2018 Softball Spectacular Recap

There have been 13 Softball Spectaculars held in Traverse City.  This one might have been the best.  It was certainly one of the most interesting.

Perfect weather, spirited competition and thrilling comebacks marked the softball landscape at game sites around Traverse City as the National Cherry Festival drew to a close.  Teams with rich histories of winning local tournament titles--the South Lyon Stealth, Petoskey Blaze and Traverse City Waves--hoisted Home Plate Championship Trophies again and reminded opponents that they shouldn't be overlooked as tournament contenders.  For the first time, an Ohio-based team--the Dublin Revolution--earned a tournament championship by playing solid defense and wearing down opposing pitchers with their potent offense.  And "up north" teams like the Cadillac Express and 231 Fusion threw in solid tournament runs and thrilling comebacks just to spice up the joint.

First, the Waves.  The tournament's namesake team has been working hard and improving noticeably from week-to-week throughout the winter, spring and the summer tournament season.  The New Waves breakthrough came in the final weekend of the Traverse City Softball Summer Series in the most thrilling of ways.  After riding rock-solid pitching and defense through pool play--Waves pitchers allowed only one run in four games--the Waves 12U team found themselves trailing an excellent Edge Fastpitch squad, 7-6, in the bottom of the fifth inning of the six-inning contest.  It was at that point that Abby Lindstrom and Rylea Beamish took it upon themselves to belt back-to-back home runs that cleared the left field fence headed in the direction of Lake Michigan to give the 12U girls the lead. Pitcher Kate Gaylord, who has shown remarkable improvement through incessant hard work, came on to close out the game in the sixth and give the Waves their first tournament title as a new organization and the first Waves title overall since the 16U squad captured the Cherry Capital Showdown in 2014.  Congratulations to all of the 12U teams!

In the 10U division, Ted Warthman's South Lyon Stealth team went undefeated on their way to capturing a tournament championship.  It was the Stealth organization's third Softball Spectacular tournament title (2012, 2013), though many Stealth teams have made deep tourney runs that underscore the overall quality of this metro Detroit area group.  The Stealth defeated Traverse City's 231 Fusion Fastpitch, 10-6, in the title game.

In the 14U group, the Revolution traveled from the Columbus, Ohio suburb of Dublin to play in the Softball Spectacular.  They made sure with their play that they didn't return empty-handed.  However, their path to the title was far from easy thanks to Ben Lundquist's Cadillac Express squad.  The Express, winners of last weekend's Bayside Bash, sported a win streak that grew to nine games during the Softball Spectacular weekend.  The Cardiac Cadillacs needed a miraculous last-inning comeback from three runs down just to reach the final four of the 14U division.  In the semifinals against Dublin, the Express trailed 6-3 with two out and no one on in the last inning.  The much-improved Express squad strung together enough hits to score two runs and had the bases loaded before a fly ball to right ended their winning streak and sent the Revolution on to the championship game.  In the title contest, the Revolution ambushed Traverse City's 231 Fusion squad early and went on to finish off an impressive title run, 13-2.  Congratulations to the Revolution--it was a pleasure to host your team in Traverse City! Great job, 14U teams!!!

The 16U division final was an all-Northern Michigan affair featuring neighboring teams familiar with each other.  Six players from Angie Behling's high-performing Antrim County-based Lady Lakers squad had been members of the Emmet County-based Petoskey Blaze team in past years.  Dave Serafini's Blaze team, winners of Softball Spectacular titles in 2011 and 2015, is always a tough tournament "out".  This time, the Blaze prevailed 5-4 in the final to capture a third Softball Spectacular title.  Great teams, great game....congratulations, girls!

We hope the tournament teams and their families enjoyed their weekend in Traverse City.  Thank you, players, for providing so many thrills on the softball fields this weekend!!