become the first female major league baseball umpire. She played on the 2004 National Champion Brakettes.

Stratford Brakettes mourn loss of Hall of Famer Micki Stratton

The Stratford Brakettes family suffered a major loss on September 7 with the sudden passing of **Rosemary ‘Micki’ (Machietto) Stratton**, beloved wife of Manager John Stratton.

Micki, 80, and John were married 56 years. Many will remember Micki as the first Raybestos Brakettes played inducted into the National ASA Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, but she was a remarkable woman with many talents other than softball.

While she excelled on the diamond for the Brakettes for ten years (1956-65), Micki was the first women’s basketball coach at Sacred Heart University and coached softball at the University of Bridgeport, where she also was a skeet shooting and sailing instructor.

Earning a degree in physical education at Southern Connecticut and a master’s degree at UB, she was also a retired LPN at the APT Foundation. She was an EMT and had served as a captain for the Stratford EMS in Lordship.

Micki was inducted into the ASA Hall of Fame in 1969. The left-handed hitting catcher was a first-team All-America five times and was named second team twice. She was a key player on the Brakettes’ first national title team in 1958.

In addition to John, she is survived by her son Jay (Keri) and grandchildren McKenna and Conner.

Contributions in her memory may be made to the Lordship Community Church, 179 Prospect Drive, Stratford, 06615, or the Stratford Brakettes, 185 Lordship Road, Stratford, CT 06615.

MARY PRIMAVERA, 88, DIED SEPT. 6

Maria (Mary) Primavera, 88, of Cathedral City, CA, who pitched for the Raybestos Brakettes from 1947-52, died September 6 at Victoria Royale retirement home in California. Before moving to the West Coast in 1953, she graduated from Stratford High School and worked for Raybestos-Manhattan Corp. She was a member of the first team in Brakettes history.

Donna McLean and Kristine ‘Botto’ Drust Set for USA Softball of CT Hall of Fame Induction

Donna McLean and **Kristine “Botto” Drust** are the latest members of the Stratford Brakettes to be selected for induction into the USA Softball of Connecticut Hall of Fame. The induction dinner is Saturday, October 20 at Costa Azzurra Restaurant in Milford at 4 p.m.

McLean, a graduate of Westfield State, played 13 years for the Brakettes (1987-89, 1996-05) as the team’s right fielder and defensive specialist. From 2002-2004, Donna was credited with 35 outfield assists. She was a member of four national championship teams (1988, 2002-04) and a two-time ASA All-America.

Donna captured the 1996 batting title with a .414 average and she hit .315 in 2004 when the Brakettes won the ASA national tournament in Auburn, AL. She delivered the biggest RBI of her career on August 15, 2004, when she hit a soft liner to left field

to drive in pinch-runner **Jen Pawol** with the game’s only run with two out in the bottom of the seventh inning as the Brakettes beat Storm USA of Lake Forest, CA, 1-0, to win their 26th national championship.

One of the highlights of McLean’s career came on June 28, 1987 when she hit for the cycle and drove in the single-game Brakettes record 10 RBI. She is sixth in all-time games played with 656, and ranks in the top 15 all-time in runs (284), hits (500), doubles (59), triples (31) and RBI (266).

Drust played for the Brakettes in 2004 and she hit .396 on that national championship team. From 2001-03 she played for the Connecticut Classics, the 23U affiliate of the Brakettes, and was a catalyst for the team’s 2001 National Championship team. Kristine, a native of Lowell, MA, played for UMass-Lowell and was a two-time NCAA All-America catcher. A speedster for a catcher, she led UMass-Lowell with 77 stolen bases, including a school record 33 in 2000.

In leading the Classics to the national title, she hit .538 (7-for-12) and was named to the 2001 All-America team. After a brief career with the New England Riptide of the National Pro Fastpitch League, she returned as an assistant coach at UMass-Lowell before becoming the head softball coach at Cheshire High School.

Reservations for the dinner may be made by contacting **Lisa DiLullio** (203) 876-0078. Tickets are \$55 per dinner (children under 12 are \$35). Checks should be made payable to USA Softball CT and sent to Lisa DiLullio, 122 Pumpkin Delight Road, Milford, CT 06460. October 10 is the deadline to reserve.

SEASON TICKETS ARE ON SALE; THEY MAKE GOOD HOLIDAY GIFTS

Season passes are good for all regular season home games for both Brakettes teams. Prices are the same for the past 10 years. Box seats are \$100, reserved with back rests (red seats) are \$80 and general admission (first and third base bleachers) are \$60. All subsequent tickets purchased are half price. They make excellent stocking stuffers for the holidays! Go to our website and download the forms.

