

Week of Monday, September 8, 2025

The Henderson County Senior Softball Association had all four travel teams in action this week, and there was not a raindrop falling at any location. It was as if Mother Nature's favored son, John Musser, was at each site personally, although he was actually present at only two locations during the week. On Monday, September 8th, the Henderson County 68+ Sluggers, sponsored by **Carolina Blinds** and coached by Stan Steinberg, made the trek to Tiger, Georgia, to face the North Georgia Patriots. In game one, the Sluggers scored four runs in the top of the first inning and never trailed as they rolled to a 26-14 flip-flop win over the Patriots. David Keith took the win on the mound as the Sluggers batted 0.821 as a team. Five Sluggers were perfect at the plate: Scott Searle (4-4 with two doubles), Mark Hammer (4-4 with two doubles and two triples), Gary Warren (4-4), Bob Drew (3-3 with a double), and Stan Steinberg (3-3 with a double). Five other Sluggers were near perfection: Gene Reiser (3-4 with a double), Joe Fishleigh (3-4 with two doubles), Jim Ready (3-4 with a double), Randy Bowman (2-3 with a double), and David Keith (2-3 with two doubles). Jim Wicker's stats are not showing on TeamSnap because he is not a regular roster player. However, he hit well in both games, possibly achieving either perfect or near-perfect scores in each. Game two resulted in another Henderson County win as they picked up a 19-12 victory. David Keith garnered the win on the mound. The team batting average dropped to a respectable 0.684 in the second game. Three Sluggers were perfect: Jim Zitney (4-4), Gene Reiser (3-3 with a double), and Bob Drew (3-3). Six other Sluggers were near perfect in the second game: Scott Searle (3-4), Joe Fishleigh (3-4 with a double and a home run), Jim Ready (3-4 with two doubles), Mark Hammer (2-3 with two home runs and a walk), Randy Bowman (2-3 with a double), and David Keith (2-3). With the pair of wins, Henderson County extended its record on the year to 21-1. Henderson County has captured the regular-season championship of the 68+ Clayton League in each of the five seasons of its existence.

While the 68+ Sluggers were playing in Georgia, the Hickory Games Sluggers traveled to Stanford Park in Hickory to battle Lake Norman and Hickory. The Hickory Games Sluggers were sponsored by **Hunter Automotive Group** and coached by John Musser for these games. John provided the following report.

Good morning, Gary. Reporting for Sonny. He faked an injury to his ribs to get out of the Hickory games on Monday. I think he had a premonition of what was to come. We had two losses where we gave up in the last couple of innings in each game. In both games, we were up at least five runs, and then our bats went cold, and the defense jellied due to injuries. We had three guys that may as well have been playing in wheelchairs (adding a 4th player two innings into Game 2). Nobody reached perfection at the plate in game one against Lake Norman. The closest we came was Robert Novak going 4/5 with a triple and a double, John Musser going 3/4 and a walk and a loaner pitcher, Wayne Collie going 3/4. Despite our loss 16 to 18, as a team we tallied a .603 batting average over a nine-inning game. It was a

disappointing loss, having been up six runs after six innings. Putting up two goose eggs in innings 7 and 8 sealed their fate. (Rhyming comes naturally. Maybe I should have been a rapper!)

In Game 2, we played against Hickory. Again, we started strong. At one point, we were up five runs only to let the lead dwindle in the final two innings. For this game, we elected only to play seven innings. We won the coin toss and chose home field. Other than a few Innings, winning the coin toss was the extent of our gratification. We did have one player bat 1.000 against Hickory. That honor goes to Bud Bonnema. He went 2/2 with a double before having to leave the game with a soft tissue ailment. We picked up a random player to take his spot to maintain 11 players. There were a few players who were one hit shy of 1.000 at the plate. Scott Webster, who went 2/3 with a home run rocketed over the fence, coupled with a walk, Rob Kennedy, who had a double and a walk himself, going 2/3 and Wayne Collie our loaned pitcher from Charlotte, who went 3/4. As a team, our batting average dipped to .513. Once again, our borrowed pitcher took the loss, succumbing to a 15-13 defeat. But hey! The weather was great!

On Wednesday, September 10th, the Henderson County mixed 70+ Sluggers hosted the Tri-Cities 70+ squad, seeking revenge for two losses they suffered to their friends from Tennessee the previous week. The mixed Sluggers were coached by Andy Hinds and sponsored by **State Farm Insurance Skip Sawyer Agency** for these games. In game one, the Sluggers were close but received no cigar as they dropped a heartbreaker to a strong Tri-Cities team, 18-16. The Sluggers had a team batting average of 0.722 and had five players reach perfection: David Keith (3-3), Jim Wicker (3-3 with a double and a triple), Danny Davis (2-2 with a walk), Doug Miller (2-2), and Mike Elmaleh (1-1). In addition, six more Sluggers were nearly perfect: Jim Ready (3-4), Gene Reiser (2-3 with a walk), Cliff Coggins (3-4), Mark Hammer (2-3), Tim Epley (2-3), and Bob Drew (1-2 with a walk). Game two finally saw the mixed 70+ Sluggers exact the measure of revenge they were looking for as they dominated in a 17-7 win over Tri-Cities. The team's batting average fell to 0.578, but the goal of victory was achieved. Jim Ready (4-4 with a double) and Jim Wicker (3-3 with three doubles) led the way offensively. Also chipping in were Cliff Coggins (3-4 with a double), Tim Epley (3-4), and Andy Hinds (1-2). The mixed 70+ Sluggers now have a record of 12-8 on the year.

