Entry type: Concept
Entry ID: AWE2275

Softball

(1939 -)

Born	19390101
Occupation	Sport

Summary

Invented in Chicago in 1887 and derived from the game of baseball, softball was introduced to Australia in 1939 when Canadian Gordon Young became director of physical education in New South Wales and promoted the game in schools. The game found its way to Victoria during the Second World War, when U.S. Army Sergeant William Duvernet organised softball as a recreational activity for U.S. nurses stationed there. Another American, Mack Gilley, brought the game to Queensland in 1946.

Details

Softball associations soon formed in all three states, and in 1947 Queensland issued invitations for the first interstate championship in Brisbane. The Australian Women's Softball Council (now Australian Softball Federation, or ASF) was formed at the second interstate softball championships in Melbourne.

Today, championships are played at both state and national level each year for Open Women and Men; Under 23 Women and Men; Under 19 Women and Men; Under 16 Girls and Boys; and Masters teams. The championships are held in each State in rotation, and include: the Mack Gilley Shield; the Elinor McKenzie Shield; the Esther Deason Shield; the John Reid Shield; the Nox Bailey Shield; and the women's national club championship.

The Australian Softball Federation affiliated with the International Softball Federation in 1953. Australia hosted and won the first Women's World Softball Championships in Melbourne in the mid-sixties. By 1990, twenty-one nations were playing in the world championships, now known as the 'world series'. Softball was introduced as an Olympic sport – for women's teams only – at the Atlanta Games in 1996. Australia's Open Women's team won bronze that year, followed by a second bronze in Sydney (2000), and silver in Athens (2004). Australia has not won a women's world championship since the inaugural championship in Melbourne, but its Women's team is nonetheless ranked third in the world. Australia's Men's team is also ranked third in the world, and Australia is currently 'the world's best softball nation', according to Softball Australia.

Today, an estimated 20 million people are playing the game worldwide, and 150,000 are playing the game across Australia. No less than 127 national associations now make up the International Softball Federation.

Published resources

Book
Batter up!: the history of softball in Australia, Embrey, Lynn, 1995

Diamond duels: women's softball in South Australia, Correll, Kathleen and Lorraine Mildren

Booklet
1982-1983 official softball rules as adopted by the International Joint Rules Committee on Softball, Australian Softball Federation, 1982

Official softball guide and playing rules of the Australian Women's Softball Council, 1961

Site Exhibition
She's Game: Women Making Australian Sporting History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2007, http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/sg/sport-home.html

Edited Book
The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport, Vamplew, Vray; Moore, Katharine; O'Hara, John; Cashman, Richard; Jobling, Ian, 1997

Resource
Website for the Australian Open Women's softball team, Softball Australia, 2009, http://www.softball.org.au/default.asp?Page=21993&MenuID=High_Performance/4019/0/

Archival resources

National Library of Australia
[Biographical cuttings on Wendy O'Connell, softball player, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals]

[Biographical cuttings on Sharna McEwan, softball player, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals]

[Biographical cuttings on Joyce Lester, softball player, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals]

Author Details
Barbara Lemon

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Digital resources



Title: Australian women's softball team on world tour
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