

Beantown History

by Mike LaMontagne



(Top to bottom) L.A.'s Carl Raider's, second place—Recreational Division. The Buddies team takes a moment to enjoy themselves. The Boston Mets celebrate their 1989 recreational Division Beantown Championship

It began as a thought, became a reality and was the driving force behind the Beantown Softball league's attempt and culmination of the 1991 Gay Softball World series.

According to local softball historians, Gary Staples and Leslie Tiffany were the original thought provokers. In the early years of the Tournament (1983-84), it consisted of only one division and games were played at Daisy and Cleveland Circle Fields. It wasn't until the games were moved to the fields in Cambridge that the Classic became a bonafide, two division tournament.

The Boston Ramrod won the Competitive Division by beating Fritz on a Joe Peltier home run or misplayed fly ball depending on who you talk to. In the Recreational Division, the 1270 won its third title by beating back a challenge from the Ploughboys and Mirabar of Providence. The banquet was held at the Cyclorama, complete with mouthwatering lobsters.

In 1988, the Tournament was moved to Smiths Field on Soldiers' Field Road where the permanent home for the Classic has been found, more or less. That year, one of the most unforgettable games, ever in the history of the Tournament occurred. The Annex Reds team, ranked nationally at that time, won the Competitive Division over Charlie's Niners from New York, beating them in the "if necessary" game of the double elimination tournament. However, it was the first game of the championship between these two teams that remain strong in many Classic's fans' minds.

The never say die Charlie's Niners came back from an 11 run deficit in the bottom of the last inning to force the "if" game. The Niners became the crowd's favorite following the comeback that year and each year after. Oddly enough, the Boston Competitive teams all took a quick exit from the tournament.

In the Recreational Division, the Fritz Raiders stormed through a crowded field beating the perennial Rec. Division powerhouse, the 1270. It later proved to be the end of what had been a 1270 stronghold on the BSL's Recreational Division. It was also the first year of the Women's Division in the Tournament with Chicago's Synergy winning what would be two championships in a row. Off the field, Commissioner Bob Burnham lost his voice and then, yours truly, a newcomer to the scene, did the talking and they haven't shut me up since.

In 1989, the Tournament became one of the largest in the country with some 33 teams participating. The Tournament grew in status as well as quality as nationally ranked teams came to Boston to take on a newly-formed Fritz team and the local Metro Boston Amateur Softball Umpires joined the umpiring crew, thus a working relationship between the BSL and the ASA began.

In the Competitive, Fritz proved to live up to its early season billing by beating back a challenge from the Norfolk Outlaws and an upstart Luxor team. The Boston Mets, sponsored by the Metropolitan Health Club, surprised many by winning the extremely competitive recreational division. They became known as the "Comeback Kids" by rallying to defeat the Raiders and Mirabar, then fought back in the "if" game to beat the Philadelphia Key West team. This match-up re-occurred in 1990 when the two teams later known as the Ramrod and Blue Parrot, would showdown in the championship game of the National Invitational Tournament at the Gay Softball World Series in Pittsburgh. The Parrot won the rematch. In the Women's Division Synergy won the division beating Leslie Tiffany's team.

Off the field, and not to be forgotten, was the case of the missing bat as the Boston Mets went to bat against the Mirabar,

just another strange occurrence in the life of gay softball. The banquet became a buffet and was held at the Villa Victoria, and for the first time, trophies were given out after the games at the fields.

In 1990, as Boston began preparations for hosting Series '91, 28 teams came to Beantown for a sneak peek of what was to come. Fritz won its second consecutive championship in the Competitive Division beating out Charlie's Niners from New York. The Niners had upset the Norfolk Outlaws earlier in the tournament.

In the recreational, Maximum Security exploded to win the championship by beating the Southenders in the title game. In the Women's Division, Indigo won its second Classic championship. The banquet was held at Buddies with Congressman Barney Frank making a special appearance.

After hosting the 1991 Gay Softball World Series and Hurricane Bob, the Beantown Softball League wearily hosted the Minuteman classic once again in 1992.

While the tournament was smaller in size than in previous years, 25 teams participated and the games themselves provided plenty of excitement despite—some foul weather — rain and cold for the first two days of the tournament. In the Competitive Division, Club Cafe and the Ramrod got the tournament off on the right foot as Club Cafe hung on to post a thrilling victory. The win proved to be a catalyst for Club Cafe as they went on to finish in second place, upsetting the Minnesota Bandits who finished third.

Winning the division of course, was none other than our own Fritz team, who later in the year would win the 1992 Gay Softball World Series in Los Angeles.

In the Recreational Division, pre-tournament predictions proved true as Chaps, Fritz Falcons and Carl's Raiders of Los Angeles battled it out to the end for the championship.

While the Falcons came in third, they came together as a team and when it came to the finals, Chaps and Carl's Raiders provided the fans with a thrilling two game championship.

The Raiders came out of the loser's bracket and handed Chaps its first loss and then in the "if necessary" game, had everyone on the edge of their seats as they and Chaps battled back and forth before Chaps won it in extra innings, thereby keeping the Recreational Division in the history of the Minuteman Classic.

In the Women's Division, Indigo, otherwise known as the old 1270 team, posted another championship and B Serious came in second. Old Friends from St. Louis came in third in their first trek to Boston.

Now, after a two year absence, the Minuteman Classic returns and you can bet that no matter who wins, there will be some memorable moments on and off the field, as well as some of the most exciting games of the season. ♦