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If your federation would like to publish information on tournaments, clinics, etc. in this newsletter please send your information and pictures to Michael Schmidt at: mschmidt@europeansoftball.org

Looking Back on the 2010 ESF Tournaments Season

by Michael Schmidt ESF VP Marketing

Do you know how many tournaments the ESF ran in Europe this past summer? And how many teams took part? And how many countries came away with medals? Before you read on, take a guess.

Well, the answer is that during just two months, July and August, 12 ESF tournaments were played with 98 teams from 25 member federations taking part. The tournaments were organized in six different nations and at 11 different locations.

Start to Finish

The first tournament of the season, the EChMG Massimo Romeo Trophy, began on the morning of July 6 in Ankara. The last games of the season started at 5.00 pm on August 28 in Prague (the ECWCM) and Ronchi de Legionari in Italy (the ECM).

We saw 12 champions from eight different nations. The Czech Republic, Denmark, GB and the Netherlands each got two Gold medals for their collections, while teams from Austria, Italy, Russia and San Marino won one Gold medal each.

Thirteen countries had teams finishing in the top three places in ESF tournaments, earning 36 medals in total.

During the seven weeks in which these tournaments were played, more than 1200 players participated in 389 scheduled games run by 116 umpires.

On average, on every ESF game day during the summer, nine games were played in an official ESF tournament.

Now, together with federations, coaches, players, organizers and supporters from different countries, we need to discuss the new game formats that were used in different tournaments in 2010 and analyze what was good, what was not so good and what has to be changed or added so our tournaments can be even more successful in 2011.

ESF Innovations

The ESF introduced several important innovations connected with its tournaments In 2010.

For the first time, the ESF organized its own merchandising operation and delivered around 3000 Polo and T-shirts to different tournaments.

We also produced our own competition ball for the first time.

While the sale of merchandise unfortunately didn't fulfill our expectations, the use of ESF softballs certainly did. We are now

Looking Back on the 2010 ESF Tournaments Season

offering the ESF ball to our member federations for a special price (all member federation have already received the offer and will soon get a reminder for the deadline to order the ball, which will be used for the ESF tournaments in 2011 as well). The ESF also organized live TV coverage of the finals of both the Women's A Pool Cup and Cup-Winners Cup in Haarlem, broadcast by our new Softball TV webpage. This was a big success, and details about future broadcast plans will be communicated to member federations soon.



Looking Ahead

In addition to our tournament and marketing activities over the past months we also met with representatives from the American Amateur Softball Association (ASA) in Haarlem and established the basis for a closer partnership with the ASA in different areas. Detailed information on this will be published soon.

While we can look back proudly on a very busy and mainly successful tournament season, we are also looking forward to a busy off-season, with many new ideas to consider to improve the sport of softball in Europe for the future.

umpire

ISF UMPIRE SEMINAR WAS HELD

By Marlies Struyvé, ESF Director of Umpires

In conjunction with the two European Cups (Cup Women A and Cup Winnerscup Women A) being played in Haarlem, an ISF Umpire Certification seminar was also staged in the Netherlands. The attendees of the seven-day session came from ten countries. The instructors were ISF Director of Umpires Bob Stanton (Canada), ISF Assistant Rules Interpreter Marlies Struyvé (Netherlands), and Gilbert Tobback (Belgium). The seminar consisted of classroom sessions in the mornings and on-field drills in the afternoons.



ISF Director of Umpires Bob Stanton leads the seminar attendees in an on-field session. (Photo by Robert Jan de Vries)



Following candidates were successful in attaining ISF certification.

Rita Ceuppens (BEL), Michal Zidek (CZE), Thomas Lohnert (GER), Raoul Machalet (GER), Mauro Fiorini (ITA), Bob Gieskens (NED), Albert Tolen (NED), Alexander Kaverin (RUS), Juan Antonio Maestre Paez (SPA), Luis Ignacio Pardo (SPA), Micheal LaTona (USA).

Congratulations to the umpires and their federation.

2010

A GREAT YEAR FOR SLOWPITCH IN EUROPE

by Bob Former, Slowpitch Development Commission

Slowpitch softball in Europe had perhaps its best year so far in 2010 in terms of both competition and development.

Development

On the development side, ESF Slowpitch Clinics were held early in the year in Malta, Slovenia and Belgium, delivered by coaches and umpire-trainers from the UK, and covering slowpitch rules, pitching, umpiring (particularly the slowpitch strike zone), tactics and strategy.

The courses certainly seem to have done their work in Slovenia and Belgium, since both countries sent teams to the European Slowpitch Championship in July that performed at a very high level!

The ESF also ran an official Slowpitch Umpire Course in Belgium in June, since there is clearly a growing need for umpires with an ESF qualification in slowpitch.

In addition to these courses and clinics, a Slowpitch Development Pack containing posters, information and DVD material has been under preparation by the ESF, and will be circulated on a Europe-wide basis early in 2011.

Competition

The largest European Slowpitch Championship up to this point in terms of the number of teams taking part was held in 2002, when six countries competed.

This year, however, 13 countries signed up for the competition (which shows the growing interest in slowpitch around the continent) and eight countries made it to the Czech Republic for the tournament, setting a new record.

Originally, the European Slowpitch Championship was scheduled to be played in Holland in 2010. But when the Dutch withdrew just before the ESF Congress in February, the Czech Federation stepped up and took the tournament on, staging a very well-run event at the SaBaT Baseball and Softball Club in Prague.



