

Mesquite, Nev. hits a home run with senior softball event

MESQUITE, Nv. -- The Senior Softball USA Spring Worlds 2010 tournament here March 23-28 drew more than 100 teams from several states competing in a colorful event showcasing the beauty of fields in both Mesquite and St. George while highlighting fun-loving men and women gray hairs.

With colorful participants and team names like the Sun Cities Sidewinders from Arizona; The Git-R-Done 60s from California; the X Factor from New Mexico and Master Collision from Colorado, the tournament packed fields for nearly a week. Players ranged in age from their 40s to into their 80s.

The SSUSA was played in Mesquite and St. George for the second year here after being lured away from Palm Springs, Calif., and you can bet the merchants welcomed the event especially considering long lines at several restaurants and a combination of motor homes, campers and cars at local hotels.

“The Senior Softball USA is fascinating because it exemplified how much fun seniors have not only playing softball but also visiting this area,” said Christian Adderson, sporting event manager for Black Gaming. “We have dozens of events every year and this particular gathering is among my favorites.

“The SSUSA is the largest senior softball organization and the players are excellent for business.”

Adderson is such a believer in the event that he said Black Gaming are prepared to ink another agreement for next March’s tournament.

Terry Hennessy, CEO of SSUSA, and Fran Dowell, executive director, both lauded the event, the hotels and Mesquite. Both work out of the company’s Sacramento, Calif., headquarters.

“We felt very good about it,” said Hennessy, a former journalist who added that participation was excellent especially considering the economy. “The weather was great and the fields were very good, too. Our people love coming to Mesquite especially those who traveled from areas with snow. Mesquite is inexpensive and the people don’t mind the drive from Vegas at all.”

Hennessy also pointed out that the tournament was a definite win-win for everyone since most seniors like to gamble.

Dowell added “It was absolutely fabulous. We were so lucky with the weather and Black Gaming did a great job of putting all the teams in. I really think this is going to grow.”

Dowell also explained that the tournament was brought to Mesquite thanks to tireless encouragement from Adderson.

“I was at a National Association of Sports Commissions gathering in Omaha, Neb. Three years ago,” she explained. “I had 60 meetings in two days and people had a few minutes to speak with me. Christian would not quit coming back and he kept pursuing us and telling us that it would be nice to have us bring our event to Mesquite.

“God love him. We’re committed for next year and we’d like to come back more.”

Ray Starwalt, the national umpire-in-chief for Senior Softball USA, brought in 36 umpires from North Carolina, California, Utah, Maryland and Canada.

“We held a two-day clinic in Las Vegas prior to the tournament,” said Starwalt, who lives in Seattle, Wash. “I go to tournaments all over and I’d say that the fields here rank among the top five in the country. They were beautiful.”

Many players, their friends and family journeyed long distances to compete or cheer. Among those who came to compete was Colorado State Director DuWayne Pillard, a 64 year-old former school teacher from Aurora who made the drive to Mesquite.

“We had a brand new team,” said Pillard, an outfielder who will soon turn 65. “We usually fly to Vegas and rent a car, but we drove this time. It was a beautiful drive, and I really like the Mesquite area. They run a good tournament.”

Louella Myers, who has lived in Las Vegas since 1955, made the trek to watch her husband, Glen, a former Clark High School (Las Vegas) prep star who plays first and third base for Rezults Realty in the Mens 55 Division. “We go to tournaments all over and I enjoy coming here for this one.

“This seems very well organized.”

Fifty five-year-old Roy Lawson of Las Vegas said he travels to tournaments and this one is considered at the top of the list.

“We go to events in Prescott and Phoenix, and this one is excellent,” Lawson said.

Echoing the statements was Dennis Rand, 62, of Rezults Realty who has been playing softball for decades.

“It’s always fun coming up here,” said Rand, a catcher who has worked with Findlay Automotive Group for more than 40 years. “We used to play in St. George years ago and the fields here in Mesquite are really nice.”

Fields used in Mesquite included Hunter Park Complex Pioneer Park and Old Mill Fall Fields and Canyon’s Complex, seven-field park in St. George.

The tournament represented yet another shining example of Mesquite’s allure for seniors following BransonFest Out West which was presented Feb. 8-11.

Full results can be found at www.seniorsoftball.com.

CONTACTS: Mike Henle, The Idea Company, Black Gaming, 702-279-3483; Christian Adderson, Sporting Event Manager, Black Gaming, Sporting Events Manager, 888-711-4653, ext. 51.