



Challenge Chatter

The Official Newsletter of the 2008 Ramada 3 Nations Challenge



Thursday July 3rd edition sponsored by



Welcome to the **2008 Ramada 3 Nations Challenge** brought to you by the Saskatoon Amateur Softball Association and Ducks Unlimited. We hope you will enjoy some of the best softball action the world can provide. This event brings together national teams from three of the best softball nations in the world. In the last ISF World Men's Softball Championship won by New Zealand, Canada finished second, the USA fourth and Japan fifth. The players will not only be playing hard to represent their country with pride, they will also be fighting for spots on their nation's team that will be competing in the 2009 XII ISF Worlds that will take place July 17-26 right here in Saskatoon. Following is a brief profile of the three teams and some of the players to look out for.

2008 USA Softball Men's National Team



"The committee members decided to take a young group of guys mixed with a few veterans to attempt every effort to grow our sport," said head coach Peter Turner. "It's going to be exciting and challenging. We have the right amount of youth sprinkled with leadership that will help this team develop."

Some players to watch include:

#8 Frank DeGroat - A member of the USA Softball Men's National Team since 2006, DeGroat will be counted on to provide leadership to this young and inexperienced pitching staff. From behind the plate he is a calming force for the U.S. pitchers and works to keep them under control and relaxed in tight situations.

#22 Nate Devine – He finished second with the USA Softball Men's National Team at the ISF Men's World Cup in Prague – batted .385 with two home runs and seven RBI. In 2006 Nate led Italian Athletic Club of Stockton, CA, to a runner-up finish at the ASA Men's Class B Fast Pitch National Championship and was named first-team All-American at the ASA Men's Class B National Championship.

#5 Kyle Magnusson - He was a member of 2004 National Team for the worlds. He has played on two ASA National Championships in 2003 and 2005. He was named to the ISC All-World team three times and an ASA All-American five times.

#34 Travis Price – He may have been born in Canada but his allegiance when it comes to softball bleeds Red, White and Blue. Making his fourth consecutive appearance on a USA National Team, Price is one of the rising stars in the USA Softball National Team Program. He has become the go-to pitcher for head coach Peter Turner.

#24 Cody Thomson – He won the silver with the USA Softball Men's National Team at the World Cup in Prague, posting a 2-0 record from the circle with 18 strikeouts. In 2006 he competed for the National Team at the Pan Am Qualifier in Sonora, Mexico where they finished fourth. He led the USA to a first place finish at the AAU International Championship in Orlando, FL and was also named Best Pitcher at the NAFA World Series. He was also a member of 2004 national team for the worlds.

2008 Japanese National Team



Japan finished fifth at the 2004 World Championship in New Zealand finishing with an overall record of 5 win 3 losses. Japan's three losses came to strong teams from Canada, USA and Australia. In 2007 Japan won the ISF World Softball Cup in Czechoslovakia, in which Canada did not attend. They lost a 4-2 decision to USA in the preliminary round but came back to record a 12-2 playoff win, along with 2-0 victory in the final.

Look for Japan to be led at the plate by sluggers **#1 Hiraku Yokoyama**, **#23 Shuhei Suzuki**, **# 14 Yu Nishimori** and **#6 Koichiro Tanaka**, Yokoyama hit an amazing .560 in 29 plate appearances at the World Cup.

On the mound Japan will be led by **#11 Kazutaka Murasato**, **#17 Kunihiko Iida** and **# 24 Tatsuya Hamaguchi**. Murasato went a perfect 3-0 at the World Cup, giving up only 2 earned runs in 14 innings. He recorded the victory over USA starter Travis Price in the semi final pitching a perfect 4 innings on the way to the 12-2 win. Look for big things from Kunihiko Iida who shut out the Americans in the final game.

2008 Canadian National Team



The eighteen players on Team Canada form a true national team, with home towns ranging from coast to coast. Six players come from Ontario, 3 from Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Newfoundland with one from Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Saskatchewan's three players are **Trevor Ethier** from Saskatoon as well as **Dean Holoien** and **Keith MacKintosh** whose home town is Melfort.

Canada will be led on the mound by an interesting mix of youth and experience in its four man pitching staff made up of: **Frank Cox**, **Trevor Ethier**, **Dean Holoien** and **Grant Patterson**. Cox and Holoien are the veterans with many years of National Team and ISC tournament experience. As for the two younger guys Ethier is in his fifth year with the National Team and Paterson is a rookie.

Working with the pitchers behind the plate will be Team Canada veteran **Craig Crawford** along with **Chad Ghostkeeper** and **Jason Sandford**. Crawford's history with the national team can be traced back to the 1996 Worlds where he hit 3 solo home runs in one game. Ghostkeeper was selected as a first team All World at the 2007 ISC World Fastball Tournament in Kitchener.

At the plate Canada should be in good shape featuring such hitters as **Ryan Wolfe** and **Jason Hill**, 2007 ISC First Team All World, as well as **Steve Mullaley** and **Derek Mayson** who were second teamers.

RESULTS OF THE PRE-TOURNAMENT GAMES

Tuesday, July 1	Saskatoon	Game 1	USA - 10	SASA All Stars - 2
	Pilot Butte	Game 1	Saskatoon Poly Plus Diamondbacks - 2	Japan - 0
		Game 2	Japan - 6	Saskatoon Poly Plus Diamondbacks - 1
Wednesday, July 2	Melfort	Game 1	Canada - 5	USA - 0
		Game 2	Canada - 4	USA - 1
	Prince Albert	Game 1	Japan - 7	Aspen Interiors - 0
		Game 2	Japan - 9	Aspen Interiors - 1

