

2020 SUN LAKES SPLASH ARTICLES



Waiting for the action are base runner Stan Coutu, first base coach Ron Carmichael and first basemen Sam Giordano.
(Photo by Captured Moments Photography)

January 2020

FALL SOFTBALL SEASON UPDATE

By Larry Wolfe

At press time there were two weeks of play remaining in the Fall Softball Seasons. In the Sun Division the Brenden Financial Planning team, managed by Mike Gloyd, had a four game lead over the second place Real Estate Rustlers, managed by Ron Carmichael and sponsored by the Jim Leckner Agency. The Planners sported a 10-2 record while the Rustlers were at 6-4. The Spooner Physical Therapy squad was at 4-6 while the Farmers Insurance team languished at 2-10. The Wolfe & Associates team, managed by Bill McCoy, led the Lakes Division with an 8-2

record. Both the Young Realty Team and the A-1 Golf Carts squad were at 5-5. The Core Photography crew was at 2-8.

Big Bob Wicks was tearing up the Sun Division, leading in both batting average and homeruns. Bob was hitting a robust .896 with 15 homers. Other Top Ten hitters were Mike Lebet (.860), Dave Platt (.808), Larry Kaufmann (.791), Tom Chilton (.781), Reyes Gonzales (.759), Jerry Hester (.759), Dean Messier (.733), Bobby Farmer (.727) and Dan Melosi (.721). Tom Stephens was second in long balls with ten; Reyes Gonzales and Dean Messier had nine taters while Tom Chilton and Mark McKinnon had eight each.

In the Lakes Division Dennis LePore was the leading hitter at .881. The remaining Top Ten hitters were Tom Lorgan (.868), Doug Warwick (.857), Vern Rogers (.744), Jerry Smith (.739), Dennis Bernaiche (.718), Ernie Flores (.708), Jesse Washington and Dave Martin (both at .703) and Gary Hillabolt (.700).

The Fall Season ended on December 20th. Check out the Stats Page on our website (www.sunlakessoftball.com) for up-to-date standings and statistics.

Thanks to Flemings Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar and DC Steakhouse for renewing their advertising banners at the Field of Dreams. John Jeffrey, Operating Partner of Fleming's Chandler restaurant, has supported our program since 2010. Dean and Lorie Laplant, owners of DC Steakhouse in Downtown Chandler have been supporters since 2013. We also welcome a new advertiser this month: The local branch of Western State Bank, located at 976 W. Chandler Blvd., has joined our group of supporters. Susan Brinegar is the local Loan Officer. Go to the Sponsors Page on our website for links to all of our advertisers' websites. And remember to support the advertisers who support our community!



Cheryl Loyd (front), Chrissy Connors (back left) and Cyndy Hilby (back right) are shown at a recent practice, getting ready for the upcoming season. (Photo by Strike A Pose Studios)

January 2020

LADY SLUGGERS ARE READY FOR 2020 SEASON

By Larry Wolfe

The Sun Lakes Lady Sluggers senior softball team opens its 2020 season with an away game at Valle Del Oro on Monday, January 6th. The first home game at the Field of Dreams is at noon on Wednesday, January 8th versus View Point. The Sluggers play in the ten-team Valley of the Sun League. The season continues through early March.

Here's the 2020 home schedule; all games start at noon:

Wednesday, January 8 vs. View Point

Wednesday, January 15 vs. Resort/Rock Shadows
Monday, January 20 vs. Canyon Vistas
Monday, January 27 vs. Sunland Springs
Wednesday, January 29 vs. Fountain of the Sun
Monday, February 3 vs. The Stingers
Wednesday, February 12 vs. Valle Del Oro
Wednesday, February 19 vs. Sunland Village East
Monday, February 24 vs. Queen Creek

The entire home and away schedule may be found on the Ladies Page of our website (www.sunlakessoftball.com). Come down to the field and cheer on Manager Terry Finley and your Lady Sluggers!



Pitcher Bill "The Gladiator" Corso of the champion Brenden Financial Planning squad tosses a pitch.

(Courtesy of Snappy Shots Photography)

February 2020

BRENDEN'S BOYS WIN SUN DIVISION

By Larry Wolfe

Manager Mike Gloyd led the Brenden Financial Planning team to the Sun Division pennant, compiling a record of 13-5. That was three games better than the 10-8 mark posted by Manager Ron Carmichael's Real Estate Rustlers team. The Rustlers are sponsored by the Jim Leckner Real Estate Agency.

Bob Wicks led the league in both batting average and homeruns. His .844 average was twenty points better than second place hitter Mike Lebet's .824. Other Top Ten hitters were Reyes Gonzales (.789), Larry Kaufmann (.788), Bobby Farmer (.768), Randy Neumann (.744), Dan Melosi (.735), Dave Platt (.735), Mike Otman (.730) and Tom Stephens (.711). Wick's 18 homers were four more than second place Tom Chilton's 14. Reyes Gonzales, Dean Messier and Tom Stephens blasted 13 round trippers each while Mark McKinnon, Tom Kasunic and Mike Lebet had ten taters each. Randy Neumann led the league in singles with 64 while Dave Platt was the doubles leader with 16. Kelly Anderson, Ron Carmichael and Dan Melosi tied for the lead in triples with three each.

