

helped The Canners, because it gave them a chance to settle down and try to gain some momentum back.

No one scored in the third. The Canners went three consecutive innings with no runs after the fourth. We extended our lead to 8 to 4 in the fourth on Phil's triple and Danny's sacrifice fly.

Then in the top of the fifth, the bottom seemed to drop out for us. We gave up four runs, suddenly finding the game tied. There didn't seem to be much panic. I think because we knew we had plenty of innings and time. The one-hour time limit is waived in a play-off game. But, both teams failed to put up any runs through the end of regulation. So, we headed into extra innings.

The rule is each team starts with a runner on second and no one out. You play that way for two innings. If the game is still tied, then each team starts their half of the inning with runners on second and third and no out. Obviously, this is to promote scoring and a winner. Anyway, The Canners pushed one run across in the top of the eighth to take a 9 to 8 lead.

With Jake on second as the runner, I started things off with a single. Haack followed with a fielder's choice that held Jake at third. This loaded the bases with only one out. Scags hit a sacrifice fly to tie the game. With runners on first and second and two outs, Phil, one of our all-time Super Subs, stepped to the plate. He was already two for two with a single, triple and a walk, scoring two runs and knocking in another. Phil lined a single down the right field line knocking in the winning run, capping off an incredible performance.

This was an awesome game and a great win for us! The past two years our first round play-off wins were easy. This showed character in that we can win big-time close games.

With our game over we sat on the sidelines and watched The Naturals take their game against the Squirrel Cagers 10-6. The championship game was appropriately set with the top two teams facing off: The Naturals at 14 – 1 and us at 12 – 3.

On the Defensive

- Phil made an awesome, sliding, shoe string catch on a short line drive to right center. This is obviously one of the reasons we brought him in to play this tournament.
- We were pretty solid all the way around this game. I don't really remember any bad plays. If there were any, whoever made them, be glad I forgot. 😊

Coach's Corner

- I cannot say enough about Phil's performance in this game. And you wonder why I call them Super Subs. The game-winning hit is one thing, but making an incredible catch in right center and going 3 for 3! Wow! And just think he was tired all week!
- Somewhere around the second inning I heard the ump say to The Canner's captain, "You want to challenge it? Go ahead." I was not quite sure what they were talking about so, I let it go. Then when they took the field the next inning

their captain shouted while pointing to Beck, "Is he on your roster?" I yelled... "Yes he is! Do you want to check it?" Then I added, "He played against you in the Sunday game!" That was the end of that. The funny thing is if you want to challenge someone's roster, you don't just ask them. You ask to see the roster and check the name against the persons ID. Even if he wasn't on the roster, do you think I would have answered NO?

- In the bottom of the 8th Joe and I played a little base running strategy again. After I singled, I came out for a pinch-runner. Yes, we did need just a little more speed on the bases than what the good lord has left me with. Anyhow, normally no one ever challenges a pinch-runner. The rule is each team can have two guys pinch run for throughout the entire game. However, if you run the first time you get on base you cannot have a pinch-runner the next time unless you get hurt. Technically I had already been on base and did not get a runner, but that was in the second inning, which took place the week before! So, being it was the play-offs, the ump tried to enforce the rule. So he asked, "Did you run the last time you got on base?" I said, "I haven't been on base yet." He asked, "Are you sure?" Lee and Joe started rambling about what my other two at-bats were. I guess that was enough, because he let it go. In the end, Marty, who ran for me, was the game-winning run. Now that's strategy!!

Big Hitters

Phil	3 for 3	2 Runs	Walk	Triple	2 RBI	GAME WINNER
Lee	3 for 4	1 Run			2 RBI	
Haack	3 for 4	1 Run			1 RBI	
Marty	2 for 3	1 Run				
Pete	2 for 4	2 Runs				

Play-off Tournament Finals – Championship Game

Game 16

Whiners Never Win!!

**2007 Lisle Park District
Wednesday Night Men's Competitive League
Play-off Tournament Champions....
BLACK JACKS!!!!**

Black Jacks 14
The Naturals 10

	<u>Line Score</u>							
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>T</u>
Black Jacks	0	0	1	4	9	x	x	14
The Naturals	2	0	3	0	5	x	x	10

A lesson I learned at a very young age in sports, and I continue to preach to this day is, "in order to know how to win, you need to know how to lose." Some guys and some teams never learn this lesson. That to me is pretty sad. There are thousands of teams out there just like The Naturals; a good team who can do well in your average league and maybe put up a good showing in certain big tournaments. These teams at the same time are so arrogant that they honestly think they can't ever lose. And if they do lose, it cannot ever be because the other team was better or they just didn't play well enough to win. There always has to be an excuse. Quite honestly, I do not have the time, the patience or respect for any team or player that acts like that. Take losing like a man.

