

**Games:** 31 & 32  
Play-off Tournament  
**Date:** Wed. 8/13/08  
**Written:** Tues. 8/20/08

### **2008 Play-Off Tournament**

Although we went into this tournament as the number three seed, we had won ten out of our last twelve games including our last four in a row. Our last two wins were against the regular season winner and number one seed Economos. The two wins previous to that were against our first game opponent, the second seeded Papa O's, who we had actually beaten the last three games in a row. I truly believe after those wins, we had everyone's attention. If I were one of the other teams, I would not have wanted to face us especially in the first round. Our confidence was for sure higher than it had been all year long.

For more weeks than I care to remember, I had to chase players just to field a team. But as the season wore on and we kept winning I figured getting guys to play in the tournament would not be a problem. The question was would they be the right guys?

To ensure that we did, Danny O'Hara (you all remember Danny don't you?), and I had been talking for two weeks about him coming in and playing. Danny had not played since the third week of the year because of an injury to his right shoulder. He has two tears in his rotator cuff and needs surgery. But, I did not need him for his arm. I wanted two things: his bat and his speed. He agreed to play. Honestly, I didn't care who else showed up, going was going to be the designated hitter no matter what. Danny is what we call a difference maker. He can walk on the field and set or change the tone of any game. There aren't many like him around, and when they are available, you have to take advantage.

My other big move was to bring in Phil. Everyone knows why Phil has been our number one Super Sub for several years. For those that do not remember, he had a monster play-off tournament last year, leading us to the championship win. And last week he came up huge again with two big games in our wins over Economos. The bottom line is, Phil is a money player. When you have an important game and need quality softball, you need a guy like Phil

On the other side of the coin, we had some question marks. Ebs who pulled his hamstring a few weeks ago, felt better but he wasn't sure how much he could contribute. He agreed to give it his best shot. We also had Diamond Dave on his way home from a business trip, and he was not sure he would make it in time to start the game. And finally we had Marty, who had just returned from his honeymoon the night before. I was not sure until Wednesday morning if he was going to be there.

Planning for the worst, but hoping for the best, I locked up twelve guys. These were twelve quality guys that no matter how you put them together were capable of winning. Worst case scenario, would be we'd start probably with ten and go from there. The best-case scenario, which would be a nice problem to have, was all twelve would show up ready to play.

Regardless of how it turned out, I had a plan for everything.

When twelve guys shows up, someone asked me what I was going to do. My answer was, "There is always a method to my madness."

### **Game 1**

## A Haunting

All twelve guys showed up ready to play, there is absolutely no doubt about that. I cannot remember when we had a full team there that early. By a little after six o'clock everyone was there. Guys I've never seen warming up much before a game were warming up. On top of that a bunch of guys took batting practice. I knew we were in for a good night. I could just feel it.

So, I bet your asking what did I do with twelve guys? Plan A was to be honest. I went up to the Papa O's captain and told him the truth.

"I have twelve guys ready to play. And to be honest, I really don't have the heart to sit anyone. Do you have a problem if I constantly rotate twelve guys all game?"

He looked me straight in the eye and said, "I have no problem with that. You do whatever you want to do. You can even hit all twelve if you want. I'm good with it. It doesn't really matter. Let's just go out and have some fun."

To make sure I pressed him just a bit. "Are you sure? Because I don't want anyone coming back to say we cheated or did something wrong. I want to be honest and up front here. If you have a problem with it, I will hit eleven and switch guys off by the book."

He repeated himself. "Honestly, I have no problem. It's fine. You won't get any of that shit from me. You are good."

I then closed the deal. "I do not want to tell the ump or anything. I don't need him throwing his ASA rulebook at me. I just want to be one hundred percent sure that we are cool."

"We are cool. No worries. Good Luck."

Just so some of you are aware some softball associations allow you to bat twelve players in tournaments. So, depending on whose rules you go by, technically this request was not illegal. As far as I'm concerned, once their captain agreed, that made it one hundred percent legal. Besides, the theory is that when you bat that many guys, you are taking away at bats from your better hitters. Well, I guess that is correct, but if you have twelve guys that can hit well, what's the difference? And if it that extra guy has a big bat, then it's to your advantage. That's what I was counting on.

Before we get into the game, let me take you back to the third week of the season when we played Papa O's for the first time. This was the night we played with nine players and got our asses handed to us. That didn't really bother me as much as these guys carrying on like they won the World Series. If you don't remember go back and read the recap from that week. I even made the statement, that behavior like that will come back to haunt you.