Our Winter League started on January 7th and will continue through February 14th. The regular season will be followed by a three-day double elimination seeded tournament beginning February 18th. Team sponsors and managers for the Sun Division are Brenden Financial Planning (Manager Mike Gloyd), Frank Margiotta's Farmers Insurance Agency (Manager Ron Carmichael), Leckner Realty (Manager Sam Giordano) and Spooner Physical Therapy (Manager Randy Neumann).

Go to our website (www.sunlakessoftball.com) for up-to-date standings, stats and more.



The 2020 Lady Sluggers: kneeling, l-r: Lynn Casey, Christine Connors, Cheryl Loyd and Cyndy Hilby. Standing, l-r: Ann Buckley, Ann Hegney, Mgr. Terry Finley, Teresa Dorman, Mary Alka, Frankie Demouth, Suzy Steinmann and Coach Scott Steinman. Not shown: Sharon Bergman, Sue Rodke, Lynn Tanner and Joan Schmitt.

February 2020

LADY SLUGGERS SEASON IS UNDERWAY

By Larry Wolfe

The Sun Lakes Lady Sluggers senior softball team opened their season on January 6th. The season continues through early March. Below is a listing of the remaining February home games. All games are played at the Field of Dreams and begin at 12 noon.

Monday, February 3 vs. The Stingers

Wednesday, February 12 vs. Valle Del Oro

Wednesday, February 19 vs. Sunland Village East
Monday, February 24 vs. Queen Creek

The Sluggers complete their season with three away dates, with the final games scheduled for March 4th at Sunland Springs.

The entire home and away schedule may be found on the Ladies Team Page of our website (www.sunlakessoftball.com). Come down to the field and cheer on your Lady Sluggers!



The Champion Wolfe & Associates team: Back, l-r: Dennis Kennedy, Dennis LePore, Manager Bill McCoy, Doug Warwick and Tom Vitolo. Kneeling, l-r: Jim Entwistle, Vern Rogers, Rick Thompson and Jim Dunn. Absent: Ronnie Pennington and Reggie Reese.

(Courtesy of Smart Phone Photos)

February 2020

WOLFE & ASSOCIATES CAPTURE LAKES TITLE

By Larry Wolfe

Manager Bill McCoy's Wolfe & Associates team won the Lakes Division's Fall League title with a record of 11-5, barely nosing out Manager Gary Hillabolt's Young Realty Team, which finished a game back at 10-6.

At the close of the Fall Season, Dennis LePore was leading the league with an average of .859. Remaining members of the Top Ten hitters were: Tom Lorgan (.840), Doug Warwick (.815), Jerry Smith (.750), Gary Hillabolt (.738), Vern Rogers (.721), Dave Martin (.706), Jesse Washington (.703), Jim Entwistle (.695) and Ernie Flores (.688). Tom Lorgan led the league with four inside-the-park homers with four while Bill Jacobson paced the league with a pair of "out of the park" homers. Dennis Kennedy was the league leader in singles with 42 while Doug Warwick led in doubles with 13 and Evan Hansen legged out a league-high six three-baggers.

Our Winter League started on January 7th and will continue through February 14th. The regular season will be followed by a three-day double elimination seeded tournament beginning February 18th. Team sponsors and managers for the Lakes Division Winter League are A-1 Golf Carts (Manager Bill Jacobson), Core Photography (Manager Gary Hillabolt), Wolfe & Associates (Manager Bill McCoy) and the Young Realty Team (Manager Tom Erpelding).

We were saddened to learn of the passing of former SLSSA player Tommy Braxton. Services were held on January 10th. Our condolences go out to Tommy's family and friends.

Local realtor Suzy Steinmann has joined our family of advertising sponsors with a new banner at the Field of Dreams. Learn more about Suzy on her Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/RealtorSuzySteinmann>. Go to the Sponsors Page on our website (www.sunlakessoftball.com) for links to all of our advertisers' websites. And remember to support the advertisers who support our community!



Ann Hegney waits for a pitch in a recent Lady Sluggers game at the Field of Dreams. (Photo by Pat's Pics, LLC)

March 2020

LADY SLUGGERS SEASON IS WINDING DOWN

By Larry Wolfe

The Lady Sluggers complete their season with their final games scheduled for March 2nd versus Fountain of the Sun at Resort Field and on March 4th at Sunland Springs. They wrapped up their home season on February 24th.

As of this month's press deadline, the Sluggers had split their first 18 games, sporting a 9-9 record. Several of the losses were "near misses" so the record could've been even better. The team has shown substantial improvement this year thanks to the addition of some new talented players, the improved play of many of our veteran players and the coaching from Scott Steinmann.



