

Adult Softball is a Fun Challenge

BY [MATT BAIDE](#) · PUBLISHED JULY 10, 2019 · UPDATED JULY 10, 2019

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TOURNAMENT: Sports Editor Participates in Game Prior to Weekend Tournament
By Matt Baide

mbaide@chronline.com

Since moving to this area more than three years ago, I've noticed the biggest and probably most successful season of sports throughout the year is the spring. Not to mention the Austen Apperson's and the Mollie Olson's of the world along with some great baseball players who get drafted like Brock Jones and Brandon White, I would argue softball is the most successful of them all.



Since joining The Chronicle in 2016, I've covered every 2B softball championship game and watched W.F. West consistently appear in Selah and finish no less than third place in state. I've seen Pe Ell-Willapa Valley and Adna win titles and witnessed heartbreak as Toutle Lake came from behind to defeat Adna in my first year here and I was there when Napavine made their run to the title game, only to be defeated by Northwest Christian.

While sitting behind the fence, in the dugout or in my little box at state taking photos, I've always wondered 'How would I do against some of these pitchers?'

Growing up, my two main sports were golf and hockey. The last time I played any sort of competitive baseball was in middle school and I haven't played softball since playing rec league in college at WSU.

Jeff Hannan reached out to me near the beginning of the summer and told me about the Hub City Fastpitch League, so I decided to check it out and see if I was able to hit something other than the giant watermelons pitchers throw during slowpitch.

There were a few minor problems with playing. I didn't have a glove or baseball pants and my cleats are meant for soccer. Luckily, I was able to borrow a glove from R.J. (Cano) and Hannan gave me my own Westside Jacks jersey. I just wore some sweats and tucked them into my socks (yes, I looked like a huge dork) and I was on the team.

I thought it would be odd using a wood bat since I never had before, but once you swing it a few times and get a bit used to it, you really don't notice.

I started at second base even though in little league and middle school, I played shortstop. Fielding is the one thing in baseball/softball that feels like riding a bike, you get nervous if you haven't done it in a long time but once you get your first ground ball hit to you and you field it properly, it's like you never stopped doing it. I just remember hearing my little league coach in the back of my head saying, 'Keep your glove on the ground!'

I was even able to turn a double play. I was hit a hard ground ball in the second inning and I didn't glove it at first but kept it in front of me, flipped it to Cano at second base who flung it down to Hannan playing first base for the double play.

While defense was able to come back to me, the offense wasn't so easy. I've seen a lot of great pitchers since working here, including Lexie Strasser, Abbi Music, Olivia Grey, Kaia Oliver, Haley Rainey, Kamryn Adkins, Dakota Brooks, Jenikka Poppe, Ashlee Vadala, Kamy Dacus and Delaney Glazer to name a few.

The pitchers in this league throw it hard like those pitchers did, but probably with a little more velocity since the rules are a little less constraining than in girls and women's fastpitch. Pitchers in this league are allowed to come off the ground and can essentially exaggerate their windup however they choose, which allows them to throw as fast as they can.

In my first at bat, I wasn't ready. I was stiff and swung at three straight pitches, including the third pitch I chased that was in the left handed batter's box.

I was determined not to let that happen again in my second at bat. I had much better form, knees bent, hands up and back and really tried to rotate my hips into the ball as much as possible. I fouled off a few pitches and swung and missed at a few pitches and even let a pitch go by me for a ball. On my final swing of the at bat, I tried to swing out of my shoes and my shoulder said 'You shouldn't have done that.' It's a good thing I already had a physical therapy appointment set up anyway.

The game ended after six innings with the Lacey A's earning the win. If you're looking for a fun atmosphere to play a competitive sport, this would be great to

try out. Despite hurting myself, I had a fun time and all the people that play are encouraging while also trying to earn a win.

This weekend, Borst Park will be host to the Westside Classic men's fastpitch tournament, starting at 10 a.m. on Saturday. Confirmed teams include the K-Club, the Northwest Braves, the Lacey A's and the host Westside Jacks. If you're at all curious, head down to Borst Park and check out a few innings. For someone like me who is always looking for a competitive outlet, this is something I look forward to coming back to once I recover.

If you aren't able to attend the tournament, the Hub City Fastpitch league now plays on Wednesdays at 7 p.m. and is open to men and women interested in playing.



WESTSIDE CLASSIC
Centralia
FORT BORST PARK
CENTRALIA WA
II
JULY 13-14, 2019

PARTICIPATING TEAMS

	SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON HOST TEAM 2018 CAN-AM CHALLENGE RUNNER UP
LACEY A'S	LACEY, WA DEFENDING WESTSIDE CLASSIC CHAMPION 2003 & 2013 NAFA AA WORLD SERIES CHAMPIONS 2015 NAFA OPEN WESTERN WORLD SERIES CHAMPIONS
K-CLUB	PACIFIC NORTHWEST 2018 NAFA AA WORLD SERIES CHAMPIONS 2018 SEATTLE INVITE A-MAJOR CHAMPIONS
NW BRAVES	HERMISTON, OR 2018 AMIGOS TOURNEY CONSOLATION CHAMPIONS 2017 NAFA 23-UNDER WORLD SERIES 3RD PLACE
DIRT DAWGS	SEATTLE, WA 2017 BIG ROCK INVITE CHAMPIONS 2019 LAS VEGAS ROADTRIP A-MAJOR RUNNER UP 2019 B.A. CINCO DE MAYO CHAMPIONS