I’LL BET YOU DIDN’T KNOW . . .

John Stratton, who taught 35 years at New Canaan’s East School and founded the town’s recreation soccer program, was honored by the New Canaan Old Timers on September 15 at Waveny Park. . . Veteran pitcher Brandice Balschmitter, who retired after a banner 12-year career, finished fifth all-time with a 190-16 record. The four pitchers ahead of her are all in the National ASA Hall of Fame. . . The NFCA has selected Krstine “Botto” Drust and her Cheshire High coaching staff as one of five regional recipients of “Coaching Staff of the Year Honors”. . . The 2019 Stratford Brakettes season schedule is 95% finished. The team will face touted newcomers the Tanner Pride of Woburn, MA, in a four-game series June 15-16 and the New England Diamond Gems (30-5-1 in 2018) on July 6-7 in another four-game series. . . Prior to the national tournament, the Stratford Brakettes, Jr. Brakettes, CT Eliminators, Polar Crush of Worcester, MA, the NYC Havoc, and Ridgefield Rebels will play in a round robin event July 20-21. . . The date of the sixth annual Battle of the Sexes at New Britain Stadium against the New Britain Bees will be announced soon. . . There is a limited supply of the Brakettes History Book, a 100-page collector’s item. They are \$20, plus mailing of \$2.50. Send to Bob Baird at the address on the main page.

Brakettes/Joan Joyce 'Pitch and Putt' Golf Tournament Set for June 29, 2019

The second annual Brakettes/Joan Joyce 'Pitch and Putt' Golf Tournament will be staged Saturday, June 29, 2019 at the Short Beach Par-3 Golf Course. The inaugural event, last July 7, was a huge success, both financially and for the participants.

"You couldn't have asked for a better day," said Brakettes General Manager Bob Baird, who also ran the tournament. "The weather was simply beautiful and the presence of Joan Joyce made it a special time for all the golfers. We're hoping to have Joan at this year's tournament."

This year's tournament will again be a four-person scramble featuring three flights at 8 a.m., 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. Golfers may select which flight they prefer. Once the flight is full they will be placed in the next available flight. "We had two full flights in our first endeavor and expect to fill every spot this time as well."

The winning team in each flight will receive individual awards and there will be separate awards for the top women's foursome. All participants will receive lunch. Our tournament photographer will e-mail photographs to everyone following the event. There will be over three dozen raffle prizes as well.

Both the Stratford Brakettes and Junior Brakettes will be in action that afternoon and evening at Frank DeLuca Hall of Fame Field. "This will be a good time for the parents of both teams to get to know each other," added John Stratton, the Stratford Brakettes long-time manager.

Last year's 8 a.m. flight winning team was Jack Spillane, Sean Gallagher, Brendan Gallagher, and Tony Seconalfi. The winners of the 9:30 a.m. flight were John Vitka, Stuart Abramson, Mark Vitka and Rich Figmic.

Information and application forms may be downloaded from the team's web site at www.brakettes.com. All proceeds go directly to the operating expenses of Brakettes Softball. Fees are the same as 2018, \$200 per foursome or \$60 for individual entrants. If you would like to donate a raffle prize or purchase a tee sponsorship at \$50, please contact Bob Baird at (203) 218-1066, or brakettesgm@gmail.com.

RECORD FIELD EXPECTED FOR 11TH ANNUAL WMS TOURNAMENT IN AUGUST

Forget the fact that the 11th annual Women's Major Softball National Championship tournament is still eight months away it's a certainty that this year's field will set a record for participation. Since the 2018 tournament ended August 5, General Manager Bob Baird has been working daily to make the coming event the biggest and best ever. "It's amazing how much time you have when you're retired," said Baird. "I should have done this years ago."

Last year's entire field is returning. Including the defending champion Stratford Brakettes and runners-up St. Louis Saints; the Lyons, PA, Spirit; Nook 23 Gold, of Manheim, PA; New York City Havoc; Allentown, PA, Patriettes; CT Eliminators; Team CT; and XTreme Chaos ... are back. They are joined by the Junior Brakettes; Stripes and Strikes of Hazelton, PA; the Pennsylvania Krunch; Fauquier Freeze of Harrisburg, VA; and Ridgfield Rebels 23U.

We have a commitment from the Pegasus of Exton, PA. "We're just waiting for the check. We will close it out at 16 teams." The tournament will run from August 1-4, 2019 at Frank DeLuca Hall of Fame Field and Short Beach Complex.