Anyway, I honestly thought the teams we faced the last two years were assholes, but these guys took the cake. They are the Champion Whiners! Or as someone near and dear to me says "Champs to Pee On"!! They complained about EVERYTHING and did not stop whining until they left the field. It was really quite pathetic as you will soon find out.

This was our third trip in a row to the Play-off Tournament Finals. As you know, we lost both times and did not really put up much of a fight either game. Going into this season, winning this tournament was without a doubt our main objective. Every change we made to the roster was made with this goal in mind. Mind you last year we won the regular season championship, but it didn't mean that much to a lot of us. It's like having the best record in football during the course of the year, but losing in the Super Bowl. As Joe so eloquently put it, "This championship is THE CHAMPIONSHIP".

Coming into the game, none of us took these guys for granted. We split the regular season games with us winning 15-12 and then losing 15-3. We knew we could beat them again. But, we also knew we had to play "our game", which is solid defense and hitting in bunches. Although a few regular guys could not be there, a few of our Super Subs were there for us. So, we still liked our lineup.

The game started early with us up first. We went down with no runs. The Naturals came up and started things quickly. Their lead off hitter is a small guy with decent speed. He's NO Danny Chim-Chim O'Hara though, that's for sure!!! This is one of those guys who thinks he's faster than he really is. Anyway, he started things off with a single. Their second batter followed suit with a single to left center. On the hit the lead off guy tried to go from first to third, but Danny came up throwing. He fired a

strike to Beck at third throwing out the runner by a country mile! As Lee said... "I love throwing guys like that out. They think they're faster than they really are. They're good for getting thrown out at least once a game." He was right! Anyway, we got out of the inning giving up only two runs.

Both teams went scoreless in the second. I could sense our confidence was starting to build because we were holding their scoring down. Scags, for the second straight game was doing a great job working the hitters.

In the top of the third we managed to break the ice and get a run across. Jake doubled, and moved to third on a fly out. Phil walked and Danny knocked in Jake with a sacrifice fly. The Naturals came back with three more runs in their half of the third to take a five to one lead. Our defense was solid and prevented them from blowing the game wide open. Even though we were down five to one, we did not panic.

In the top of the fourth our bats began to slowly wake up. You could feel the momentum slowly starting to turn. Joe started the inning off with a single. One batter later Marty poked a single of his own. After another out, I followed up with a hit knocking in the first run of the inning. Jake kept things going with another single, and then Haack doubled in two runs. Phil added an RBI double to end the scoring. We ended the inning with four runs and the score tied 5 to 5.

We sent the Naturals down with no runs again in the bottom of the fourth. This set the stage for what I call our *Championship Inning*. Lee started things off with one of his patented walks. I do believe his team leading 10th of the season. One out later Joe singled. Then Beck opened up the floodgates with a booming triple to left field knocking in both Lee and Joe. Marty then followed with a single to bring in Beck. Scags singled moving Marty to second. I followed with a single bringing in Marty and sending Scags to third. Jake followed with slow roller to short that the shortstop botched bringing in another run. Haack contributed a single of his own to keep things rolling. Phil moved runners around when the second basemen made a bad throw on a force play. Two runs wound up scoring. Danny then decided it was time for him to chip in with a double to bring in two more runs. When the dust settled we ended the inning with nine runs on seven hits, a walk and two errors, taking a 14 to 5 lead.

At this point we knew full well holding the Naturals to just five runs was not going to happen. We also figured they'd come storming back. What we did not count on or expect was them turning into the Champion Whiners of all time. Here is where the fun started. In the beginning of their five run rally in the bottom of the fifth a throw came in down the third base line from the outfield and rolled towards the dug out opening. Now, there IS a rule that NO equipment, bats or balls are allowed outside the dugout fence. They had two bats leaning against the fence. The ball rolled behind the two bats along the fence and settled near the opening of the bench area, where I grabbed it. On the throw a run scored. The ump immediately ruled the runner back to third because the bats impeded my progress of getting to the ball. In a sense, it did because I had to wait until the ball rolled behind and past the two bats. Mind you, he did NOT call the runner out. He just ruled him back to third.

The Naturals naturally (no pun intended) started arguing vehemently that the ump was wrong. To his credit the ump stayed calm and just kept repeating the rule.

Their argument was that the rule gets enforced only if the ball hits the equipment and gets in the way. He said no it does not have to hit it, besides that it was in the way. The disagreement carried on for about five minutes. Finally, play continued but the arguing went on right up until we all left the field.

