

Week of Monday, September 22, 2025

There were three travel teams from HCSSA scheduled to play the week of September 22, 2025. Unfortunately, the Franklin Old Bones were unable to field a team for their scheduled game against the Henderson County 68+ Sluggers in Clayton League play on Monday, September 22nd. The pair of forfeits extended the Sluggers' record to 24-2 on the year. One of the unavailable Franklin players was our friend Larry Hildreth. We received word that Larry is battling throat cancer and is currently undergoing treatment. We wish Larry all the best going forward.

On Wednesday, September 24th, the Henderson County 70+ mixed Sluggers traveled to the Maples Sports Complex in Marion, NC, to face the High Country team from Boone. The Sluggers had a team batting average of 0.615 and rode the arm of Don Chambers to eke out a narrow 19-18 victory over High Country. Andy Hinds (3-3) and Jim Wicker (1-1 with a double, walk, and sacrifice fly) both batted 1.000 in game one. Several teammates were near perfect: Gene Reiser (3-4), Don Chambers (2-3), Jim Ready (3-4 with a double), Marty Serafin (2-3 with a double), Roger Helm (2-3 with two triples), Stan Steinberg (1-2 with a walk), and Tim Epley (1-2 with a double and sacrifice fly).

Game two saw the 70+ Sluggers roll to a more comfortable 12-3 win over High Country. Marty Serafin picked up the win on the mound. The Sluggers upped their team batting average to 0.625 and were led by four batters achieving perfection: Andy Hinds (2-2), Bob Drew (3-3 with a double), Bud Bonnema (3-3) and Roger Helm (3-3 with a double). Also aiding the offense were Gene Reiser (2-3 with a double), Marty Serafin (2-3), Stan Steinberg (2-3 with a double), and Tim Epley (2-3 with a double). The 70+ Sluggers were coached by Andy Hinds and sponsored by WNC Family Medical Center. With the pair of wins, the mixed 70+ Sluggers now have a record of 14-8 on the year.

On Thursday, September 25th, the mixed 60+ Sluggers coached by John Musser and sponsored by Kiefer Family Chiropractic traveled down the mountain to Tyger River Park to battle the Upstate Mojos. John's account of the day follows:

Well, HCSSA's fact checker must have approved the data on the 9/11 week's MASH-themed write-up. Rich Hickman pointed out an error in the write-up of 9/3 (HVL vs. High Country). I named the narrator of The Twilight Zone as Rod Sterling. He pointed out it's actually Rod Serling. Thank you, Rich. Here at the HCSSA writing department, we try to be as factually accurate as possible and always welcome and appreciate corrections. On to this week's write-up of the Hendersonville County's Mixed '60s Sluggers' contest against the Upstate Mojos. Hendersonville traveled below the border to a great stadium park at Tyger River Park in Duncan, South Carolina. Overnight rains in both states, rain still pouring in North Carolina, and a lack of communication for a confirmation of field conditions created an atmosphere of uncertainty. To add to the angst of the frustrating morning, I-26 became a parking lot due to a serious accident trapping three of Hendersonville's players.

Thank you for the early reporting, Kirk Hall, who advised everyone to stay off of I-26. For some, it was just in time; for others, unfortunately, a little late. Oh, irony and its sense of humor! Three early departees were already enroute to Tyger River (who were caught in the shutdown, Tom Welbourn, Bud Bonnema and Mike Elmaleh) before the coach/manager was able to get word to them that the start time was to be delayed because of immediate and inclement weather. Rumor has it that if Mike Elmaleh hadn't insisted on having one more blintz before they left the restaurant they bunkered down at to bide a little time, they would have been ahead of the accident.

With an abbreviated BP session and missing the three aforementioned players (who arrived midway through the second inning), Hendersonville borrowed one player from Upstate to field 11 in their absence. In Game 1, the stadium setting seemed to have inspired Henderson County as they put up 16 runs over the course of six innings. While it was nothing to boast of, the steady drumming of hits was enough to outscore the Mojos. The Sluggers did not need their 7th at bat to take the win. With the Mojo's batting a full seven Innings, they only managed 13 runs, leaving the score 16-13, Hendersonville. Don Phipps (spectator turned pitcher) took the mound and the win. The Mixed '60s Sluggers posted a .650 team batting average. Special recognition goes to three batters who had perfect plate appearances in Game 1, Jim Wicker, 4/4, John Mix 3/3 and a walk and Bud Bonnema 2/2 and a walk. Other contributors were Jim Ready 3/4 with a triple, Tom Welbourn 2/3 with a double, Chris Culberson 3/4 and Don Phipps 2/3 with a triple.

With the clouds giving way to sunshine, Hendersonville's Mixed '60s Sluggers took the plate first in Game 2. Things were looking business as usual for Hendersonville as they put up twelve runs in the first three innings to Upstate's six runs. Over the next and final four innings, Hendersonville trotted out only 16 batters to the plate and only managed two runs! REALLY? Two runs from sixteen batters? Huh... Having a 5-run lead over their opponent, the Mojos started the bottom of the 7th inning with a small glimmer of hope in achieving their first victory ever over these Sluggers. With only one out, the tying run on second and the winning run on first, a line drive zipped over the second baseman's head. An aggressive move was made by the right center fielder to steal an out in hopes of catching a runner off the base to seal the game, making what would be the third and final out. As the adage goes, "You live by the sword, you die by the sword". Musser was not able to get to the ball in time to make the catch. Consequently, the ball passed under his glove too deeply into the outfield to prevent the winning run from crossing the plate. Cheers erupted from the Mojos dugout, loudly resounding throughout the stadium. Can't say with absolute certainty, but there appeared to be a tear of joy coming down the cheek of Mojo's coach, Phil Salina. With heads held high The Mixed '60s Sluggers graciously extended the congratulatory hand of sportsmanship to their opponents as they left the field with only their third loss of the season. Bright spots were seen in Game 2 with two Sluggers reaching perfection at the plate. Robert Novak (3/3 with a triple and an in-the-park homer) and John Musser (3 for 3 with a double). Help also came from Jim Ready (2/3 with two doubles), Kirk Hall (2/3), Bud Bonnema (3/4) and Mike Elmaleh (2/3). Offensively, Hendersonville posted a

.568 team batting average, which was not high enough to overcome several errors defensively, leaving Don Phipps walking off the mound suffering the "L".

A scene from an Adam Sandler movie comes to mind. In *Grown Ups*, during a basketball challenge, Adam Sandler misses a shot he never misses. When questioned by his son about how his dad missed that shot, Adam Sandler points to the other team, which, at that moment, was celebrating and elated with their victory, and mentions that sometimes people who experience nothing but loss in their lives should get to experience victory at least once. Was that a miss by Musser, The Sluggers, a way of giving hope and joy to the other team? I guess we will never know.

Next week, the league will have two teams in action, and both will be traveling. On Wednesday, October 1st, the mixed 60+ Sluggers will go to the Maples Sports Complex in Marion, NC to face the High Country 60+ squad. That same day, the mixed 70+ Sluggers will go to the James K. Ellis fields in Johnson City, TN, to face the Tri-Cities 70+ team.

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>.