Let's play some ball! Being we were the lower seed, we were the visiting team. So, we came up first. Danny, taking back his usual lead off spot in the order, immediately got things going with a single. Phil, followed suit with another single moving Danny to third. Two batters later Joe gave us the lead with a sacrifice fly. Bones then singled moving Phil to third. Trice brought in Phil with another single for our second run of the inning, giving us a quick two to nothing lead.

Before I could even take my position behind the plate several Papa O's started whining. I heard two different guys say, "There's at least four or five guys that have never played for them before."

The first time I let it go, but after hearing it the second time, I got pretty pissed, and stepped in right away to put an end to that bullshit right quick. I walked right up to their bench and yelled.

"Don't start that bullshit already! Every fucking guy on this field is on the roster and has played at least three nights. If you want to check rosters then go ahead and make the call. I have a copy right in my bag and would be glad to show it to you!"

I do not think they expected me to come right over to their bench and say that. They just looked at me and one guy said, "Oh we were just giving you shit. It's no problem."

I shot back, "Yeah okay. It's no problem. I'm just setting you straight right now because I don't want to hear that bullshit all game long!"

I HATE being accused of doing something that I am not doing. If they wanted to say something about the twelve guys playing, that would have been different.

When their first batter came up to the plate he tried to make all nice. "Hey man. It's cool. Just as long as you don't beat us like twenty two to two or something."

I said, "Let's just play the game. I don't want to hear that other shit."

Finally the game got going again and Papa O's came back with one run to cut the lead to two to one after two. Then both teams went scoreless in the second, so the score held. For us, that was just the calm before the storm.

With one out in the top of the third Danny singled for the second time. Phil followed again with a double, putting runners on second and third. Lee got the scoring going with an RBI single. Then Joe brought in another with a double. Bones followed with a two-run single, bringing in the third and fourth runs. Trice then stepped up and cleared the bases with a long home run to left center for the fifth and sixth runs. Franchi started another rally with the first of five consecutive singles. Following him were D-Vo, Ebs, me and finally Marty. Ebs brought in one run. I knocked in another and Marty brought in the final two runs, of a MONSTER ten run inning! After just two and a half innings we were up twelve to one. With that, I think it's time for more whining from Papa O's.

After our ten run explosion, the ump, as umps usually do, asked how many runs we scored. We counted them up not once, but at least three times to make sure. I yelled, "Ten blue". Now mind you, we keep detailed score of every single game. We have done that since our first year of existence. If you don't believe me, just ask Wendy. One of the main reasons is because sometimes there is confusion or there are questions. By keeping score disagreements and disputes can be settled quickly. The scorebook does not lie.

Immediately after I yelled ten runs to the ump, a guy from Papa O's yelled, "Ten runs? Bullshit! There's no fucking way you guys scored ten runs."

GOD I HATE WHINERS!!!

I grabbed the book and charged right back to their bench again. I waved the book in the air. "You wanna see the book? It's right here in black and white. It shows ten fucking runs! Don't start your shit with me!

No one said word back to me. I just don't get it. These guys continued to create their own bad karma. Don't worry; the whining is not over yet.

Getting back to the game, Papa's came back with only two runs in the third. So, after three we were up twelve to three.

In the fourth with two outs Joe doubled. Then Bones stepped up and crushed a towering, long home run to right center, getting the two runs back that we gave up in the previous half inning. We were now up fourteen to three and looking for an early slaughter rule win.

Trice, as he has done just about all year kept pitching a hell of a game, and our defense was solid. We held O's scoreless in the fourth, keeping our eleven run lead. With the twelve run slaughter rule looming we went into the fifth smelling blood and looking for the kill.

Ebs got things going with a walk. I reached on a fielder's choice and Marty reached on an error putting two runners on. Dave made an out so we had two men on and two men out. I remember someone yelling, "Hey, we're not done here. We got a two out rally in us!"

Danny singled knocking in the first run. Phil followed knocking in another. Lee singled bringing in the third run. Joe stepped up and cracked a long triple to left clearing the bases for the fourth and fifth runs. Bones, showing no mercy, launched another moon shot way over the right center fielder's head for his second two-run homer of the night. On the play, Joe literally stood on third, until Bones got to second. Then he had no choice but to go because Bones was coming hard behind him. When Joe took off their pitcher made a snide comment, something like, "Yeah cause you really need that run." Okay, so what exactly would you like him to do? Just stand there and get tagged out? As it was he held up for as long as he could. What I would have said was, Yeah, and you guys really needed all twenty-six runs that you scored the first time we played you when we had nine guys. Remember what I said about shit coming back to haunt you.