Most of us thought that the runner wound up scoring anyway. But, I went to the videotape (yes this game is on video), and we were wrong. The very next batter hit a grounder back to Scags, who threw to me at home for a force out. So, the ump's ruling did cost them a run. What can I say? You should know not to have equipment outside the bench area. The rules are the rules.

As a side note, the video also showed some more of this team's true colors. After catching a line drive to end of one of the innings, their third baseman fired the ball as hard as he could towards their bench and into the backstop. Obviously no one saw it, because that's grounds for ejection. Why did he do that? I guess he was mad because they were losing. Then one of their young guys made an out and while running up the first base line took his hat and threw it up the first base line. Finally, on a few occasions they cheated by pinch running for several guys with one of their fast runners instead of the guy who made the last out, which is the rule. Yep, this is the kind of team we were dealing with.

Anyway, back to the bottom of the fifth. They managed to put together five runs on six hits and a walk, cutting our lead to 14 to 10. Oh yeah, how can I forget. During that inning I also started to hear rumblings from the Naturals about the way Scags was pitching. They were claiming he was doing something illegal. At first I chose to ignore it, but when they kept at it, I had to say my piece....as you will see.

Moving on. We went down quietly in the top of the sixth with no runs. Heavy winds with lightening, thunder and light rain started to close in. It was only a matter of time before it really hit us. At this point enough innings were played for a complete game. But, I assure you, ending the game early was NOT on anyone's mind. Everyone wanted to finish this thing no matter what the outcome.

The Naturals started rolling again in the bottom of the sixth. Their first three guys got hits, which brought in their eleventh run. A fly out and another hit later and the score was 14 to 12. A second fly out followed by yet another single made the score 14 to 13. All the while I continuously heard the whining and complaining about Scags' pitching. It seemed like after every pitch someone would say something. To Scag's credit, he did not flinch. He kept right on doing whatever he was doing! But the verbal abuse kept coming.

"He doesn't stop for enough time in between pitches!"

"He can't move forward like that. It's illegal!"

"He has to pause longer!"

"He's quick pitching!"

At this point, for some reason their pitcher jumped out from their bench and started in on the ump.

"Every pitch that guy throws is illegal!"

The ump did not respond. Finally I had enough.

"Look who's talking! He's the KING of quick pitches!"

I turned to the ump and he said to me, "Do you actually think I'm listening to those guys?"

I said, "I hope not, because that guy is the KING of illegal pitches."

The next guy steps in the batters box and said, (are you ready for this?)

"He's a hall of fame pitcher!"

I said, "That's nice."

"You think I'm bullshitting you! It's the truth."

"I really don't care if he is or not. The point is he's the KING of quick-pitching so none of you have a right to complain."

"I'm just telling you he's a hall of famer."

So, just for their trouble, the lightening sirens went off, and the game was stopped, with runners on first and second, two outs and the score 14 – 13. The ironic thing is, if these guys would have spent less time whining and arguing they probably would have gotten an extra batter or two up, giving themselves another chance to win or to at least finish the sixth inning. Serves them right for being a bunch of goddamned babies!! They got exactly what they deserved! But don't worry, the whining isn't over yet!!!

The weather sirens go off automatically whenever there is a chance of lightening close by. The system resets itself every twenty minutes. If after twenty minutes the weather is clear, the sirens will go off again indicating the danger is gone. The rule during the season is to wait twenty minutes. Being this was the play-offs the ump was willing to wait a lot longer, which he said right away.

Once the field was cleared the ump asked for captains to meet with him behind the backstop for a discussion. So, I went over with Lee and Joe right behind. One of the Naturals guys came over and then shouted something to someone on his bench. (Wait, this gets good). The umpire went on to very clearly explain where we stood with the game. His explanation went something like this.

"We have completed enough innings to make this an official game. If we cannot continue the Black Jacks win the game and the Championship based on the score after the last completed inning, which was 14 to 10." Lee, Joe nor I said a word. The Naturals guy turned around and said something to some woman (I told you this was getting good). This woman comes storming over and started a rather loud and bold tantrum.

"You will speak to me. I am the manager of this team! You speak directly to me! I decide what goes on with this team!"

I swear to you I almost peed my pants!! How I did not laugh in her face is beyond me!! Anyway, the ump very calmly restated his position. Then one of the player's fathers who was listening in said, "So let's finish this thing right now!!!"

The ump went on to explain that he could not allow nor permit anyone to be on the field because it was not safe due to the nearby dangerous weather. He has to wait until the all clear siren or call off the game. It's a matter of safety.

