

Bob Willis - HoF - 2009

BOB WILLIS: He began his fast-pitch career as a high schooler, playing in the adult leagues of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, in the city of Ishpeming. After graduation from the University of California, Berkeley in 1962, where he played football and track, Bob moved to Southern California, and began playing for the defending 1964 ISC World Champions, the Downey Impalas.

He was voted the MVP of the Western Softball Congress in 1965, and participated in his first World Tournament, ironically in Rock Island, Illinois, the site of his 2009 induction into the ISC Hall of Fame. He helped lead Downey to a second place finish, batting .409, and was 3-1 as a pitcher. He earned the Most Outstanding Rookie that year. In all, Bob played in 8 ISC World Tournaments, with one championship team, the 1971 Long Beach Nitehawks, three runners-up, and had one fourth place finish.

In 1972, Bob experienced perhaps his best tournament, being selected to the ISC All-World team for the runner-up Nitehawks. He was the 1972 ISC World Tournament Most Valuable Player. He led the tournament in hitting, at .467. He had a record tying 4 hits in one game. As a pitcher, he threw a no-hitter at the Rock Island team in the semi-finals of the tourney. In four of his eight ISC tournaments, Bob hit .400 or over, and his overall tournament batting average was .353, going 35 for 102, while playing three positions, pitcher, first base, and outfield.

Bob finished his career in the early 80's with Athletes in Action. He spent two years and many summers as a missionary in Guatemala, and for two years he was the manager for both the men's and women's national fast-pitch teams for that country. Willis remained in softball, coaching in high school in southern California at Gahr H.S., and presently is co-head softball coach at Capital Christian H.S. in Sacramento, California.