Trice then tripled to left bringing in Bones. On the play the throw came to third on a bad hop and it the third basemen right in the face. The ball bounced away and Trice instinctively ran. Did he have to? In my mind yes. This was a playoff game. Any team is fully capable of scoring ten to twelve runs in an inning. We've done it several times and have had it done to us on more than one occasion. We play to win. Believe me, if the shoe was on the other foot they would have run too. As a matter of fact they did run, every chance they got when they beat the hell out of us in the third week of the year. Anyway, naturally another comment was made about Trice scoring too. I HATE WHINERS!! We ended the inning with eight runs and a twenty-two to three lead.

Papa's did nothing in the fifth, going down quietly ending a huge win for us!

I hate fucking whiners! Early in the year, we took our ass beatings like men. We never said shit to anyone. Now that the shoe is on the other foot, the real character in players comes out. I am proud to say, NO ONE on this team is like that.

The bottom line was this. We beat the hell out of them. We took advantage of every error, mental mistake and misplay, and we flat out pounded the ball.

From how they acted back in the third week of the year, they created their own haunting! Like I said... shit like that comes back to haunt you. And it did. In my mind, justice was served.

One game down and one to go!

**Black Jacks**                    **22**  
**Papa O's**                            **3**

|                    | <u>Line Score</u> |   |    |   |   |   |   |    |
|--------------------|-------------------|---|----|---|---|---|---|----|
|                    | 1                 | 2 | 3  | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | T  |
| <b>Black Jacks</b> | 2                 | 0 | 10 | 2 | 8 | X | X | 22 |
| <b>Papa O's</b>    | 1                 | 0 | 2  | 0 | 0 | X | X | 3  |

|            | <u>Box Score</u> |   |   |    |    |    |    |     |
|------------|------------------|---|---|----|----|----|----|-----|
|            | AB               | R | H | BB | 2B | 3B | HR | RBI |
| Danny DH   | 4                | 3 | 3 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0   |
| Phil LC    | 4                | 3 | 3 | 0  | 1  | 0  | 0  | 1   |
| Lee 2B     | 4                | 2 | 2 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 2   |
| Joe RC     | 3                | 3 | 3 | 0  | 1  | 2  | 0  | 4   |
| Bones SS   | 4                | 3 | 4 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 2  | 6   |
| Trice P    | 4                | 2 | 3 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 3   |
| Franchi 3B | 4                | 1 | 3 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0   |
| D Vo DH    | 4                | 1 | 2 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0   |

|       |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pete  | C  | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Marty | RF | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Dave  |    | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

**Big Hitters:** **Bones (HR # 4 &5), Danny, Phil, Lee Joe, Trice, Franchi, D Vo, Pete**

## Game 2

# Championship Season

We all knew, that if we made it to the finals of the championship tournament we would be facing Economos. And to be honest, I don't think any of us wanted it any other way. After all the adversity we overcame during the year and completely turning the season around, we wanted to play and beat the number one team for this championship.

I think all of us knew that we were good enough to not only get there, but to win. I know quite a few of us were as confident as ever, especially after beating them so soundly last week. The only real question was whether the one-hour wait between games would stop our momentum.

I could just sense that the energy was not going anywhere. We were all pretty relaxed in between games, but you could just sense there would be no let down. After just a few innings of the next game guys were running around warming up again. Guys were talking about the game, watching Economos very closely in their first game, which by the way they won by a big margin. I have no idea what the score was.

Speaking of Economos, I will give them credit. They are all friendly and pretty classy. There was absolutely no animosity before or during this game. There was no animosity all year long, and that's pretty surprising being they got an awful schedule of playing the late games every week. Yes, don't even get me started about that. Anyway, they were good guys, competitive, but friendly.

I also think that part of it was we were in their heads after beating them so badly last week, holding them to seven runs. They were smart and did not want to add any fuel to the fire I'm sure. But there is no doubt we had their respect.

Ah, you're wondering about the twelve guys we had for the first game and how I handled it for the second game. Well, good question. Honestly, I did not have to make a decision. D Vo who played the first game, needed to get home early, so he could not play the second game. So, the decision was made for me. We had and went with eleven.