But the 2010 European Slowpitch Championship, the seventh since the competition began in 1998, wasn't just about quantity. The quality of play was far higher than ever before, and most of the teams were well-matched and competitive with each other. Although Great Britain won the tournament without losing a game and Slovakia failed to win a game, the other six entries (Ireland, the Czech Republic, Guernsey, Belgium, Slovenia and Austria) played some tremendous softball against each other. Of all the games between those six teams, all but four were decided by a margin of four runs or less, and every country except Slovakia had a real chance to make the playoffs.

A few weeks later, the fourth European Slowpitch Cup was played in the Slovenian capital, Ljubljana, with the Irish team Dodder Dynamoes there to defend their title and prove once again that teams from GB don't necessarily win every time.

Six teams took part, and though the British national champions Chromies did win the tournament in the end, there was yet another demonstration of how the gap between the British and Irish teams and the rest is narrowing. The Slovenian team Long Bridge, in particular, played some very close games against Chromies, Dodder Dynamoes and the Irish national champions Batpak. Long Bridge defeated Dodder Dynamoes during the tournament, and lost four other games to those teams by a total of five runs.

Above all, both the European Slowpitch Championship in Prague and the European Slowpitch Cup in Ljubljana continued the tradition that ESF slowpitch tournaments are as much about fun as competition. All of the teams get on well, and though play can be fierce on the field, the spirit off the field is one of friendship and mutual support.

Looking Forward to 2011

There will be two ESF slowpitch competitions once again in 2011.

The European Slowpitch Cup is of course an annual event, but at the moment it needs a host for 2011. Any federation or club interested in taking it on should contact Gabriel Waage, ESF Vice





President for Tournaments. The European Slowpitch Cup now takes place each year in the first full week of August, though a host country can always request different dates if necessary.

But the European Slowpitch Championship will also be played again in 2011. The ESF is in the process of moving this competition to odd-numbered years to even out its competition calendar, and is doing this by running it back-to-back in 2010 and 2011.

The 2011 European Slowpitch Championship will be played in Dupnitsa, Bulgaria from July 18 or 19 through July 23, and the hope is that this year's record of eight countries entering can be broken. Bulgaria, as the host, will be playing in the competition for the first time, and the hope is that some of the other countries that entered and then withdrew this year, including Denmark, Switzerland, Jersey and Israel, will take the plunge this time.

Slowpitch development efforts will also be stepped up in 2011. The ESF Slowpitch Development Pack will be released early in the new year, and any federations that want to run one-day or two-day slowpitch clinics in their countries next year should contact Bob Fromer, ESF Development Commission member for Slowpitch, on bobfromer@onetel.com.

The ESF covers the costs of trainers' flights for these courses, and the clinicians volunteer their services. So the host countries only need to supply room and board for the clinicians for one or two nights and cover in-country costs (if any) such as venues and publicity.

Another possibility that the British Softball Federation will explore with the ESF

Executive is sending slowpitch umpire-trainers to different countries to run two-day slowpitch umpire courses leading to a national qualification in slowpitch umpiring. These courses would be modelled on the Umpire Qualification Courses run in the UK that have produced dozens of qualified umpires who officiate at national slowpitch tournaments and league events in Britain. Again, any federations interested in this idea should contact Bob Fromer.

As we head towards 2011, there is no question that slowpitch is continuing to grow on the European continent, with new teams and leagues being formed and more serious athletes playing.

For federations, slowpitch is a way to bring a wider range of new participants into the sport more quickly than they can with fastpitch. And for clubs, slowpitch can bring more members and more revenue, and more competitive opportunities.

And above all, slowpitch softball is quick, exciting and fun!



Malta Tigers



The Malta Tigers Softball Club (MTSC) was established two years ago and currently consists of 9 members in the committee and 12 players on the team. The MTSC President and Vice-President are Mrs Elaine Schembri and Mr Aldo Scicluna respectively, while the team's manager and coach is Mr Roberto Andolfi. Roberto Andolfi started coaching baseball and softball 21 years ago and coached several teams, placing first in various national and international leagues. He started coaching the Maltese National team in 2006 and 2007, and offered the Maltese team opportunities in several international tournaments.

The Tigers first experience abroad was in 2008 where they participated in an international tournament in Arezzo. In 2009, the team had another unique opportunity to compete against other leading teams in an international tournament held in July at San Martino Buon Albergo, followed by an intensive training camp in Castelfranco Veneto. Furthermore, as part of their pre-season training, the Caserta Softball Club, opted to choose Malta for a training camp in conjunction with the MTSC in February. Moreover, seven chosen players, together



with the team's manager, attended the European Softball Championships Pool "A" in Valencia, Spain. Being able to assist to such professional softball teams competing against one another was a wonderful opportunity for them. The Tigers also had the opportunity to meet the President of the European Softball Federation (ESF), Mr Andre Van Overbeek. In early December 2009, the Maltese team hosted two Italian teams, Saronno and Milano 1946, for a 3-day fastpitch tournament. This tournament was won by the local team, where the winner had to be chosen by difference in points.

This year, the Tigers attended once more in San Martino Buon Albergo, classifying 6th out of eight teams. In September, some players will be attending a training camp in Italy where they will have the opportunity to practice some gaming techniques. In December, the club will be holding another international fastpitch tournament in Malta, hosting 4 Italian teams. The team's captain, Erica Xerri Mallan, was also chosen to play with two Italian teams, twice for Polizzi Generosa, who play in Serie B league and once for Macereta Softball, who play in the Serie A1 league. The club worked really hard to make these trips possible, in fact, the Tigers holds various fund-raising activities, mainly swimming lessons, as well as, football tournaments.

For more information regarding the Club and other activities please log on to: www.freewebs.com/melliehatigers or send an email on: tigerssoftballmalta@gmail.com.

