



JAPAN DETHRONED AS WORLD CHAMPS

Team USA posted a 3-1 victory over Japan in the gold medal game of the VIII Jr. Women's World Championship.

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ENSCHDEDE, NETHERLANDS -- After many days in a row of rain, it was fitting that very light precipitation tried to fall in the middle of today's final game at the International Softball Federation's (ISF) VIII Jr. Women's World Championship (19-and-under, fast pitch) here. As it passed though, so too did the end of Japan's quest for a three-peat after they fell, 3-1, to Team USA. The event is played every four years and Japan had won the 2003 & 1999 editions of the tournament after the U.S. had taken the 1995 title.

Sixteen countries competed in the 2007 version, which saw Japan take a quick 1-0 lead with a run in the top of the first inning in today's gold medal game. However, Team USA tallied twice in the bottom of the second and three pitchers combined to hold off the Japanese, who they had defeated by almost the same score (3-0) in a playoff game one day earlier. The Americans cemented the gold medal game with a run in the bottom of the fifth.

Five different U.S. players had two hits apiece while Japan got a 3-for-3 effort at the plate from Yu Yamamoto. Winning pitcher Megan Elliot came on in the fourth inning in relief of starter Ashley Brignac. Tomo Yasufuku took the loss for Japan, going the first three-and-a-third innings.

Earlier today Japan had advanced to the gold medal game with a big 10-1 win over Australia that resulted in the latter taking home the bronze medals. The winners scored in every inning except the second and took advantage of four Australian errors.

The U.S. finished with a perfect 10-0 won-lost record. Japan (9-2) was unbeaten in their first eight games of the event. Australia finished up 8-3.

The tournament's other participants were (alphabetically): Argentina (3-4), Botswana (0-7), Canada (6-3), China (3-4), Chinese Taipei (4-4), Germany (1-6), Italy (2-5), Netherlands (5-3), New Zealand (2-5), Puerto Rico (5-4), Russia (1-6), South Africa (0-7), and Venezuela (7-3).

For more on the VIII Jr. Women's World Championship, visit the official event website at <http://www.wksoftbaljunioren2007.nl/>. (Results, boxscores, and leaders can be found at <http://www.knbsb-stats.nl/knbsb/stats07/wksbjr07/index.html>.)

The ISF's next world championship will be the junior men's (19-and-under, fast pitch), to be held next year in Whitehorse, Yukon (Canada) (June 21-29, 2008).

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Bruce Wawrzyniak, ISF Director of Communications (+1 813 453 8762 or brucew@internationalsoftball.com)