Let's play ball!

We knew a quick start would be huge against these guys. They are really good at bunching hits together and taking advantage of mistakes, so we needed a lead.

Danny, Phil and Lee started things off with four consecutive singles to start the game. Lee drove in Danny for the first run. Then Joe stepped up and banged another triple to left bringing in Phil and Lee for a three to nothing lead. Bones then brought in Joe with a sacrifice fly for the fourth run. Trice came up and decided we weren't done yet, and blasted a home run to left center giving us five runs and nice early cushion.

As we expected, Economos came right back and plated three runs. The bad thing here is we started to make some mistakes. And just like they usually do, they took advantage, cutting the lead to two.

We went scoreless in the top of the second. Sure enough Economos pounced on a few bad plays in their half of the inning, and stormed back with four runs, to take a seven to five lead.

To our credit no one panicked. We stuck together knowing this game would not be easy. In the top of the third we came alive again. Lee singled to start off the inning. Two batters later, Bones, who was having an absolutely monstrous day, crushed another long triple to right bringing

in Lee. Trice then brought in Bones with a sacrifice fly to tie the score. Is it me, or do we hit a lot of sacrifice flies? I think we lead the world in sacrifice flies! And that's just fine with me.

Going into the bottom of the third we needed to calm down in the field, stop making mistakes and get a nice easy inning. Everyone settled down and we did just that. It seems like whenever we really need a good inning in the field Trice steps up, pitches awesome and makes incredible plays covering the mound. This was no different. We blanked Economos this inning, pretty much starting things over with a tie score.

We stayed loose but intense. In games like this good teams always find a way to get the job done. We needed to keep scoring. With one out Marty singled, then Dave singled. Danny followed with a third consecutive single bringing in Marty, and moved to second on a throw putting runners at second and third. Phil came up big again with a huge two-run single, bringing home Dave and Danny. Lee followed with yet another single putting two runners on again. Joe came through again with his own RBI single. Bones then finished the scoring with yet another sacrifice fly for our fifth run of the inning and twelve to seven lead.

Economos kept coming at us and kept capitalizing on our mistakes. It seemed like all of their ground balls either had eyes or we couldn't make a play. They have very little power, but kept blooming hit after hit just out of the reach of the infielders and too short for the outfielders to reach. Give them credit, they kept finding ways to stay in the game. Before we knew it, they tied the game with five runs. So after four, the game pretty much started over again, with a tie score of twelve to twelve.

We did not score in the fifth. So, we had to come up with a way to stop the dink hits from falling and to get to their ground balls that had eyes. I am not sure who came up with the idea, but I will give credit to both guys involved with this decision, Joe and Lee. They talked about moving Joe from right centerfield to the infield and playing with five infielders. They came to me, which I truly appreciated and asked me what I thought. I have to be honest I completely disagreed with the suggestion. The main reason is we have tried this a few times over the years and every time we did we got burnt big time. It even cost us a game or two. I just do not like making major changes like that in the middle of the game, and I made my feelings known. However, this is not a dictatorship. I am open to suggestions and if I am out voted I will go with the majority. We decided together that we would give it a try. Joe even said, "if they beat us in the gaps once or twice we will go back to a regular defense. We can even change it up every inning to mess with their heads". Now this part I liked. For the past two innings I kept hearing several guys on Economos yelling that we did not have any range in the infield and to keep beating the ball down. Now, if we brought in an extra infielder that would totally mess up their heads.

This strategic move was not over yet. When you go with three outfielders you need major speed in the outfield to cover a lot of open ground. We had a whole lot of speed sitting on the bench in Danny, and Joe knew it. Now mind you Danny cannot really throw, but we needed his ability to chase down anything. So, someone did a pretty damned unselfish thing. Marty stepped up and volunteered to come out of right field so Danny could play there. This turned out to be a huge move. My only concern was Danny's inability to throw and I said so. Lee decided that any ball hit to the outfield he would run out from second base and get as close to Danny as he could to cut down on the throw. So, a very risky plan was put in place. The question would be was it a good one.

Oh, before I forget, speaking of unselfish players, Franchi had a few rough plays at third base and asked Ebs, who was playing first to switch. So Franchi moved to first. I thought this was pretty impressive as well. In the end this turned out to be huge too. You really have to love unselfish players. That's the kind of stuff Champions are made of.

