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Candidatures wanted - notice page 5!

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

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

With Christmas and the New Year nearly on our doorstep, now is the time to reflect about the year that's rushed by and look positively to the opportunities that lie ahead.

National and European competitions have been played, the champions are known and a lot of work was done by all those volunteers who spend so much of their free time to promote the sport we all love.

Volunteers are the most important part of our sport – without them it is not possible to play a game, manage a club or run a National, European or World Federation. Of course, at the same time, we want everything to become better and more

professional – and we want people who are volunteers, not paid professionals, to make this happen. Well, more professionalism is certainly an aim, but we will have to get there step-by-step.

In October, the ISF Congress was held in Venezuela and a new ISF Constitution was adopted. Our VP Operations and ISF Vice-President, Ami Baran, had a large role in preparing this constitution, as did others from Europe over the past three years.

At the Congress, new playing rules were accepted which will be published on the ISF website, Women's World Championships was rescheduled from every four years to every two years, and we learned that the original dates for the Women's World Championships in 2010 have had to be changed because of a conflict with dates for the CONACAS Games in Puerto Rico, where the three South American teams who qualified for the Women's World Championship are committed to participate.

At this moment, the ISF is looking at several other potential sites to place the World Championships and at dates that will not affect other competitions already scheduled, including those in Europe.

As far as the ESF is concerned, the Executive Council and all our Commissions learned much during the playing season in 2009. We learned from our own mistakes, from European competitions and through cooperation with our member Federations.

During this "off season" period, we are working on changes in the structure of the ESF and a new European Championship competition schedule. An Athletes and Scorekeeping Commission has been created; brochures, leaflets and clinic manuals are being translated; and clinics and courses are being scheduled in different parts of Europe. All of this will be presented to you at the ESF Congress in Antalya in early February.

We are all looking forward to this Congress, where we will work together to make plans for the future of softball in Europe – a future without the Olympics. *Your President Andre van Overbeek*



Andre van Overbeek
President

2010 ESF slowpitch competitions should be the biggest yet

Interest and participation in co-ed slowpitch softball has been growing slowly but steadily in Europe over the past few years, and as a result, ESF slowpitch competitions in 2010 look like breaking new records for the number of teams taking part.

European Slowpitch Championship

The European Co-ed Slowpitch Championship (EchCS) will be held in the Netherlands from July 6-10. This will be the first time that the Dutch have taken part in a European slowpitch event either as hosts or participants, and because the Netherlands is one of the top softball countries in Europe, everyone is looking forward to seeing how good a Dutch national slowpitch team will be.

Another new entrant to the 2010 European Championship will be Belgium, who have run a slowpitch league for the past two years and have sent teams to slowpitch tournaments in the UK to prepare for European competition. The Belgians will also host their own international slowpitch tournament on June 26-27 next year in Oostende, just before the European Championship.

Other potential new entrants in 2010 include Switzerland and Bulgaria and there is a possibility that Austria (who competed in 2002 and hosted in 2004), Guernsey (who competed in 1998 and 2000) and Slovakia (who competed in 2002) will come back to the competition, along with Jersey, who made their debut in 2008.

Of course, the Great Britain team will be back to defend its title, and, as usual, strong challenges are expected from Ireland and the Czech Republic and from an improving Slovenian team.

So the 2010 European Slowpitch Championship should be the biggest and best yet – and there is still time for more countries to enter and join the fun.

European Slowpitch Cup

The 2009 European Co-ed Slowpitch Cup (ECCS) in Bulgaria had seven teams from six countries taking part, a new record for European slowpitch competition. And for the first time since ESF slowpitch tournaments began in 1998, a British team failed to win. Instead, it was Dodder Dynamoes from Ireland who took the title, and that means there will be two fun-loving teams from Ireland in this year's competition.

The dates and venue for the 2010 European Slowpitch Cup have yet to be decided, but a motion has been submitted to the ESF Congress to fix the timing for the ECCS in the first full week of August, so August 4-7, 2010 is the likely date.

Several countries have expressed an interest in hosting the tournament, and the ESF is waiting for the candidatures.