Dennis LePore (#2) scampers toward second base as Gary Hillabolt awaits the throw. Foreground: Coach Tom Vitolo (#30) and first baseman Wayne Newman (#14). (Photo by Color Shot Studios)

March 2020

SENIOR SOFTBALL SHORT HOPS

By Larry Wolfe

At press time, one week remained in our Winter League sessions. In the Lakes Division, the Young Home Team Realty squad, managed by Tom Erpelding, had a two-game lead over the A-1 Golf Carts and Core Photography teams. In the Sun Division, The Farmers Insurance Team, managed by Ron Carmichael and sponsored by the Frank Margiotta Agency, held a slim one game lead over the Brenden Financial Planning and Spooner PT teams. Following the regular Winter Session, a three-day double-elimination tournament was held. Go to the Stats Page on our website (www.sunlakessoftball.com) for up-to-date standings, tournament results and batting statistics.

Tom Lorgan was leading the Lakes Division with a robust .840 average. He also led the Division in round trippers with six. Rounding out the top ten were Dennis LePore (.770), Doug Warwick (.761), Vern Rogers (.730), Dave Martin (.724), Jim Entwistle (.723), Gary Hillabolt (.702), Jerry Smith (.698), Dennis Bernaiche (.684) and Ernie Flores (.683).

Mike Lebet was leading the Sun Division with a .817 average followed by Reyes Gonzales (.793), Bob Wicks (.778), Dan Melosi (.776), Bobby Farmer (.762), Tom Stephens (.752), Larry Kaufmann (.748), Tom Chilton (.733), Dave Platt (.723) and Dean Messier (.697). In this "homer happy" Division, Bob Wicks had slugged 32 homers, two more than Tom Chilton. Others with 20+ long balls were Tom Stephens (27), Dan Melosi (26), Dean Messier (22) and Reyes Gonzales (21).

Thanks to owner Dan Schneider of Aluma-Line, Inc. for renewing their advertising banner at the Field of Dreams. Go to the Sponsors Page on our website for links to all of our sponsors and to learn how your business or organization can advertise at the field.

Save the Date: Our annual banquet is scheduled for April 1st. Invitations and RSVP cards will be sent to all current members of the Sun Lakes Senior Softball Association. All former members are also welcome. Contact Larry Wolfe at larryewolfe@msn.com or call 480-802-2748 if you're interested in attending.



The Farmers Insurance Champs: Kneeling, l-r: Phil Gutterman, Dave Lingen, Mgr, Ron Carmichael and Dick Bleich. Standing, l-r: Mike Lebet, Doug Friesen, Steve Hilby, Bobby Farmer, Bill Corso and Kurt Carmichael. (Courtesy of Howling Wolfe Photos)

April 2020

FARMERS INSURANCE ARE SUN DIVISION CHAMPS

By Larry Wolfe

The number one-seeded Farmers Insurance team, managed by Ron Carmichael and sponsored by the Frank Margiotta Agency, lived up to their billing by winning the Sun Division's Winter Tournament Championship; however, they had to fight their way back through the losers' bracket to do so.

Here's a wrap-up of the three-day six-game tourney:

Number four-seeded Leckner Realty, managed by Sam Giordano, upset Farmers Insurance in the opening game by a 21-17 score. The Realtors scored five runs in the final inning to pull off the upset. Kim Whitney and Don Scoggins had four hits

each to lead the Realtors to victory. Bob Wicks and Tom Chilton added three hits and a homer each to aid the cause. Paul Gayer had four hits, including a home run, for the Farmers, while Phil Gutterman, Mike Lebet and Kurt Carmichael also homered, but it was not enough to top the spunky Realtors.

There was another upset in the second contest as the third-seeded Spooner PT team beat the second-seeded Brenden Financial Planners 19-6. Dan Melosi and Kurt Carmichael both went 4 for 4 for the winners. Melosi, Reyes Gonzales and Jerry Hester all “went yard.” Dean Messier homered for Manager Sam Giordano’s Planners.

In a real nail-biter, Manager Randy Neumann’s Spooner PT squad eked out an 18-17 win over Leckner Realty. The Therapists scored twice in the bottom of the seventh to secure the victory. Phil Gutterman with four hits and Reyes Gonzales with three hits, including two long balls and a walk, led the Therapists. Kelly Anderson, Eli Romanchych and Steve Schaider added three hits each. In a well-balanced attack, five Realtors had three hits each (Kim Whitney, Jack Martin, Jim Leckner, Sam Giordano and Mike Gloyd). Kim Whitney, Bob Wicks and John Castro homered.

In the loser’s bracket game, Farmers Insurance eliminated the Brenden Financial Planners in another close encounter, 14-13. Steve Hilby and Kim Whitney paced the Farmers with four hits each while Mike Lebet and Kurt Carmichael homered. Dave Platt had four hits for the Planners; Tom Stephens hit two out of the yard while Mike Otman and Bobby Farmer also homered for the Planners.

On the final day of the three-day tourney, Farmers Insurance eliminated Leckner Realty by a 16-12 score to earn the right to face Spooner PT in the Championship Game. Mike Lebet led the charge for the Farmers with five hits. He was aided by five teammates who had three safeties each, Steve Hilby, Ron Carmichael, Bobby Farmer, Dick Bleich and Bill Corso. Bob Wicks and Sam Giordano had four hits each for the Realtors. With the wind blowing in, no one hit any four-baggers.