Finally, on Thursday, September 11th, the mixed 60+ Sluggers took on Upstate South Carolina. The mixed 60+ Sluggers were sponsored by **Parks Ford** and coached by John Musser. John again pulled double duty as coach/reporter, and his on-the-scene epic story follows as only he can tell it.

It was a beautiful day for softball. Mid-70s, Clear Blue Skies and a nice gentle breeze throughout the day. Yet an air of somberness could be felt as we played on a day that 24 years ago, America was greatly mourning. A moment of remembrance was taken with a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance to begin the day. Hendersonville's Mixed 60s faced off against the Upstate Mojos with an undefeated record of 16-0 this season. Each game between these two teams seems to get tighter and tighter, with the Upstate Mojos bringing

in some bigger guns with every opportunity. This meeting was definitely going to be a challenge, as Hendersonville's Mixed 60s roster has been hit with the injury bug in recent matches. With the coach/manager running around preparing for the upcoming contest, it could be related to an episode of MASH. With the date changed from 9/10 to 9/11 to poach players from other teams and field a team for us, and with locations ranging from Tyger River Park (SC) to Jackson Park, enough personnel were gathered to field 11 players per post. It could truly be said that it was an All-Star cast (of some sort). We had four players bat 1.000 in Game 1, in which Hendersonville's coach chose to be the visiting team. John Mix 4/4 w/ a double, Joe Fishleigh 3/3 and Manny Gonzalez 2/2 each sporting an in-the-park homerun and John Musser 3/3 w/ 2 doubles. At the sound of approaching helicopters, charging to the battleground with support was Jim Ready 2/3 w/ a double, Robert Novak 3/4 and a double of his own, Zelmo Zale (a.k.a Bill Kane) 2/3 w/a triple! After four innings, the game was tied 11 apiece. As Hendersonville suffered its last at-bat, going one for four at the plate and putting up a goose egg, the Upstate Mojos saw an opportunity and braved the razor wire known as Hendersonville's Mixed 60s defense. Definitely within gunfire, the Mojo's only needed to put up five in the bottom of seven to tie and six to win. It would have seemed like an easy win, given that Hendersonville had put out two of their first three batters. Then the Mojos made a strong advance. With the winning runs on base, Hendersonville stayed strong and secured the third out, securing a 19 to 16 win. Joe Fishleigh notched the win on the mound. Hendersonville's team batting average was .622, having gone 23/35.

Game 2 was a heated battle back and forth as well. The near victory by Upstate seemed to have bolstered the morale of the visiting Mojos while fortifying their will to win as Hendersonville elected to be the home team in Game 2. After four innings, Upstate Mojos were up two runs- 13 to 11. Once again, Hendersonville's Mixed 60s colors were within reach to be captured by their opponent. With shrapnel having taken out the solid left center Major Charles Winchester (a.k.a. Robert Novak), Colonel Sherman T. Potter had to make some drastic personnel changes and assigned new casting members to critical posts. Not only were there changes made to the perimeter, but also inside the tent. Changes involving the catcher and middle infielder may have raised the eyebrow of the constant Hawkeye Pierce (a.k.a Jim Wicker) as Trapper John was sent home and was replaced by BJ Hunnicutt. Would that change the dynamic of the long-running series? Of course not! It was just as good as the previous episodes. Hendersonville secured their colors and the victory as the Upstate Mojos retreated, waving the white flag. Hendersonville did not have to bat in the seventh inning as they walked off with a 20- 17 victory. Game 2 saw three soldiers score perfect bullseyes from the plate. Father Mulcahy (a.k.a Jim Ready) 4/4 w/ a double, Major Frank Burns (a.k.a Joe Fishleigh), 2/2 and 2 walks, Igor Staminsky (a.k.a Manny Gonzalez) 4/4 w/ 2 doubles. Other notable characters, such as Corporal Klinger (a.k.a Chris Culberson), going 3/4 with two in-the-park home runs, Radar (a.k.a Mike Elmaleh 2/3), and Dr. Freeman (a.k.a John Mix 3/4). Special shout-out goes to Hot Lips Houlihan (a.k.a Kristy Musser), who contributed in a not-so-small way by taking a walk in Game 1, putting Hendersonville in position to secure that victory. In Game 2, Hendersonville's Mixed 60s Sluggers went 25/39 at the plate for a team batting average of .641.

Next week's schedule has only one team in action. The Henderson County 68+ Sluggers will host Upstate South Carolina at Mills River Park on Monday, September 15th.

The Henderson County Senior Softball Association is always looking for new players aged 50 and older (35 and older for ladies). Regular league games are generally 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>.