The yelling from the Naturals started.

"This is bullshit!" "No way!"... on and on.

Then their lady manager, (I do think she was someone's mom), started in again.

"Who's in charge here?"

The ump said, "I am right now."

"No. Who from the league is in charge here? I want to speak to someone right now!"

"The decision is mine." Declared the ump. He then went on, "A field supervisor is here if you want to talk to him, but this is my call and a matter of safety. I will wait as long as I can, but at some point I will make a decision. If you want to take it up with the league supervisor that's your decision."

She continued, "I want someone to call Erica (the league supervisor) right now. I know who she is, and I want her to make this decision."

"That's fine but the rule is the rule. This game has enough innings completed to be called an official game."

"I want to talk to Erica." She kept saying.

At this point I just decided to walk away. I figured if had to listen to another minute of this woman carrying on like a two-year old, defending her kids, it was going to get ugly.

I overheard her ranting and raving about the sirens, and the weather system and the flashing light indicating there was danger. It did not seem to end. As she was doing that they were still going on and on about the damned bat interference and Scags pitching!

After about twenty minutes it started to rain. Within seconds it was torrential downpour! The ump quickly declared the game over. So I said... "That's it, we win!" Joe then told me he heard the ump say it's up to your league supervisor now. I could not believe it. The ump changed his tune after this lady carried on for twenty minutes. So, I went to the field supervisor and asked for the trophy. He said he couldn't give it to me because he wasn't sure what was up. I went up to the parking lot and literally banged on the ump's car to ask him what the decision was. He said, "It's up to your league supervisor and pulled away.

Now I'm furious, standing in the pouring rain in stunned disbelief because some whining mother gave the ump an earful to the point where he couldn't take it anymore. What a bunch of bullshit. I figured for sure this would turn into some kind of war between this lady, the league and us.

We left the field not knowing the official outcome. So, we went to the bar and celebrated anyway, because we honestly could not think of a reason for Erica to not declare us the winners. After all, the rule is the rule.

On Thursday I emailed her to ask what the decision was. She never replied. On Friday morning I emailed her again. This time she did reply with this,

"There are more important things going on right now, I will deal with this on Monday."

Stunned by this note I used Phil to get word to the ex-league supervisor (who still works for the Lisle Park District), who he plays on another team with, to find out what was so urgent at the Park District that Erica could not make a decision. Yes, it does pay to have good relationships.

Monday came and went, with no word. On Tuesday I got word from Phil that we WON!! The former supervisor went to see Erica, and asked her what happened. She said the Black Jacks won. So, he asked why she did not let everyone know that. She did not have an answer and did not come up with anything that was so pressing that she could not notify the league that we won.

Later that afternoon I checked the league website for about the hundredth time. FINALLY there it was in bold red print;

Congratulations to the Black Jacks on their Tournament WIN!!

So, I emailed her again to say thanks and asked if there was any doubt about her decision. She said no. The game was over and we won. There was nothing to decide. She also said no one from the other team called or emailed her at all, so she figured they didn't care.

Go figure! So, why in the name of all that is HOLY, did it take almost a week to declare us Champions!?!? I have NO idea, and probably won't ever find out. Anyway, here's the bottom line:

**2007 Lisle Park District
Men's Wednesday Night Competitive League
Play-off Tournament Champions....
BLACK JACKS!!!!**

Coach's Corner

- Big game by Jake who stepped up in the biggest game of the year going 2 for 3, getting on base three times. Way to go son!
- Our Mr. Softball Joe came through too with a clutch performance going 3 for 4.
- Again what else can I say about Phil? Big time players come through in big time games. Shall we call him Mr. August? What a tournament he had, both at the plate and in the field! He did not make a single out at the plate and was on base seven out of seven times! I think he can now be called "Mr. Super Sub"!!!
- This whole thing feels kind of surreal. I think because we really didn't get to celebrate on the field, and because it took so long to finally get the definitive word. However....I'll take it! It's been a long time coming!
- Our ultimate goal was accomplished! What's left? Well, let's try getting a little greedy and take both the Regular Season Championship and the Play-off Championship!

Championship Game Big Hitters

Joe	3 for 4	1 Run		
Jake	2 for 3	3 Runs	Double	1 RBI
Pete	2 for 3	2 Runs		2 RBI
Haack	2 for 3	1 Run		2 RBI

Marty 2 for 4 2 Runs 1 RBI

Tournament Stuff

Tournament Finish

Semi's – Game 1

The Naturals	10
Squirrel Cagers	6

Semi's – Game 2

Black Jacks	10
The Canners	9

Finals / Championship Game

Black Jacks	14
The Naturals	10

Tournament MVP

This has to go to Phil, no doubt about it!!