The European Slowpitch Cup, which will be held for the fourth time in 2010, has already established a reputation as a relaxed and friendly tournament – but it's also a competition where some great softball is played. Expectations are that the 2010 event will equal or better the number of participants in 2009.

Still Time to Enter

The deadline for entry without penalty to all ESF Championships and Cups is January 1, 2010 (entry forms can be downloaded from the ESF website). So there is still plenty of time for countries and clubs who are thinking about entering a European slowpitch competition in 2010 to do so.

Entries can be withdrawn without penalty by February 13, 2010 in the case of tournaments where the date and venue is known at the time of the Congress. So for those who would like to enter a slowpitch event but aren't quite sure, the best thing is to enter by January 1 and withdraw your entry in February if your team can't go after all. That way, you have as long as possible to make the choice.

Meanwhile efforts to grow and develop slowpitch in Europe will continue in 2010, with slowpitch clinics currently being planned for Belgium, Malta, Slovenia and Bulgaria.

Bob Fromer



Italian coaches hold clinic on game tactics in Croatia

During the weekend of October 3-4, a clinic on game tactics for Croatian softball coaches was presented in Zagreb by Italian coaches Adriano Morabito and Anna Battigelli.

The clinic was divided into two parts. The first part consisted of a lecture, held on Saturday afternoon, on how to prepare a good line-up, offensive and defensive strategies and adjusting team offense and defense to specific game situations.

The second part of the clinic was practical, and consisted of games played during a four-team friendly tournament on Sunday. During this tournament, the team coached by Italian coaches played different game strategies in three different games.

This part of the clinic was held at the beautiful Princ Fields on Lake Jarun in Zagreb on a beautiful sunny day. With two very well-prepared fields, we were able to host four teams who all played each other over the course of the day. The teams were Azzano (Italy) and then three teams from Zagreb: Novi Zagreb Lady Pirates, Princ Zagreb and Mladost Scorpions.

All games were limited to 90 minutes due to the fact that six games had to be played.

At the end, the ranking was:

		W	L	PCT	F/A
1.	AZZANO	3	0	1.000	16:3
2.	NOVI ZAGREB	1	2	0.333	10:9
3.	MLADOST	1	2	0.333	16:11
4.	PRINC ZAGREB	1	2	0.333	5:21

Game scores were:

- Novi Zagreb 3, Azzano 5
- Azzano 4, Mladost 0
- Azzano 7, Princ 0
- Princ 2, Mladost 12
- Novi Zagreb 2, Princ 3
- Novi Zagreb 5, Mladost 4

The weekend again demonstrated successful cooperation between the Croatian Softball Association, the Italian Baseball and Softball Federation and the European Softball Federation.

It was great to see Anna and Adriano again, this time with their team and of course a lot of parents and friends that came to cheer for Azzano.

With ongoing help from the European Softball Federation and from coaches like Anna and Adriano, we know we will see improvements in Croatian softball. Through the education of our existing and future softball coaches, we have already seen great progress in our sport.

Our youth program in particular has enjoyed great success in the past two years. Competitions organized by the Croatian Softball Association in 2009 were competed in by three Junior, five Cadet and four Minime teams.

We would like to thank the European Softball Federation and the Italian Baseball and Softball Federation once again for all the help provided so far and for their future support.

Croatian Softball Association

great britain

Vote for GB Softball Team

YOUR ONLINE VOTE CAN HELP THE GREAT BRITAIN WOMEN'S SOFTBALL TEAM GET TO THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS!

The Great Britain Women's Fastpitch Softball Team earned a place in the 2010 Softball World Championships by finishing second in European Championships this past summer, the team's highest-ever European placing.

But the team receives no public funding because softball is no longer an Olympic sport. Players and staff had to pay their own way to compete for their country at the European Championships, but the cost of competing in the World Championships, which will probably be held in North America, is beyond what the players and their families can afford.

So the team has entered a British Airways contest called "Great Britons" where the prize could be 16 desperately-needed free flights that can get the majority of our players and staff to the



World Championships. Now the team has been short-listed along with seven other entries, and the winner will be determined by public vote.

