

Week of Monday, July 14, 2025

It was another great week for Henderson County Senior Softball as both teams that saw action went undefeated. After three previous cancellations, the Henderson County 68+ Sluggers were finally able to complete two games with the Lake Keowee Eagles. On Monday, July 14th, the Sluggers played host to the Eagles at Mills River Park. The Sluggers were sponsored by **Carolina Ophthalmology** and coached by Stan Steinberg for these games. In game one, the Sluggers rolled to a 15-3 flip-flop win over the Eagles with David Keith earning the victory on the mound. The Eagles were able to push across three runs in the second inning but were held scoreless in the other six frames. The Sluggers had a team batting average of 0.649 in the first game and were led with perfect outings at the plate by Sonny Johnston (3-3 with two doubles) and Roger Helm (3-3 with a double). Ten other Sluggers were one out away from perfection in the first game: Bob Drew (2-3 with two triples), David Keith (1-2 with a double), Gary Warren (2-3), Jerry Austin (2-3 with two doubles), Jim Zitney (2-3 with a double), Joe Fishleigh (2-3 with a double), Mark Hammer (2-3 with a double), Mike Warner (2-3), Scott Searle (2-3 with a double), and Stan Steinberg (1-2). Game two was not quite as easy as the first game. Heading into the bottom of the second inning Lake Keowee held a 6-0 lead over the Sluggers. Henderson County scored three runs in that inning to cut the margin in half. The Sluggers would go on to put up a five-run inning and take a two-run lead. The Eagles trimmed the margin to one at 8-7, but that would be the last time they would score as the Sluggers went on to capture a 16-7 victory. David Keith again picked up the win on the mound. The Sluggers upped their team batting average to 0.737 in game two with six hitters reaching perfection: Jerry Austin (3-3), Joe Fishleigh (3-3 with a double and a triple), Mike Warner (3-3), Scott Searle (3-3), David Keith (2-2), and Roger Helm capping off a perfect day with another 3-3 outing. Four other Sluggers were one out from perfection: Sonny Johnston (2-3), Mark Hammer (2-3), Gene Reiser (2-3), and Gary Warren (2-3). With the pair of wins, Henderson County ran their record to 16-1 on the year and kept a firm grip on first place in the 68+ Clayton League. And in a bit of good news, the Sluggers got a little help from their friends in Franklin, who earned a split with Rabun County to give the Sluggers a three-game cushion in the loss column over the second-place Relics.

On Wednesday, July 16th, the Henderson County 60+ mixed Sluggers, coached by John Musser and sponsored by Kiefer Family Chiropractic, battled Ashe County.

The on-the-scene coach and reporter, John Musser, provides the details below.

Weather played another mind game with us yet again. With uncertainty about whether we would be playing at Simpson Field against Ashe County on July 16th, an answer wasn't received until 8:00 a.m. We finally received word from the fields pertaining to their playing conditions. But it wasn't from the park maintenance department. It was from Ashe County themselves. They had a player arrive early to get us word. We got the green light, which was good because many were already on the way. Game 1 started in a thick haze of consternation and disorganization. So as not to put to open shame, anonymity will be kept of the player(s) names responsible for the disarray in which the game started (hint: management). One other cause for the consternation was how the game was visited by a light rain shortly after it commenced, causing many to wonder if we were going to see a rainout after traveling all that way. Note: The Weather was forecast to have nearly 0% chance of rain for the day.