In game one, he made a huge defensive play and proceeded to go 3 for 3, with a walk, a triple, two runs scored and 2 RBI including the game winning hit in the bottom of the 8th.

In the Championship Game he went 1 for 2, with a double, a walk, got on on an error, one run scored and had 2 RBI.

He did not make a single out through the entire tournament, getting on base all seven times he came up.

Incredible performance. Truly impressive!

Honorable mention goes to Scags. He held The Canners under 10 runs and did a solid job against The Naturals, while under verbal abuse for half the game.

Nice going guys!!

Tournament Big Hitters

Phil	4 for 5	2 Walks,	3 Runs	Triple, Double	4 RBI
Haack	4 for 7		2 runs		3 RBI
Marty	4 for 7	Walk	3 runs		2 RBI
Pete	4 for 7		4 Runs		2 RBI
Lee	4 for 7	Walk	2 Runs		2 RBI
Joe	4 for 8		1 Run		1 RBI

Comic Relief

Not as easy as it seems

For the play-off tournament, I let Joe and Lee put together the players and the lineups. They both quickly found out, that something that should be really simple sometimes is not. It's just not as easy as it seems.

Joe: Ebs you're at first.

Ebs: Really?

Joe: Yeah. You're playing first base.

Ebs: You want me to play first?

Joe: Yes. Is there something wrong?

The look on Joe's face was priceless. Like I he couldn't believe what he was hearing.

Ebs: Well, no. But you want ME to play first?

Mark: I'll play first. Then I don't have to worry about my throws.

Pete: Yeah, but there's no other human vacuum cleaner out there to cover third.

Joe: You have your choice then, third or first

Ebs: If first is where you want me to play, then I'll play there.

Joe: Yes, but you have a choice now

Ebs: No, no... it's up to you. First base it is then.

Joe: Unbelievable!

That's as fast as I can go

Bradley had the misfortune of hitting into a double play.

Danny: I think I would have been out on that double play too.

Pete: No way!

Joe: I don't think so either.

Brad: Probably not, but there was no way I was going to beat it out.

Joe: Well, you hesitated a little bit there in the beginning.

Brad: No, No! I didn't. Sorry, but that's as fast as I can go.

I used to do this for a living

After the game at the bar we ordered pizzas. Joe took over and tried to play host.

Joe: Okay, who wants pizza?

There were about 10 of us, and everyone stuck their plates out.

Joe: Here it comes!

Joe began to literally toss the pieces in the air on to everyone plates

Joe: Come on! Who wants pizza?! Who wants more!?

Lee: You're pretty good at that.

Joe: I used to do this for a living.

The very next piece Joe dropped on the table upside down.

Pete: Yeah, I can tell.

That's just good coaching

How can I end the season without mentioning what has to be the number one target for Comic Relief over the past three years!? Yes, I am talking about my speed, or lack thereof! For the second week in a row, Danny was coaching third base when I was on second. On a base hit, he did not hesitate in sending me home. What? Is there a problem with that?

Joe: I can't believe you scored from second base again.

Pete: What are you talking about?

Joe: If they would have thrown home you would have been out.

Pete: Hey, I'm just watching my third base coach. If he says go I go.

Danny: You should have seen the look on your face when I yelled for you to go.

Pete: That's two weeks in a row! That's so cool!

Joe: Yeah, but I'm telling you, you would have been out if they made a throw.

Danny: But they didn't.

Joe: They should have.

Danny: That's why I sent him. There's NO WAY they were expecting him to run. It's the ultimate surprise.

Pete: I'm with him. We're locked in when he's coaching third. I just think that's good coaching.

Danny: It is good coaching. I know what I'm doing.

Joe: I'm not so sure.

Danny: He scored both times didn't he?

Pete: YES I DID! Now that's good coaching! And good running!!

A bunch of us sat around a big table at the Maple Inn after the tournament was over drinking beers and eating pizza. To put the season in perspective, at least fifty times Joe stood up, raised his beer and yelled, "BLACK JACKS!!! CHAMPIONS BABY!! CHAMPIONS!!!!!"

The End.....

Big thanks to everyone who came out this year!

No matter how much or how little you contributed, every bit helped!

We hope to see more of everyone next year!

To our readers: Thanks for sticking with us.

I hope you enjoyed reading these as much as I enjoyed writing them. If you know anyone that wants to be added to the mailing list next year, just let me know.

The coach has spoken.....for the last time this season!

See you all next year!

Pete