So please go online to <http://www.greatbritons.ba.com/> shortlists and cast your vote for the GB Women's Team

entry submitted by first base player MORGAN PARKERSON. Just click on Morgan's name on the Judges' Shortlist and then hit the VOTE NOW button under Morgan's photo. You'll need to do a quick registration, and then you can vote.

And then please get everyone you know and everyone you can reach by way of Facebook, MySpace, Twitter etc to vote as well! Winning this contest could make all the difference between the GB Women's Softball Team being able to go to the World Championships and having to turn down its place.

Thanks very much for your help!

Bob Fromer

SLOWPITCH RULES: What are the main differences from fastpitch?

*Over the past few years, there has been growing interest in **slowpitch** on the continent of Europe.*

*The **European Co-ed Slowpitch Championship**, held every two years, is now an established ESF competition. Six countries entered teams in the latest **European Co-ed Slowpitch Cup competition** held in 2009 in Bulgaria and there may be eight countries or more in the European Slowpitch Championships in the Netherlands in 2010. More and more countries are starting slowpitch leagues or hosting domestic slowpitch tournaments. But many people in Europe are still confused about slowpitch rules and how they differ from fastpitch. So here is a brief summary of the most important rules that are unique to slowpitch and that determine how the game is played.*

Field Dimensions

In adult slowpitch softball, the field dimensions are:

- Distance between bases: 65 feet (19.81 metres).
- Pitching distance: 50 feet (15.24 metres).
- Minimum outfield distance: 275 feet (83.82 metres).

Formats and Players

Slowpitch can be played either as a **co-ed** game or as a **single-sex** game by men or women.

Whichever is played, a slowpitch team has **10 players** on the field, with four outfielders instead of three. All other positions are the same. There are no fixed rules about where those four outfielders are positioned.

When played as a co-ed game, the standard ISF rule is that there must be **five men and five women** on the field: two men and two women in the outfield and two men and two women in the infield at whatever positions the team decides. The pitcher and catcher must be one of each.

However, it is possible to play co-ed slowpitch with a different ratio of men to women (6:4 or 7:3), in which case there must be at least one woman in the outfield and in the infield and a woman must be either the pitcher or the catcher.

Batting Order

Where a co-ed game is played with the standard five men and five women on the field, the batting order must be constructed so that a woman is followed by a man and vice-versa. You can never have two men or two women batting consecutively.

Where the ratio of men to women is different (6:4 or 7:3), there are special rules about how the batting order must be constructed.



Protective Equipment

Slowpitch softball is often played without the use of batting helmets or protective equipment for catchers, and the rules do not require them. **However, a catcher's mask is highly recommended**, and there is just as much reason to wear a batting helmet as a batter-runner or baserunner in slowpitch as in fastpitch.

Pitching

In slowpitch, the ball is delivered underhand with one foot remaining in contact with the pitching plate until the ball is released. A legal pitch has to describe an arc reaching a **minimum of six feet (1.82 metres)** and a **maximum of 12 feet (3.65 metres)**. This arc ensures that the pitched ball will travel slowly. The judgement about whether a pitch conforms to these parameters is made by the home plate umpire.

As in any other form of softball or baseball, the rulebook strike zone applies: in this case the ball must cross some part of the plate between the batter's front shoulder and back knee. But since the ball is coming downwards through the strike zone, it takes a while to learn how the judge balls and strikes in slowpitch.

Balls and Strikes

In slowpitch, any pitch that hits any portion of the plate as it descends to the ground is a ball, even if it passes through the strike zone.

A foul ball hit when a batter already has two strikes is a third strike and the batter is out.

Bunting and Stealing

Bunting is not allowed, nor is base stealing. A baserunner must remain in contact with the base until the pitched ball is hit or crosses home plate.

Accordingly, there can be no such thing as a wild pitch or a passed ball on which runners can advance. A pitched ball is, in effect, a dead ball until it's hit.

Walks

A walk to a woman batter in co-ed slowpitch means the woman takes first base, as normal. But when a male batter is walked, he gets **two bases** and goes to second base (via first base).

