

THE FIRST 25 YEARS OF THE RINGNECK YOUTH FASTPITCH TOURNAMENT
1978-THROUGH 2002

Compiled by Dennis Jons, 6-2002

The original idea of the first fastpitch tournament that became known as the Ringneck Tournament belonged to Rich Quartier and Myron Olson. The tournament, which began in 1978, was originally named the Olson Taxidermy Tournament and was set up for 16 teams in each of the boys and girls divisions and was for 10-12 yr. olds only. The first tourney was held at the 9 diamonds at the McCart fields. The entry fee for each team was \$25 and the umpires were paid \$5 per game, 1 umpire per game. The dirt diamonds were rained out on Saturday night, but the tournament was completed on Sunday at the Covell Lake Baseball Diamonds.

In 1979, the tournament had 19 boys and 24 girls teams, again in the 10-12 division. Three teams from Kansas City, 1 from Oklahoma, and 1 from Colorado came to the tournament. This was also the year that the first coach was kicked out of a game. A girls team coach from Sioux City was "booted" by LeRoy Zafft, a well known umpire. This was also the first year that some ads were sold and a program was printed. 1979 was also the year that Rich and Myron decided to add a meal for all players that participated in the tournament. Donations of wieners, buns, beans, drinks, knives, forks and plates were acquired to feed the troops at McCart field. 5 tubs of wieners were heated at Myron and Gertrude Olson's home and transported to the diamonds for the teams.

In 1980, the tournament expanded to the Elmwood diamonds in addition to the McCart fields. 28 boys teams and 23 girls teams participated in the Girls/Boys, 10-12 yr. old division. The entry fee was \$30. There were no more free lunches!

1981 was a big year for the tournament as the name was switched to the current Ringneck name. It was also the 1st year the tournament was played at Sherman Park and a boys and girls 13-15 yr. old division was added to the 10-12 yr olds. Games were also played at Elmwood and McCart. The entry fee was \$60/team and 81 teams participated in the Friday, Sat., Sunday affair with teams from Illinois, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Colorado, Nebraska, and So. Dak. Admission was \$1/day per person. This was also the first year that souvenir T-shirts were available.

In 1982, the diamonds at Sherman were used for 23 Boys teams in the 13-15 and 16-18 yr. Divisions and there were 26 teams in the girls divisions. Approximately 20 teams played in the 10-12 yr. old division at McCart. Entry fee was \$60.

The 1983 tournament had 81 teams and included a Division 1 and Division 2 for the 13-15 old girls. In addition to the Sherman complex the diamonds at Mc Cart were used for the 10-12 yr. olds. The entry fee for 12/under was \$40, 12/over was \$65.

1984 was the first year of the Ringneck Award that is given annually to someone who has made a notable contribution to youth fastpitch softball. The 10-12 yr. old divisions were dropped and taken over by another group. A Division I and II were added to the 13-15 Girls. 70 teams participated in the Double Elimination tourney.

In 1985, 42 Girls and 31 Boys teams participated from 8 states and was also the first year a team from Canada played in the 16/18 Boys Division. The 1986 version was about the same. All divisions played in a Double elimination format.

The 1987 edition took on a little different look. The Division 1, 16/18 Girls had the first pool play. All other divisions played Double Elimination. A special 12/un Boys Division or 5 teams played a Pool Play Tournament. 77 teams played in this tourney

from Minnesota, Illinois, No. Dakota, Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Wisconsin, So. Dak., and Canada.

1988 saw an all time high of 85 teams and was played at Sherman and McCart Diamonds. Entry fee was still \$65.

In 1989, ASA had an age change in the divisions. The 10-12, 13-15, & 16-18 divisions were changed to 14/un, 16/un, and 18/un. Another record 100 teams participated at Sherman and McCart. The girls all played a Pool Play format and Boys Double Elimination.