In the Championship Game, the Farmers continued their comeback from their game one defeat by outlasting Spooner PT by a 21-12 score. Spooner jumped out to an 8-0 lead but the Farmers came back quickly and coasted to victory. Mike Lebet went 5 for 5 for the second straight game while Doug Freisen and Dave

Lingen also had five hits for the Farmers. Phil Gutterman and Kurt Carmichael added four hits each while Steve Hilby smashed two long homers for the winners. Tom Schneider had three hits, including a “big fly,” for the Therapists.

Congratulations to the Farmers Insurance team for their hard fought victory!



Slugger Sharon Bergan swings away at a recent Lady Sluggers game.
(Courtesy of Lens Queen Photos)

April 2020

LADY SLUGGERS CAP SUCCESSFUL SEASON By Larry Wolfe

The Lady Sluggers capped off their most successful season in several years, finishing with a record of 19 wins and 15 losses in the competitive Valley of the Sun Ladies Senior Softball League.

Sharon Bergan led the Sluggers in batting average with a .792 mark. Others in the top five were Terry Finley (.755), Sue Rodke (.689), Frankie DeMouth (.689) and Suzy Steinmann (.677). Sue Rodke smashed ten homeruns to lead the team; Suzy Steinmann added five round trippers. Leaders in other hitting categories were: Chrissy Conners with nine bases on balls; Terry Finley with 61 singles; Suzy Steinmann with nine doubles and Sharon Bergan with four triples.

A big thank you goes out to Coach Scott Steinmann who brought his professional expertise to help the team improve in all aspects of the game. Scott is a coach in the Oakland A's system. After the conclusion of the season, team members celebrated by attending a spring training game at the A's Hohokam Stadium.

Other thank yous go out to Scorer Lynn Tanner, Dennis LePore, coordinator of umpires and scoreboard operators, and all of the umpires and scoreboard operators from the Men's League who supported the program. In addition, the team wants to thank all the fans who came out to the games to cheer them on!

Wait'll next year! It should be even better!



Members of the Core Photography team: Kneeling, l-r: Jesse Washington, Ron Pennington, Frank Rouse, Tom Lorgan, Rick Thompson and Bill Maxwell. Standing, l-r: Manager Gary Hillabolt, Jerry Smith, Team Sponsor Mike Core, Dave Boone and Wayne Newman.

April 2020

WINTER SOFTBALL WRAPUP

By Larry Wolfe

Both the Lakes and Sun Divisions ended with two teams tying for first place with identical won-lost records during the 16-game Winter Season. The Core Photography team, managed by Gary Hillabolt, and the Young Realty Team, managed by Tom Erpelding, tied for first place in the Lakes Division with 9-7 records. In the Sun Division the Farmers Insurance squad, sponsored by the Frank Margiotta Agency and managed by Ron Carmichael, and the Brenden Financial Planning team, managed by Mike Gloyd, both finished with 10-6 marks, just one game better than Randy Neumann's Spooner Physical Therapy crew.

Core Photography and Farmers Insurance were declared pennant winners and number one seeds in the season-ending tourney based upon tie-breakers. See separate articles in this edition of the *Splash* for tourney recaps.

The Top Ten hitters at the end of the Winter Session in the Lakes Division were Tom Lorgan (.836), Doug Warwick (.761), Dennis LePore (.744), Vern Rogers (.735), Dave Martin (.729), Jim Entwistle (.723), Gary Hillabolt (.716), Jerry Smith (.704), Dennis Bernaiche (.684) and Brian Jette (.667). Tom Lorgan led in total homers with six while Vern Rogers led in “out of the park” homers with three. Leaders in other key stats were Tom Erpelding with 76 singles, Jerry Smith with 22 doubles and Dave Martin with ten three-baggers.

In the Sun Division, Mike Lebet and Reyes Gonzales were atop the leader board with .808 averages. The remainder of the Top Ten were: Bobby Farmer (.771), Dan Melosi (.764), Bob Wicks (.760), Tom Stephens (.751), Larry Kaufmann (.731), Dave Platt (.727), Tom Chilton (.727) and Dean Messier (.714). Bob Wicks slugged 33 round trippers to lead the Division, two more than second place Tom Chilton. Randy Neumann led in singles with 88 while Dave Platt’s 32 doubles and Kelly Anderson’s six triples paced the Division.

At press time our Spring Season was well underway. Go to our website, www.sunlakessoftball.com, for up-to-date standings and stats.

Thanks to fans of the Iowa Hawkeyes for renewing their banner at the Field of Dreams. If you’d like to promote your business, organization or favorite team with a banner at the field, call Larry Wolfe at 602-538-2248 or email at larryewolfe@msn.com. There’s also information about advertising on the Sponsors Page of our website.



