

Extra Innings

OCC Takes 1997 Softball Title

For the first time in many years, the OCC softball team took the high-powered Leahi League Championship home to the Club. Runner-up finishes in the past five years could have left the team uninspired, but the 1997 team came out determined as ever.

OCC followed up their Spring League regular season title with the Fall League title and the overall Leahi League Championship. OCC's final record for the year was 14-4. No one was happier than Head Coach Jim Gaddis, Assistant Coach Bill Kilcoyne and senior veteran Henry Ayau. Jim, Bill and Henry have played an active role in OCC softball for many years. Their contributions on and off the field have not only kept OCC softball alive, but have regenerated the Club sport in an exciting new direction.

OCC's last three games of the Fall season were all nail-biting must-win games. A five-run outburst by OCC in the last inning against Maharaja cemented a 14-8 win. Jim Joy (OF) was the big gun with three hits including a key two-run double in the 7th. Enjoying multi-hit games were Jim Cavanah (SS), Keith Letman (P), Kilcoyne (1B) and Ayau (C). The outfield made a number of exceptional catches to douse threats.

A heart-breaking loss to Matsuno put a damper on two three-run home runs by Mike Miranda (2B) and Clay Chee (OF) in the first inning. Both homers were monster shots, a rope to left center by Miranda and a towering drive to left by Chee. Brian Hoernig (C) led the team with three solid singles. Jon Whittington (OF), Kilcoyne (1B) and Chee had two hits each. Chris Siegfried (OF) scored three runs and Chee drove in four runs.

The final game of the season was huge. OCC needed the win to clinch the title outright. Five-time defending champion Kahala Mandarin (formerly the Dream Team) had lost to OCC seven out of eight regular season games but always managed to trip Outrigger in the championship playoff game. The Mandarin desperately needed the win to salvage a .500 season for themselves. They were already out of the title picture but not out of the "spoiler" picture.

OCC came out hungry with an amazing five-run first inning after the first two batters were retired. Consecutive singles by Kilcoyne (OF) and Miranda (2B) were followed by walks to Hoernig (1B) and Siegfried (OF) which produced the first run. Ayau (C) knocked in two runs with a shot to left before McAluney (OF) reached base on an error producing two more runs.

Kilcoyne's two-run monster blast to right field followed Rick Piper's (EH) lead off single in the second inning giving OCC a 7-1 lead. Kurt Lajala (OF) blasted a two-out, two-run home run in the 3rd inning following a lead off single by Siegfried and Ayau and a double play erasing Ayau and McAluney.

The DP, started by the Kahala pitcher who backhanded the line shot, was the best OCC had seen all year. The entire Outrigger team applauded his effort. Cavanah (SS) caught the game-ending out to give OCC a celebrated 10-2 win and their long-awaited

championship. Kilcoyne led the team with hits (single, double and home run). Miranda and Siegfried had two hits each.

The most impressive aspect of the 1997 squad was the distribution of "clutch" outings. Early in the season, veterans Jon Kiner (EH), Jim McAluney (OF), Gaddis (38), Cavanah, Kilcoyne and Hoernig put up the big numbers. In mid season, Ralph DeWitt (1B), Letman, Whittington, Miranda and Piper came through in must-win games. In the team's final push to the title, it was Chee, Joy, Siegfried, Ayau and Kilcoyne who had their batting eye *in focus*.

McAluney showed off his powerful and accurate throwing arm nailing opposing runners at the plate from his outfield position.

Defense played a major role in winning the championship, especially up the middle. Letman had his best year ever on the mound snagging every shot hit his way. Miranda (2B) and Cavanah (SS) showed off their flashy fielding talent leading the league in double plays.

The 1998 OCC softball committee of Gaddis (chairman), Kilcoyne, Hoernig and Whittington have big plans with hopes OCC Softball can start a new tradition by once again participating in either the Hana Classic and/or the Molokai Tournament in '98 or '99.

Brian and Jon will be in charge of expanding member participation, neighbor island tournaments and the 1999 travel budget. Kilcoyne will concentrate on local tournaments, scheduling, permits, fees, field conditions and post-game activities.

Gaddis will continue to skipper the team (roster, line ups, strategies and practices), handle equipment, uniforms and manage the current '98 budget.

Next month's issue of *The Outrigger* will feature an Extra Innings story on the team's first Annual Awards BBQ, profiles of award winners, final 1997 player statistics and OCC softball information for 1998. ☺



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