So, we go into the bottom of the fifth still tied at twelve, with five infielders. Sure enough the move started to pay off. Joe made a huge play on a ball that would have put a runner on third,

but him being positioned up the middle prevented that. Not only that, we did get into their heads. Half the Economos team kept yelling about us having only three outfielders and to hit the ball in the air. The other half kept yelling to not change anything at the plate. Anyway we held them scoreless in the fifth, keeping the score tied.

In the top of the sixth, with one out Danny singled for the third time of the game and moved to second on a lazy throw. Phil stepped up and once again came up big with an RBI single. If this did not epitomize the reason why I brought Danny and Phil in to play nothing did. In a huge spot Danny finds a way to get to second with his blazing speed, and Phil continued to prove how much of a money player he is by knocking in Danny with his third RBI and hit of the game. Honestly, when I asked these two guys to play I knew all along they would hit one and two. They are the classic one and two hitters. This changed a steady line up we have had for several weeks, but as you can see, it was the right thing to do. So, going into the bottom of the sixth we were up by one thirteen to twelve.

In the top of the sixth we went back to the conventional four-outfielder defense, and you could just tell these guys were not sure what to do. However, they would not go away. Even though we made some huge plays in the field, including a run saving play by Ebs at third (remember the move with Franchi) they managed to tie the game yet again. Welcome to championship softball my friends!!

Bones led off the seventh, and just like he had done all night long, he came through again with another booming triple to right center. Trice then lined out hard to third for the first out. Franchi stepped up, pretty much knowing he needed to get the ball in the air to the outfield, and he did just that with yet another sacrifice fly, bringing home Bones with the go ahead run. That was it for the inning, so we went into the bottom of the seventh with a one run lead. Man, does it get any better than this?

This time Joe and Lee decided to go back to the five-infielder defense. The guys from Economos were getting really tense and confused. I could tell with every batter that they were very indecisive as to what to do at the plate. I am not sure exactly what order things happened, but I know Danny made a huge running catch in right for one of outs. Remember the unselfish offer by Marty to let Danny play out there. I also believe Trice made a good play on a ball hit hard back to him. In between two runners got on. So, there were two runners on and two runners out. A single would undoubtedly tie the game. A gap shot would probably win it.

When the next batter stepped up I looked at his face and then I looked down at his feet. He was for sure very nervous and antsy. It seemed like he was thinking way too much and was trying to do something with directing the ball. You can't do that with your feet constantly moving. Trice threw real nice pitch a little high and on the outside part of the plate. The guy swung hard trying to direct the ball to right field, but he popped the ball up! Where? Right in front of me! I honestly could not believe it. As the ball kept going up and then started to come down, it seemed like slow motion. I kept telling myself, I can't believe I have a chance to catch the last out of the championship game. I took maybe two steps forward and settled underneath it. All I had to do was squeeze it. As a matter of fact I heard Franchi and Lee yelling...."Squeeze it Pete! Just squeeze it!" And that I did! I didn't do shit the whole championship game, but catching the final out was justice enough for me. How cool is that!? Who would have thought the last out would be a pop up to the catcher and that catcher would be ME!?!?

For the second consecutive season, the Lisle Park District Wednesday Night Men's 12 inch Softball Champions: ***THE BLACK JACKS!!!!!!!!!!***

***And that's all I've got to say about that!!!***

**Black Jacks**  
**Economos**

**14**  
**13**

|                    | <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>  |
| <b>Black Jacks</b> | <b>5</b>          | <b>0</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>14</b> |
| <b>Economos</b>    | <b>3</b>          | <b>4</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>13</b> |

|                     | <u>Box Score</u>                         |          |          |           |           |           |           |            |
|---------------------|--|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
|                     | <u>AB</u>                                | <u>R</u> | <u>H</u> | <u>BB</u> | <u>2B</u> | <u>3B</u> | <u>HR</u> | <u>RBI</u> |
| Danny DH            | 4  | 3        | 3        | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 1          |
| Phil LC             | 4  | 2        | 3        | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 3          |
| Lee 2B              | 4  | 3        | 3        | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 1          |
| Joe RC              | 4  | 1        | 2        | 0         | 0         | 1         | 0         | 3          |
| Bones SS            | 2  | 2        | 2        | 0         | 0         | 2         | 0         | 3          |
| Trice P             | 3  | 1        | 1        | 0         | 0         | 0         | 1         | 2          |
| Franchi 3B          | 3  | 0        | 1        | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 1          |
| Ebs 1B              | 4  | 0        | 3        | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0          |
| Pete C              | 4  | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0          |
| Marty RF            | 3  | 1        | 1        | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0          |
| Dave LF             | 3  | 1        | 1        | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0          |
| <b>Big Hitters:</b> | <b>Danny, Phil, Lee, Ebs, Joe, Bones</b> |          |          |           |           |           |           |            |