The Champion Young Home Team: Kneeling, l-r: John Seigla, Bob Zawidski, Brian Jette, Bob Montelione and Ernie Flores. Standing, l-r: Manager Tom Erpelding, Dennis Colbert, Dennis LePore, Gene Granquist, Jeff Jay and Dennis Kennedy.
(Courtesy of Lensation Photo Labs)

April 2020

YOUNG REALTY WINS LAKES DIVISION TOURNEY By Larry Wolfe

The Winter Softball League ended with a seeded double-elimination tournament. In the Lakes Division tournament opener, the number two-seeded Young Realty team edged third-seeded Wolfe & Associates 13-12. Jeff Jay and Dennis LePore paced the Realtors with three hits each while Doug Warwick had a walk and three hits for the Wolves.

In the second game, the fourth-seeded A-1 Golf Cart squad upset the number one-seeded Core Photography team by a 21-16 score. Bob Montelione had a perfect 5 for 5 game for the Golfers while Terry Zeltinger added four base knocks;

Mike Willits was 3 for 3 with two walks. Frank Rouse spearheaded the Photographers attack with four hits and a walk while Manager Gary Hillabolt added three singles and a double.

Two more games were played on the second day of the three-day tournament. The Young Realtors continued their winning ways with a 14-11 win over A-1 Golf Carts. Pitcher Gene Granquist was 4 for 4 with a single, two doubles and a triple to lead the way for the Realtors. (Who said pitchers can't hit?) Tom Lorgan and Mike Willits were both 3 for 3 with a walk for the Golfers.

In the losers bracket Core Photography eliminated Wolfe & Associates in a 19-18 nail biter. The Photographers were led by Dave Boone, Wayne Newman and Frank Rouse with four hits each. Gary Brinkman was 3 for 3 with a walk for the hard-luck Wolves.

On day three, the Photographers rolled over the A-1 Golfers by a 14-3 count. Frank Rouse again led the way for the Lensmen with two singles and a double while nobody did much for the Golfers.

In the championship game the Young Realty team beat the Photographers 18-11. In a well-balanced attack, the Realtors jumped off to a 10-0 lead and cruised to victory. Tom Erpelding, Jeff Jay, Bob Montelione, Gene Granquist and Brian Jette had three hits each for the winners. Jerry Smith had a perfect 4 for 4 day for Photographers while Wayne Newman was 3 for 3 with a walk.

Congratulations to Manager Tom Erpelding and his Young Home Team.



Sweet swingin' Steve Hilby prepares to bash another one as catcher Sam Giordano and umpire Dennis Bernaiche look on. (Courtesy of Snappy Studios)

May 2020

COVID-19 Curtails Spring Softball Season By Larry Wolfe

The COVID-19 virus did what heart attacks, knee and hip replacement surgeries, rotator cuff surgeries, old age and many other maladies couldn't do: stop our guys from playing senior softball! Our Spring Season was postponed on March 18 and later canceled, wiping out over half of the remaining season along with our season-ending tournaments and our annual banquet.

After playing only eight of the scheduled eighteen games in the Sun Division's Spring Session, the Brenden Financial Planning team, managed by Mike Gloyd, had jumped off to a great start with a 7-1 won-lost record, two games better than Manager Randy Neumann's Spooner Physical Therapy squad. In the Lakes

Division, the Core Photography team, managed by Bill McCoy had a record of 5-3 while Manager Bill Jacobson's A-1 Golf Carts team and Manager Gary Hillabolt's Wolfe & Associates club both were only one game back with 4-4 records.

In next month's *Splash*, we'll cover all of the stats for our full program (Fall, Winter & Spring Sessions), including league leaders in all major batting categories.

Our summer program was slated to begin on May 5th and continue through the third week of September; however, as of press time, the start date was very much in doubt. Check our website, www.sunlakessoftball.com, for up-to-date information.

Congratulations to Tom Erpelding and Cyndy Hilby who were elected to our Board of Directors prior to the "shutdown." They succeed outgoing Board members Sam Giordano and Steve Hilby, who both served two terms (six years) on the Board. Thanks, guys, for a job well done.

Thanks to Drs. Mary Peters, Frank Maben and Vanousheh Ghandhari of Ocotillo Foot & Ankle Centers for renewing their advertising banner at the Field of Dreams. They've been supporting our program since January 2011. They have locations at nearby 270 W. Chandler Heights Road and in Ahwatukee. Go to their website, www.ocotillofootankle.com, for more information about their practice. You can also find links to their website and to those of all of our advertisers and team sponsors on our website's Sponsors Page.

You can stop looking for the monthly softball player profile article since there is none this month. We hope to be back to the new normal soon!