The 1990 version had 114 teams at the Sherman Complex and at Brandon, S.Dak. The Brandon diamonds replaced the dirt diamonds at McCart. The boys played Double Elimination for \$75, the Girls had Pool Play for \$90.

The 1991 tournament was again held at Sherman Park and Brandon. The tournament had a record 123 entrants from 8 states and Canada. The Boys Double Elimination entrants paid \$85, the girls Pool Play entrants paid \$100. This is also the year that Rich Quartier bid farewell to managing the tournament. Over the years, Rich had many different people on his tournament committee, but the mainstays were Al Bossman, Dave Feller, Linda Mriden, and Dennis Jons. Their spouses also played significant roles in helping with the tournament by selling souvenirs, selling tickets at the gate, etc. Each year money was always donated back to various So. Dakota teams that qualified for a national/regional tournament. A minimum amount of dollars were kept for the next years tournament. Rich, his committee, and their spouses, can be proud of the Ringneck Tournament that was built for the benefit of youth fastpitch softball, Sioux Falls, and the Midwest between the years of 1978-91.

The tournament was given to an already established group of 24 volunteers known as the Sioux Falls People for Youth group in 1992. This group had previous experience hosting Boys National Tournaments and has proven to be a good "fit" to run the Ringneck. Al Bossman and Dennis Jons came to the SFPFY Board from the Ringneck Board and Al Bossman was the Tournament director from 1992-1994. 1992 was also when the first games were played at the newly developed Dunham Park as well as Sherman. 37 Boys and 70 Girls Teams participated. The 1993 and 1994 Tournaments had 126 and 123 teams respectively with 6-8 states and Canada represented.

1995, 1996, and 1997 had Dave Kemper and Dale Axtell as Tournament Directors and had 117, 108, and 114 teams represented. The entry fee for Boys Double Elimination was \$90 and Girls Pool Play was \$130. It was also in this time period when the committee began furnishing jugs of ice water to each dugout, and having medical personnel on hand at the Sherman complex. These were welcomed services by all teams.

The 1997 Tournament only had 18 Boys teams representing 3 Divisions. The difficult decision was made to discontinue the boys portion of the Ringneck and fill it with girls. Since 1998, the tournament has been an all girls affair. The 1998 directors were Rich Gereats and Dale Axtell and had 110 girls teams in 4 Divisions, all pool play. Brian Utely and Dale Axtell were the directors in 1999 with 112 teams and a \$160 entry fee.

In 2000, two additional awards were originated. Awards were presented to "out of town" coaches or umpires who have been long time supporters of the Ringneck. The directors were Lee Thompson and Dale Axtell for 120 girls teams. The 2001 directors were Lee Thompson and Brian Utely, also 120 teams.

The 2002 edition features 85 teams who paid a \$200 entry fee. Unknown playoff scheduling conflicts in Minnesota and Nebraska, which is where many of the entrants come from, hampered this years total. Historically the Ringneck has always been around July 4. Future Ringneck dates will be moved to June, which again will allow this tourney to enroll to capacity. Craig Halverson is the tournament director.

The volunteer Sioux Falls People for Youth group, with the Sioux Falls Park Dept. can be proud of the notoriety of the Ringneck Tournament. Many volunteers have built up this tournament over the last 25 years. The tournament features: good organization, excellent agri-lime diamonds, well maintained facilities, ice water delivered to dugouts, medical personnel to assist with injuries, a fun opening ceremony and nice awards, reasonable priced souvenirs, economical admission, and a hard working committee. Any profits taken from the Ringneck are used to support local softball teams going to a National Tournament, traveling to National ASA Conventions to bid for a national tournament, purchase additional equipment to improve the softball diamonds or any other kind of function that will promote youth fast pitch softball.

Thanks to all the volunteers, participating teams, fans, and the Sioux Falls Park Dept. who have spent 25 years making the Ringneck, a fun memorable experience for everyone.

Past division champions from all the years are displayed elsewhere in this program. Past Ringneck Award recipients are also listed elsewhere.