## **Coach's Corner**

### **Bringing Their "A" Game**

Some of the performances in this tournament were truly amazing. A huge round of applause goes to everyone who played. Every single player, at some point or another made major contributions to these two wins. But, hats off to these guys for stepping up big at the plate in the biggest games.

|       |         |        |                   |       |
|-------|---------|--------|-------------------|-------|
| Bones | 6 for 6 | 5 Runs | 2 Triples, 2 HR   | 9 RBI |
| Joe   | 5 for 7 | 4 Runs | Double, 2 Triples | 7 RBI |
| Danny | 6 for 8 | 6 Runs |                   | 1 RBI |
| Phil  | 6 for 8 | 5 Runs | Double            | 4 RBI |
| Lee   | 6 for 8 | 5 Runs |                   | 3 RBI |
| Trice | 4 for 7 | 3 Runs | 7 Triple, 2 HR    | 5 RBI |

### **Bittersweet**

There is no doubt this was about the most bittersweet season I could have ever imagined. I swear to all of you, and you can ask my wife or Lee to confirm this, after the first ten games of this season, as far as I was concerned, this would be very last Black Jacks softball season ever. There was no way I would ever go through anything like this again.

But then to turn this thing around the way we did, and to end it with the ultimate prize of a repeat Championship win, is truly amazing and something I will never ever forget.

As Jimmy V said a few years ago. "Never give up. Never give. Don't ever give up!"

Thank you guys!

### **The Turning Point**

When we were at our lowest point during the season Marty stepped up and offered to contact a bunch of players he plays with on his other softball team. Of course I was all for it. His contacting these guys was truly the turning point of the season. So, thank you Marty. From that point on it was like a domino effect of new faces because other guys started calling friends they played with as well. Before we knew it, we had a pretty damned good team. I don't like leaving anyone out, but I have to give special thanks to the new guys who stepped up and became our new regulars: Franchi, Trice, Bones, Diamond Dave, and Steve.

### **Getting over the Top**

As important as the new influx of good players was, there were a few other critical things that happened to really make us a winning team.

First, two players made their return at around the half-way-point of the season. It was at this time that we really started to string wins together. It was like trading for two top-notch players that put your team over the top.

Then the final piece of the puzzle that made us a championship team was one guy catching FIRE at the right time.

The two guys that came back were Joe and Ebs. The one guy, who got as hot as anyone I have ever seen for the last month of the season, was Lee.

So, you add a few returning players with a few new players, combine that with the return of a two key players and top it off with a player catching fire and you have the makings of a championship team.

### **UNSELFISH PLAYERS**

I cannot say enough about unselfish players. I know I mentioned it before but what Marty and Franchi did during this tournament was not only admirable it was down right eye opening as to the type of players they are.

### **PITCHING AND DEFENSE WIN CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Any baseball or softball expert will tell you this because it's one hundred percent true.

When we play defense and pitch well, we are a pretty awesome team.

We have five or six outfielders that can go get 'em with just about anyone, including Joe, Dave, Phil, Danny, Marty, Dvo and Lee when he needs to.

We have several solid infielders who can all play just about any infield position including Ebs, Lee, Franchi and Bones.

Of course we cannot forget Trice's ability to become the fifth infielder with the way he fields his position.

I will even throw myself into the mix because I love being behind the plate. Someone has to anchor the infield! Plus, on the tough plays I always get the hardest part. Right Lee!? 😊 That's a joke folks, although I did have my share of plays at the plate, rundowns and foul pops caught.

And then there is our pitching, which is not too shabby. With Trice on the mound we went 11 and 5. He gave up an average of 8 runs per game, which is awesome. He was on the mound for all of our last six wins giving up an average of seven runs per game.

Backing him up we had Lee, who was only undefeated as a pitcher, going four and 0. He gave up only 7.5 runs a game.

### **The Homerun Race**

Bones gets the Homerun crown with five! He hit two in the tournament!

Joe finished second with four and Trice finished third with three.

## The Challenges

Here were the challenges I laid out from two weeks ago and last week.