Record-setter and league leader Reyes Gonzales
(Courtesy of Mug Shot Studios)

June 2020

Softball Stats for Traditionalists By Larry Wolfe

Why do most baseball and softball fans and players love statistics? It's probably because stats give the game historical context and allow for the comparison of various accomplishments from the past to the present. They also are used to measure the performance of each player versus others on his team and in his league. Over time the number of stats and their complexity has grown exponentially. If you look at a box score from the 1950s, you'd see players listed with five columns for at bats, runs, hits, putouts and assists. Today's box scores contain a myriad of statistics that could keep a nerdy reader occupied for a long

time! And the introduction of so-called Sabermetrics such as WAR (Wins Above Replacement), FIP (Fielding Independent Pitching) and wRC+ (Weighted Runs Created Plus) have added another level of complexity to statistical analysis of the sport. But don't fret; this article is based upon good ole traditional stats that we all understand! We're talking hits, runs, doubles, triples, homers, etc.

Our senior softball statistics are based upon the results of our three formal sessions: fall, winter and spring. We also usually have a summer session, but it's more "loosely run" since many of our players are either vacationing or back up north somewhere. This year's spring session was cut short due to the COVID-19 virus shutdown, so not many records were set. In fact, only one "all time record" was set; Reyes Gonzales had a remarkable slugging percentage of 1.634 which topped Mark McKinnon's 1.447 mark set during the 2016/2017 sessions. Slugging percentage measures both hitting for average and power, as additional value is assigned to extra base hits.

Here's our league leaders in traditional categories in the Sun Division: singles (Dave Platt, 110); doubles (Dave Platt, 44); triples (Kelly Anderson, Ron Carmichael and Dan Melosi, 6 each); homeruns (Tom Chilton, 38), bases on balls (Randy Neumann, 24), batting average (Reyes Gonzales, .834) and the aforementioned slugging percentage (Reyes Gonzales, 1.634).

In the Lakes Division the leaders were: singles (Tom Erpelding, 100); doubles (Jerry Smith, 29); triples (Dave Martin, 16); homeruns (Tom Lorgan, 6); bases on balls (Gary Hillabolt, 26); batting average (Tom Lorgan, .822); and slugging percentage (Tom Lorgan, 1.034).

In the Sun Division a total of eight players hit over .700, which is kind of equivalent to being a .300 hitter in baseball. Following Reyes Gonzales at .834 were Mike Lebet (.809), Dan Melosi (.763), Bobby Farmer (.743), Larry Kaufmann (.723), Tom Stephens (.711), Dean Messier (.709) and Dave Platt (.707).

Just five players hit the .700 mark in the Lakes Division. Following Tom Lorgan's .822 were Dennis LePore (.751), Gary Hillabolt (.726), Doug Warwick (.713) and Dave Martin (.712). Vern Rogers just missed the 700 Club, hitting .699.

Thanks to all of our scorekeepers and to our Chief Statistician, Jim Entwistle, for compiling all the statistics.

And speaking of stats, this is softball article number 376 since I began writing for the *Splash* back in 2006. That's 144 player profiles and 232 general news articles. Guess I didn't know what I was getting into at the time!! Maybe we'll have some sort of celebration when I hit 400, after all, that's a "magic stat" in baseball!

As of press time, the resumption of our program, including our summer session, was still uncertain. Check our website, www.sunlakesoftball.com, for up-to-date information.



Socially-distance batting practice at the Field of Dreams
(Courtesy of Mundane Photo Company)

July 2020

Missing the Game We Love
By Larry Wolfe

We miss it. We really miss it. It's inherently true that you don't know how much you'll miss something till it's gone. At press time, our softball program had been closed down for three months and counting but there was hope that the program could begin to restart in mid-June with a possible Summer League starting in July. The Field of Dreams was recently opened for "socially-distanced" batting practice; but there were no real games, no teams, no scores and no batting statistics to write about. Rather than skip an article, I decided to ask our members what they missed most during this shut down.

Almost all the respondents said it was the camaraderie with the other players that they missed the most. They missed the razzing, the joking around, the "trash talk," the politically incorrect statements and opinions, the "fake news," the crazy and, sometimes, amazing plays and the crazier stories.

Here's a sampling of comments (some paraphrased or shortened):

Cyndy Hilby, Head Scorekeeper and member of the Lady Sluggers: "I miss baking cookies for the guys. I also miss knowing what day of the week it is. With my scoring duties on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, I could keep track of what day it was!"

Many of the guys: "I miss Cyndy's cookies!"

Larry Kaufmann: "Even more than the zany, unimaginable plays that we see every day, I miss the 'Odd Couple' in the 'box seats' (You know who you are!) and my frosty Mountain Dews!"

Dennis Bernaiche: "I've had time to reflect on my 15 years playing here and got to thinking about all the guys I've played with. I miss them and wonder what happened to all of them?"

Jim Entwistle: "I miss trying to come in 1st place, but pretending I don't care!"

Ken Brenden: "I miss the opportunity to laugh, share our exaggerations about the plays we made and being amazed at the abilities these guys have at our ages."

Dick Bleich: "I miss a great way of celebrating being alive."

Jesse Washington: "I miss our crazy jokes and stories, the exercise, the base hits, the many errors and the call of 'runner blue!'"

Kim Whitney: "I miss not having an opinion on anything since Big Al hasn't been around to tell me what I should think!"

Jeff Jay: "I miss the competition, the laughs and watching all the old guys having so much fun!"

