

20 March, 2018

Six new players have been named for the **GOLDEN HOMES NEW ZEALAND BLACK SOX'S** next tour - but head coach Mark Sorenson and some of his senior world champions are taking time out.

Sorenson, captain Nathan Nukunuku, infielder Tyron Bartorillo and outfielder Wayne Lauulu will stay behind when the Black Sox play at the Intercontinental Cup tournament in Prague from August 28 to September 1.

Black Sox assistant-coach Daryl Marino will guide the 17-man team in Sorenson's absence with New Zealand under-23 Major Sox coach Steve Deans as his assistant.

Experienced outfielder Ben Enoka will take over as captain.

Softball New Zealand chief executive Tony Giles said Sorenson "has accepted an offer to take a sabbatical".

"Whilst Mark will not be physically in attendance, he has already set the benchmark high for the tour by not only selecting an exciting and youthful squad but selecting a new management line-up also," Giles said.

"Succession planning is key, both on and off the diamond and this is an area where Mark is very astute. His attention to detail in all aspects of campaign planning, including identifying talent, sets him apart in the international game."

Black Sox assistant-coach Daryl Marino will guide the team in Sorenson's absence with New Zealand under-23 Major Sox coach Steve Deans as his assistant. Former Black Sox catcher Casey Eden takes over as manager with Jayden Moore ending his 12-year involvement.

Sorenson said his sabbatical allowed the Black Sox "the opportunity to develop the next tier of coaches".

"We just felt they would develop better if I am not there. I've been part of everything and will continue to be, I just won't be getting on the plane. The work we're doing will continue, just with a slightly different flavour."

Sorenson – a four-time world champion in a 20-year career as a Black Sox player – has been coaching the national team since 2013.

He loves the role but also has a lot of business responsibilities as central regional manager for the AWF recruitment company. "I haven't had a family holiday in five or six years as all my leave is taken up with my softball commitments."

Sorenson believes taking a break will freshen up his coaching and is convinced it will do the Black Sox players some good to hear "some new voices".





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He has confidence in Marino to take over and said it was logical to have under-23 coach Deans assist.

Sorenson said the selectors know what Nukunuku, Bartorillo and Laulu – all proven world championship players – can do and it made sense to spell them to blood others and further develop the Black Sox's depth.

GOLDEN HOMES BLACK SOX SQUAD

PITCHERS

Nik Hayes (Hutt Valley), Daniel Chapman (Auckland), Campbell Gibson (Auckland), Eru Drage (Auckland).

CATCHERS

Kallan Compain (Auckland), Zane van Lieshout (Auckland)

INFIELDERS

Pita Rona (North Harbour), Joel Evans (Hutt Valley), Cole Evans (Auckland), Rhys Evans (Auckland), Jerome Raemaki (Wellington), Joe Ferriso Jr (Hutt Valley).

OUTFIELDERS

Ben Enoka (Auckland, captain), Thomas Enoka (Auckland), Campbell Enoka (Auckland), Reilly Makea (Canterbury), Jackson Watt (Canterbury).

Head coach: Daryl Marino. Assistant-coach: Steve Deans. Battery coach: Jim Wana. Video analyst: Jamie Frisby. Manager: Casey Eden.

Scorer: Ian Ditfort.

NEW PLAYERS 'DESERVE PROMOTION'

The **BLACK SOX'S** six new players had all earned their spots after proven performances in the domestic season, head coach Mark Sorenson said.

DANIEL CHAPMAN, a former Junior Black Sox pitcher, has earned promotion after pitching Mt Albert Ramblers to the national interclub tournament.

"He threw two no-hitters on the penultimate day and took 28 strikeouts in 12 innings and he only gave up two hits in the final."

ERU DRAGE offers the Black Sox "a left-handed hitting and pitching option and can also play first base".



RHYS EVANS had emerged from younger brother Cole's shadow this year with consistent defensive displays in the infield and "batted .400 [four hits out of every 10 at-bats] at most events".

JOE FERRISO JR is an athletic, young infielder who has benefited from a break from the game and "has come back a better, all-round player".

Teenage outfielder **REILLY MAKEA** – the son of four-time Black Sox world champion Thomas Makea – "obviously comes from good stock", Sorenson said. "Which isn't a selection criteria, but it helps. He's been around the ballpark since he could walk and is a young, exciting talent, coming through."

JACKSON WATT, a Canterbury outfielder, has impressed Sorenson with his batting consistency. "He's a tough out at the plate and has fully earned his spot in the line up."

KEY RETURNEES

Wellington infielder **JEROME RAEMAKI** will return after missing the 2017 world championships following knee surgery.

"He's a world-class hitter," Sorenson said. "He's not totally back where he was, but he's an offensive threat every time he goes to the plate and we wanted to take him to get him fitter and stronger so he's able to withstand the rigours of a tough internal tour."

PITA RONA – first selected for the Black Sox as a 16-year-old in 2011 – is back as a first baseman and back-up pitcher. The son of Brad Rona (another four-time world gold medallist), Rona "was top batter at the National Fastpitch Championships with a .619 average and he threw a game against the Czech Republic where he took 17 strikeouts".

OTHER SELECTION NOTES

- The squad includes two sets of brothers - **COLE and RHYS EVANS** ; and **BEN, THOMAS and CAMPBELL ENOKA** (all from Auckland).
- Wellington infielder **JEROME RAEMAKI** returns to the Black Sox after missing the 2017 world championship victory following knee surgery.
- **REILLY MAKEA** will be playing in two international tournaments in successive months. He will pitch for the Junior Black Sox (coached by father Thomas) at the 2018 under-19 world championships in Prince Albert, Canada, in June.
- **JACKSON WATT** will make his Black Sox debut - two years after he had to miss the junior world championships with a broken arm.
- Hutt Valley infielder **JOE FERRISO JR** is the second NZ softball international in his family. His sister, **DANICA FERRISO**, has represented the NZ White Sox at the last two women's world championships.





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TOURNAMENT DETAILS

The Black Sox -ranked No 1 in the world – will play Japan (2), Argentina (3), USA (6), Czech Republic (7), Denmark (11) and Botswana (12) in the five-day Intercontinental Cup series in Prague from August 28-September 1.

MEDIA CONTACTS

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Regards

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