With less than two outs, if a man is walked, the following female batter simply takes her turn at bat as normal. But if a man is walked with two outs, **the following female batter can choose either to bat or to take a walk**. These rules are designed to prevent teams deliberately walking men to get to female hitters they think might be weaker.

Outfield Line

All of the above is in the ISF Rulebook. One rule that isn't, but is sometimes used in co-ed play, is that a line is marked across the outfield in an arc 150 feet (45.72 metres) from home plate. All outfielders have to stand behind this line until the ball is hit.

Again, this is designed to make sure that outfielders don't play too close when women bat, because when they do, women have almost no space between the infielders and outfielders in which to get base hits.

Use of 11" and 12" Softballs

In ESF co-ed slowpitch play, two different balls are used: an 11" ball when a woman is batting and a standard 12" ball when a man is batting. This is easy to manage within a game (the umpire hands the appropriate ball to the catcher for each at-bat) and it overcomes the disadvantage for women of having outfielders play too close, because the 11" ball travels further.

The use of two different-sized balls does not seem to present problems for pitchers or fielders.

Time Out

In slowpitch, there is no equivalent of returning the ball to the pitcher in the circle to stop play, as happens in fastpitch. Instead, the home plate umpire will call "Time" after every play when he or she is satisfied that the ball is under control by the defensive team in the infield and that baserunners are not showing any intention to advance. This is a judgement call on the part of the home plate umpire.

After "Time" is called, all runners resume contact with their base, the ball is returned to the pitcher (if he or she doesn't already have it) and the next pitch is delivered when pitcher and batter are ready.

Bob Fromer

REMINDER TO ALL FEDERATIONS

We remind all Federations that they can submit the **Entry Forms** to participate to the ESF Competitions **until January 1st, 2010**. Late submissions of the Entry Forms (after Jan. 1st, 2010) will be accepted until the final day of the Congress (Febr. 6th, 2010) but they will be subject to a penalty of the same amount as the Entry Fee. After February 6th the Entry Forms will not be accepted. You can download the Entry Form from the website www.europeansoftball.org -> DOCUMENTS -> FORMS TO DOWNLOAD. Here the shortcut <http://www.europeansoftball.org/node/151>

This is the 2010 ESF Competitions Calendar:

EChU22G	CHAMPIONSHIP UNDER 22 GIRLS	Prague-CZE, Aug. 2nd-7th
EChJG	CHAMPIONSHIP JUNIOR GIRLS	Vienna-AUT, Jul. 25th-31st
EChMG	CHAMPIONSHIP MINIME GIRLS	tba-TUR, dates and location to be communicate by the Organizer
EChM	CHAMPIONSHIP MEN	Havlickuv Brod-CZE, Jul. 26th-31st
EChCS	CHAMPIONSHIP COED SLOWPITCH	Amstelveen-NED, Jul. 6/7th-10th
EChEW	CHAMPIONSHIP ELITE WOMEN	Nomination still open
ECWA	CUP WOMEN A	Haarlem-NED, Aug. 16th-21st (***)
ECWCWA	CUP WINNERS CUP WOMEN A	Haarlem-NED, Aug. 16th-21st (***)
ECWB	CUP WOMEN B	Nomination still open (***)
ECWCWB	CUP WINNERS CUP WOMEN B	Nomination still open (***)
ECM	CUP MEN	nomination received from Italy, Aug. 23rd-28th (***)
ECWCM	CUP WINNERS CUP MEN	Nomination still open (***)
ECCS	CUP COED SLOWPITCH	provisional dates Aug. 2nd-7th Nomination still open

(***) Dates of these Cups might change depending on the communication from the ISF of the Women's World Championship dates.

Any Federation member can send the **Candidature for Organizing** the still open Competitions using the two Forms published on the website www.europeansoftball.org -> DOCUMENTS -> FORMS TO

DOWNLOAD. Here the shortcut <http://www.europeansoftball.org/node/151>.

Candidatures are accepted until the final date of the Congress, Febr. 6th 2010.

Shortly the Congress Documents will be

posted on the website. We are waiting for the last information from the organizing Turkish Federation. For any additional information you can contact us via email secretarygeneral@europeansoftball.org.