Mike Lebet: "I miss being out on the field and being grateful and thankful for being able to play another day."

Terry Zeltinger: "I miss the free words of wisdom and all the controversial comments. Plus, I'm tired of watching the Corn Hole Championships on the sports channel!"

Rosemarie (Mrs. Dave) Rinaldo: "I miss the few hours of peace and quiet away from the energizer bunny (aka Dave) while he's dragging the field and hanging with the guys."

Bob Montelione: "I soooo miss the game. What better way to spend time at this point in our senior lives!"

There are many more comments I'd like to share, but I'm at my "word limit." To be continued....



Rick “The Greyhound” Oien rounds second. Is he faster than Chuck “The Cheetah” Schaan?? (Photo by Larry’s Lensmen)

August 2020

Softball Alternative to COVID
By Larry Wolfe

The term COVID has, unfortunately, entered the lexicon of our everyday language. It, of course, isn’t a “real word,” but a contraction for **C**ORONA **V**IRUS **D**ISEASE. Wouldn’t it be nice if we could substitute softball terms for C-O-V-I-D? How about this: The batter **C**rushed a long fly ball, hoping for a home run, but the **O**utfielder from the **V**isiting team shouted, “**I** got it!” He caught the ball in front of the fence and the batter dejectedly headed back to the **D**ugout. So much better!

Sadly, the real COVID continues to have a negative impact on our world and our softball program. We’ve canceled our Summer League and now must hope things are better by the fall when we normally restart our leagues in late October. The Field of Dreams has recently opened up for recreational play, but there are no formal teams or games.

In last month's *Splash*, I shared some of what our guys missed most about not playing. It was mostly the camaraderie among the players, but there were also some very specific things missed. Here's some musings from Dandy Dan Melosi, I miss hearing Bill Corso shout, "Did a grown man hit that ball??"

I miss seeing Rick Oien flying around the bases like a greyhound.

I miss seeing Chuck "The Cheetah, or is it Cheata?" Schaan jump off first before the ball is hit, so he always makes it safely to second!

I miss John Castro's infectious smile. Win or lose, it's great to have him as a teammate.

I miss Tom Bersano's rifle shots that dent the outfield walls!

I miss watching Frank Tanner's first swing always splash into Tanner Lake. I miss watching Davey Martin sliding into second. Who does that at our age??

I miss Mike Otman's massive first swing. He hits the longest and hardest foul balls in the league.

I miss waiting for Tom Chilton to show up. He always arrives two minutes before game time!

I miss Jimmy Dunn hollering, "That pitch was flatter than my Prom date!!

Hell, I even miss Tom Kasunic...there must be something wrong with me!

In other news, we installed Officers and Board members for 2020-21. Here's the lineup: President Doug Warwick, Vice President Bill Corso, Secretary Cyndy Hilby, Treasurer Larry Wolfe and Members-at-Large Ron Carmichael, Tom Erpelding, Gary Hatch and Jim Leckner. Many thanks to outgoing Board members Sam Giordano and Steve Hilby, both of whom served two terms (six years).

We welcome our newest advertising banner sponsor, Love Our Roof, an XCEL Roofing company, with local headquarters in Mesa. Go to their website, www.loveourroof.com/phoenix, to learn more about their services.

We were saddened to hear of the passing of long time SLSSA member Butch Paoletta. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family and many friends and former teammates. RIP, Butch.

Check out our website, www.sunlakessoftball, for up-to-date news. We all hope that some time in the "not-too-distant" future, this pandemic will be history and we'll again hear those two perfect words, "PLAY BALL!"



Ronnie Pennington pitching in a recent physically-distanced pick-up game at the Field of Dreams (Courtesy of Pitcher Perfect Photoshop)

September 2020

Sun Lakes Softball is 35!

By Larry Wolfe

Thirty-five years ago, in September 1985, Jack Lander of Cottonwood put a notice in the *Sun Lakes Splash* newspaper requesting that anyone interested in participating in a senior softball program should meet up in a Cottonwood meeting room at a time and date lost in the annals of history. About a dozen guys showed up and that was the birth of Sun Lakes softball.

The first softball field was at the intersection of Minnesota Avenue and EJ Robson Blvd., with Riggs Road being the northern boundary of that makeshift field. The Robson organization was a big help in getting the program off the ground. Besides

allowing the fledgling group to use that parcel of land, Robson provided the first balls, bats, flat rubber bases and a pitcher's rubber. In the beginning there were no backstop or fence. If a player hit a ball onto Robson Blvd., it was an automatic homerun!

There weren't enough guys for a Sun Lakes league, so a travel team was formed. The first game was in 1986 against a team from Apache Junction. Jack said, "They beat us by a score of about 100 to nothing!" But the program was underway.

The first "real field" was built in 1988 where the Baptist Church is now located at the corner of Riggs and Dobson Roads. That field was only used for a little over a year. Field number three was built where the Sun Lakes library is now located. That would be the home of Sun Lakes softball from 1990 until 2002 when the current Field of Dreams was built near the intersection of Riggs and Price Roads.