Game one was set with Hendersonville mixed '60s Sluggers being the visitors. They opened up with five runs being scored by the first five batters. Yes. That would mean the fifth batter must have knocked in the fifth run. Since there were only five batters with five runs scored then one may rightly deduce the fifth batter hit a homer! It was an out-of-the-parker! Brought to you by Steve StrusWOWski! While the score on TeamSnap for the first game might have been recorded 19 to 3 with a Sluggers win, I do not believe that score total for Ashe County to be accurate. Recollection recalls, at one point, the game being much more competitive. It seems like Ashe County violated the Mixed 60s Sluggers' Steel Curtain defense 9 times thusly forcing a premature flip-flop denying the Sluggers there 6th inning at-bat. Two batters were perfect at the plate in Game 1; John Mix going two for two and the aforementioned StrusWOWski going three for three with a homerun. Others one hit away from sharing the Podium of Perfection was Dwight Moore (2/3), John Musser (2/3), Kevin Doyle (3/4), Kirk Hall (3/4), Norman Royo (2/3), Teddy "The Bear" Johnston (2/3) and Tom Welbourn (2/3, HR) who, himself, blasted one over the fence. Dwight Moore took the mound for the win. I'm thinking a more accurate score of Game 1 should be 19 to 9-ish.

Game 2 started off with only five batters making a plate appearance as well. It couldn't have been more contrary than the first five batters at bat in Game 1. While in Game 1, the first five batters put up five runs, in Game 2, the first five batters put up a stinking goose egg! SMH! Once again, anonymity will be kept so as not to put any player to public shame. Seemingly, in Game 2 the bats heated up. Four players were perfect at the plate: Dwight Moore (3/3), John Musser (3/3), Norman Royo (3/3) and Steve StrusWOWski (4/4). Two other players were one hit short of perfection, John Mix (2/3) and Tom Welbourn

(2/3) with, yet again, hitting another big, booming out-of-the-park homer (collecting 2 on the day). Dwight Moore once again pitched the entirety of Game 2, securing the win. To put the commissioner's conscience at ease, because of the strong defense by the Mixed Sluggers, Dwight Moore's pitch count has been kept low, thus keeping his arm fairly rested. 17-3 was the verified score. Evidently, the Mixed 60s Sluggers are better athletes than mathematicians, as suggested by the uncertainty of Game 1's score. Statistically speaking, Game 1 and Game 2 were very similar. Both games put up 25 hits with 40 plate appearances, recording each game a team average of .625. Both games ended with a flip-flop. Also, similarly, the Sluggers only used five innings in each game to put up their scores. In Game 1, the sixth inning seemed to be one heartbeat away from death. The lead-off batter (Kirk Hall) hit a double and then was left hanging after the next three batters went 0/3, negating any impact on Game 1's score.

A couple of final notes: Steve StrusWOWski was the only batter to bat 1.000 for the duration of both games. The defense once again has proven too stout for any competition they have faced. Plays such as Kevin Doyle snatching a would-be home run just before the ball cleared the fence, John Mix snatching the ball just before it hits the ground in right field and being able to complete a double play by throwing out a batter who left too soon. Infielders like Kirk Hall snagging line drives at 3rd base or strong arm throws by Steve The WOW Strusowski and Norm Royo gunning down runners. There is no doubt that the Mixed '60s Sluggers' defense is world-class!

Next week's schedule has been changed as the Franklin Old Bones do not have enough healthy players to muster a team, thus forcing cancellation of the 68+ Clayton League game that was scheduled at Mills River Park on Monday, July 21st. However, the Henderson County 60+ team participating in the Hickory Games on that Monday will be played at Stanford Park in Hickory. Also, on Thursday, the mixed 60+ Sluggers will host the Upstate 60+ team at Jackson Park.

Finally, in a note of interest, our Henderson County league had some players participating in the 2025 USA Softball Senior National Championships in Burlington, NC, last week. The Code/Le Bleu team captured the championship in the 75+ Major division with Don Ward receiving the MVP award. The Upper East Tennessee squad took home the championship in the 75+ AAA division. Our league was represented by Jim Zitney, Gene Reiser, Bill Close, and Gary Warren on this team. Charlie Hoskins, who plays with Franklin in the Clayton

League but has played with Henderson County several times at the North Carolina Senior Games and the National Senior Games, received the MVP award.

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://hcssoftball.com>.