1. Beat Economos: **We did this last week and when it counted in the championship game**
2. Finish with an overall record of .500 or better. **Overall we finished 16 and 16. Not including forfeits or in MY LEAGUE following MY RULES, as the guys say, we finished 16 and 12.**
3. Finish in second place in the regular season. **This is the ONLY challenge we did not meet.**
4. Beat Papa O's in a double header. **We did this two weeks ago and then beat them again in the play-offs**
5. **Win the play-off tournament. This was the most important and amazingly enough we achieved this too!!!!!!**

## TWO GUYS

I thought about not mentioning this, but being I am the author, and I think it needs to be said, I am going to.

There were only 2 guys, who played every inning of every game this entire season. Those two guys were Lee and yours truly.

So, while we are giving accolades to all of the new comers and all the guys that stepped in at the right time and all that good stuff, and deservedly so, don't forget about us!

For me, being the oldest player on the team, playing every inning of every game, and coming out of it alive, is pretty freakin impressive as far as I'm concerned. I got tired at the end of the season, but I busted my ass every game and had a damned good time doing it.

Lee is a few years younger than me, so playing every inning of every game is no big deal to him, but it is to me. That's commitment and dedication, and that's a rare commodity these days.

Besides that, I don't know too many players that are better than him all around, and he sure did catch FIRE just when we needed him.

But from me to him, thank you for being there the entire year for me and for this team. I couldn't have done it without you.

## The Future

Like I said earlier, at one point, there was no way I was even going to consider having a team next year. But I am very happy to say it looks like that has all changed. As my favorite uncle, who passed away last September used to tell me...."The good lord willing and the creek don't rise"...we will be back next year! So stay tuned for season 7!

---

## **Comic Relief**

I know there was a bunch of very funny stuff throughout a very long night that was absolutely hysterical but I just don't remember the details to a lot of them. I'm sorry about that. Here are two of those.

At some point in between the first and second game, a bunch of guys (Lee, Ebs, Franchi and Marty included) were making fun of Joe about how he thinks he's right the majority of the time, but he's actually wrong a large percentage of the time. This went on for so long that he finally couldn't take it anymore and yelled,

**"FUCK YOU GUYS!"**

After the game at the championship celebration Marty and Trice kept making fun of Joe and how they were going to take his daughters out, because they know how much he is looking forward to anyone dating his three daughters.

It ended when Joe started throwing things at both Marty and Trice. Trust me, this was hysterical.

Here are the three episodes I do remember. I wish it were more.

### Ouch! That had to hurt

On a play at the plate, Trice was a little too close to me in trying to line up or cut off the throw, so I got completely blinded as the ball came in and it hit me on the inside of my left thigh.

**Ump:** Ouch, that had to hurt.

**Pete:** A bit

**Ump:** You okay?

**Pete:** Sure. I'm tough

**Ump:** That hit your right in the nuts didn't it?

**Pete:** No. It got me on the inside of the thigh.

**Ump:** Really?

**Pete:** Yep

**Ump:** Are you sure?

### Not so slow

**Joe:** I was really impressed with your running today

**Pete:** Thanks

**Joe:** No really you really hustled and really moved down the line

**Pete:** I try

**Joe:** You beat that throw by a mile. It wasn't even close.

**Pete:** Maybe I'm not as slow as you say.

**Joe:** It's those legs.

**Pete:** Yeah right.

**Wendy:** Those legs? Look at his calves.

**Pete:** I have chicken legs.

**Joe:** No, the thighs man. We could live off those thighs.

**Pete:** You're just sick

### Pete's League

**Ebs:** What were the final standings?

**Pete:** Economos was 22 – 8, Papa O's was 16 – 14, We were 14 – 16, and Squirrel Cage was 8 – 22

**Ebs:** So we finished at .500 counting tonight?

**Pete:** Yes we did.

**Franchi:** No, we were way over .500 according the Pete's League

**Lee:** Well the forfeits don't count that's for sure

**Pete:** So, that makes us 16 – 12

**Franchi:** Well, there were other games that didn't really count in your league either right?

**Pete:** That is correct

**Lee:** Like the three or four games we played with nine. Those don't count.

**Pete:** Nope, not with me.

**Lee:** So, what does that make us?

**Pete:** Well, to be honest, if follow all of my rules, we were pretty damned close to being undefeated!!

**The End.....**

---

**See you next year for Season 7**

*Pete*