In 1989 there were two travel teams and by 1990 there were enough players to form a four-team league. The program continued to expand over the years and now includes two four-team leagues, a less formal recreational program and a ladies' team. Total participants now average around 130-140 including players, umpires, scorekeepers, scoreboard operators and field maintenance guys.

Due to COVID-19 our full program has been cut back significantly, but we're hoping to get back to "the good old days" sometime this fall. In the meantime, the field has been reopened for informal play including batting practice and pick-up games.

We were all saddened to learn of the unexpected passing of member Rick Oien's life partner, Linda Hadler. Our thoughts and prayers are with Rick and his family during this difficult time.

Check out our website, www.sunlakessoftball.com, for up-to-date news and announcements.



New manager Mike Otman is in the spotlight; a photo of Mike at first base during the Spring Season. (Courtesy of Just Shoot Me Photos)

October 2020

Why's It Called Softball?

By Larry Wolfe

If you've ever played the game and been hit by a line drive or errant throw, you might wonder why the ball is called a softball....it's hard as a rock!

Well, to answer that question, we have to go back to the game's founding in 1887. George Hancock, a reporter for the Chicago Board of Trade, is credited with inventing the game of softball. Legend has it that Hancock and some friends were at the Farragut Boat Club awaiting news of the Yale-Harvard football game. When the news came that Yale defeated Harvard, a Yale supporter enthusiastically picked up an old boxing glove and threw it at a nearby Harvard alum, who

promptly tried to hit it back with a broomstick. This gave Hancock the idea of playing a game of indoor baseball. He tied together the laces of the boxing glove, which would be the indoor ball, and, of course, it was soft!

Over the years, the game was known as Indoor Ball, Kitten Ball, Pumpkin Ball and Mushball, among others. The name softball wasn't used until the mid-1920s. Why softball? Why not Big Ball, since a softball is much larger than a baseball? There are a couple theories other than the "boxing glove" theory. One is that in the early days of baseball, the game was often called hardball. So, it might make sense that the larger ball was given a similar-sounding name: softball. Another theory is that the core of a softball is made of a mixture of cork and rubber, a rather soft material. Who knows? All I know is that the ball is hard, very hard and I've had the broken fingers, split chin and bruised shins to prove it!

On to the news: The Sun Lakes Senior Softball Association is planning to return to league play on October 27th, assuming the COVID-19 metrics remain "under control." Many social distancing protocols and safety rules will be implemented to attempt to keep everyone safe. Go to our website for additional information.

Managers have been named for the Fall Season. In the Lakes Division, the four managers are Tom Erpelding, Gary Hillabolt, Bill McCoy and Vern Rogers. The Sun Division managers are Ken Brenden, Mike Gloyd, Mike Otman and Randy Neumann. Vern Rogers and Mike Otman are new managers this year while the others are returning veterans. Thanks, guys, for stepping up to the plate!

Our website and email "blasts" to current members will provide additional information regarding registration for the new season. The registration deadline will be October 15. Registration will be held at Snedigar Field in Chandler while the Field of Dreams is being over-seeded.

November 2020

It's Time for Fall Ball!

By Larry Wolfe

We finally heard those two words we've been waiting to hear for months: "Play Ball!" After our Spring Season was shut down in mid-March due to COVID-19 and our Summer Season was canceled in its entirety, it was great to get the competitive juices flowing again! Our Fall Season opened on October 27th and is

now in full swing with league games on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. We've instituted health and safety rules and protocols to keep everyone safe while the pandemic continues. Spectators are welcome at the field, but must abide by our safety rules, including wearing masks at all times and practicing physical distancing. We've also staggered game times to keep the number of players at the field at any time at an absolute minimum.

We have eight teams, with four teams in each of the Sun and Lakes Divisions. This year's team sponsors are A-1 Golf Carts, Brenden Financial Planning, Core Photography, Farmers Insurance (Frank Margiotta Agency), Jim Leckner's Realty Company, Spooner Physical Therapy, Wolfe & Associates and the Young Team Realtors. We appreciate the support of all of these local companies.

The Field of Dreams is also open for recreational play on non-league days, except for Sundays. To find out more about our programs and to read all the latest news, go to our website: www.sunlakessoftball.com.

We thank the following three companies for renewing their advertising banners at the Field of Dreams:

The Kolb Team Realtors and Carey Kolb, supporters since 2013; Retirement Insurance Specialists (RIS Agency) and owner Justin Bro, advertisers since 2011; and, Wolfe & Associates, accounting and tax preparation specialists, supporters since 2007.

Go to the Sponsors Page on our website for links to all of our advertisers and team sponsors. And remember "SOS," Support Our Sponsors!

Did you know: In the 1800's, you (as a base runner) could be put out between the bases by having the ball thrown at and hitting you? Players were resistant when this rule was changed because they thought it was an important and masculine part of the game. This practice was called "soaking" or "plugging." In Sun Lakes Senior Softball, we sometimes hit base runners with a throw...but not on purpose! Next month, we hope to renew our softball player profile series of articles. They were also a casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic.