

Week of Monday, June 16, 2025

The Henderson County Senior Softball Association had two teams in action the week of June 16, 2025. On Monday, June 16th, the Henderson County 68+ Sluggers coached by Stan Steinberg and sponsored by **Carolina Ophthalmology** traveled to Tiger, Georgia to face the North Georgia Patriots. In game one the Sluggers had a team batting average of 0.738 as they picked up a 20-15 flip flop win over the Patriots. David Keith was the victor on the mound. Four Slugger batters were perfect at the plate in the first game: Scott Searle (4-4), Jim Zitney (4-4 with a double), Jim Ready (4-4 with a double), and David Keith (4-4). Five additional Sluggers were near perfect in the first game: Gene Reiser (3-4 with a triple), Jerry Austin (2-3 with a sacrifice fly), Roger Helm (3-4 with a double), Tim Epley (2-3 with a double and sacrifice fly), and Stan Steinberg (1-2 with a walk and sacrifice fly). The start time for these games was moved up to 9:30 in hopes of completing play before the forecasted rain hit the area. Although it was a good plan, it didn't quite work out as the rains came before the entire second game could be completed. However, the teams did get enough innings in to make the game official. The Sluggers had a team batting average of 0.789 as they rolled to an easy 16-2 rain shortened victory over North Georgia. David Keith again toed the mound to pick up the win. Eight Slugger hitters were perfect in the second game: Joe Fishleigh (2-2 with a double and home run), Jim Zitney (1-1 with a double and a walk), Jim Ready (2-2 with a double), Jerry Austin (2-2 with a double and a triple), Tim Epley (2-2 with a home run), Gary Ayers (2-2), David Keith (1-1 with a walk), and Gene Reiser (1-1 with a double and a walk). In addition, Roger Helm (1-2 with a double) and Stan Steinberg (1-2) were near perfect. With the pair of wins Henderson County extended their unblemished record to 12-0 in the 68+ Clayton League and maintains their hold on first place.

On Wednesday, June 18th, the mixed 60+ Sluggers made the trip to Morganton, NC to battle the bombers from Ashe County. The mixed Sluggers were coached by John Musser and sponsored by **Wild Birds Unlimited** for these games. What follows is the account of the days events presented by the master wordsmith John Musser. FACT OR FICTION - you decide.

This date was looked forward to with a curiosity that needed to be addressed. The last outing, us Mixed 60s, experienced our first loss of the season against this very team having split our doubleheader. We wondered if it was a fluke or had we found our equal. By the end of our doubleheader we had an answer, sort of.

We were loaded, anticipating another heavy battle. From the look of the first game today, in a similar fashion to our first meeting's first game, the Sluggers brought out plenty of offensive weapons and defensive clout to hand the Ashe County ball team a 20 to 9 whooping. I am sure the thought went through our minds that our loss against them our last meeting was a fluke. Game two was going to prove yai or nay.

Hendersonville started off as the visitors putting up five runs in their first inning and then was shut out in inning 2, only to come back and put up four runs in their third inning. Meanwhile their counterparts answered their first three Innings putting up nine runs themselves leaving it tied after 3 innings. Then somebody flipped a switch and Hendersonville decided to put the pedal to the metal and pushed across 11 more runs in their final four innings while putting a wheel locking boot on Ashe County shutting them out their last for innings of at-bats.

As you would expect with scoring 20 runs several batters had great days at the plate. Only one batter though, had a perfect plate appearance in game 1: Teddy Johnston 3/3 w/ 2 dbl and a walk. However, there was plenty of Supporting Cast actors coming near perfect at the plate: Jerry Austin 2/3 with a walk, Kevin Doyle 3/4 with a triple, Gene Reiser 3/4, Kirk Hall 3/4, Rob Kennedy, 3/4, Randy Bowman 2/3 with a walk and a double and lastly, Dwight Moore 2/3 with a walk. There was a home run in the first game smashed out of the park by Steve Strusowsk

As a team the batting average was a smooth .600. It could have definitely seen the .700s as a team batting average if it wouldn't have been for the Hitless Wonder John Musser going 0 for 4! Dwight Moore took the mound and walked off with the W.

Game 2, otherwise known as the answer to the question on everyone's mind: Is Ashe County Hendersonville's Mixed '60s equal?

Fueled by the high of winning the first game, Hendersonville Mixed 60's Sluggers came out and put up five runs in inning 1 of Game 2. The high must not have been loaded with THC because the next three innings were shutouts. Meanwhile, their counterparts started with a goose egg in their first inning and yet put up seven runs in their next four leaving the Mixed 60's staring at a possible deja vu while seeing the game tied at 7 after 5 innings. The sixth inning between these two colossals saw Ashe County put up three runs to Hendersonville's 1 leaving a two-run deficit going into the all-you-can-eat 7th inning.

Hendersonville's defense rose to the challenge holding Ashe County to another goose egg, but wondered if they were able to push across enough runs to outscore their opponents in their AYCE opportunity given their erratic performances at the plate thus far.

Not encouraging, the lead-off batter grounded out to start with one out right off the bat (insert pun). Next batter was able to secure a base by taking a walk. The following batter hit a single advancing the walked batter to second. Eerily similar to the last matchup, with the winning run on second base, a conversation between the coach and pitcher resulted in a decision to put one of Hendersonville's Mixed Sluggers big hitters on base (hired muscle Jerry Austin). It was this exact move that allowed Ashe County to put the first loss up on Hendersonville's record. Would this work, yet again? With Kevin Doyle at the plate, ice in his veins, he stared down the pitcher. The ball, released from the pitcher's hand, floated

towards the plate. Whack! The sound echoed throughout the confined field. The ball lined through the air splitting the defense and allowing the winning run to come across the plate! A sweep! The Mixed 60s Sluggers improved their record to 13-1.

Notable stats for Game 2: Kevin Doyle was perfect at the plate with 4/4, as well as Kirk Hall-3/3. Tom Welbourn made his presence known by smashing the ball out of the park for a home run. As a team, the batting average dipped to .571. Final score for this barn burner was 11-10, Sluggers victory and Dwight Moore yet again tallied a W as pitcher.

Lastly, shout outs to Rachel Kane traveling nearly 2 hours to keep the books for us and Bill Kane for umpiring the entirety of the doubleheader!

Next week's schedule has three teams in action. On Monday, June 23rd, the Henderson County 68+ team will travel to the Parker Meadows Complex in Franklin, NC to face the Rabun County Relics in a battle for first place in the 68+ Clayton League. Currently the Sluggers sit atop the standings with the Relics close behind. The two teams will play three five inning games. On Wednesday, June 25th, the mixed 70+ Sluggers will make the trek to Simpson Park in Morganton, NC to battle the High Country 70+ squad from Boone. On Thursday, June 26th, the mixed 60+ Sluggers will host Upstate SC 60+ at Jackson Park.

The Henderson County Senior Softball Association is always looking for new players age 50 and older (35 and older for ladies). Regular league games are normally played on Monday and Friday mornings at 9:30 on fields 8 and 9 at Jackson Park in Hendersonville. For additional information, call 828-606-8556 or go to Henderson County Senior Softball at <https://hcsssoftball.com>.