

Brad Burrup - HoF - 2001

Young "Mr. Clutch" enters ISC Hall of Fame

By Bob Otto/Yucaipa, CA

Nineteen to 49 is a commendable journey in men's fastpitch softball. But 30-year journeys are not uncommon in a sport where players tend to blossom with age. What is uncommon though, is reaching the sport's zenith at a young age.

August 2001, Utah's 49-year-old Brad Burrup joined a select group of fastpitch softball greats by being inducted into the International Softball Congress Hall of Fame.

"There's been players (inducted) that were maybe as young, but very few," said Royce Heath, ISC Hall of Fame Chairman. "Brad is one of our youngest."

Burrup, a power-hitting catcher, spent 14 of his 23 playing years with Larry H. Miller Toyota of Salt Lake City, Utah, where he attained ISC All-World status five times.

Other honors include Amateur Softball Association All American seven times; induction into the Utah state Hall of Fame; and playing for the USA Pan American and International Softball Federation teams in world competition.

"I'm extremely honored and appreciative to be selected into such a distinguished group," said Burrup, who played in 17 ISC World Tournaments. "And very surprised." But it's no surprise to those who know him best.

"He was always the ultimate warrior," said the late fastpitch softball sportswriter, Dan Pattison. "I watched Burrup play the game with many nagging injuries catching the game's premier pitcher, Peter Meredith. It wasn't an easy task for him. I watched him catch Meredith in an ISC tournament, and he came back to the bench and his hands were so bloody and broken that he could hardly grip a bat."

But despite nagging injuries and bloodied hands, Burrup boasted a remarkable .356 career batting average. A playing career that began in 1971 as a 19-year-old in Blackfoot, Idaho and ended with Larry H. Miller Toyota in 1994 at 42.

Still feeling a hunger for the game, Burrup turned to managing Miller Toyota. And in his first season, guided the team to a runner-up spot in the '95 ISC World Tournament in Sioux City, Iowa. In seven years at the helm, Burrup brought leadership, stability and young players to the Miller club.

Promoting fastpitch softball and mentoring its youngsters could be Burrup's crowning achievement, says ISC Executive Director, Ken Hackmeister.

"Brad is a firm believer in developing young players and may in fact manage the younger Chevrolet team (of Salt Lake City) made up of baseball players he has recruited," said Hackmeister.

"I love the game," said Burrup. "It's very satisfying and rewarding bringing new, young enthusiastic talent into the game and watching them come together as a team."

Most likely a love and appreciation tracing back to two influential men in his life.

"My father, Ross Burrup, brought me into fastpitch when I was 19 and had the biggest influence on me," said Burrup. "Larry H. Miller gave me the opportunity to play with and against the best teams in the world."

As a high school and college baseball player, Burrup excelled at shortstop and third base. And in his early fastpitch days he remained at shortstop. But that didn't last long. With his leadership and athleticism, Burrup was destined to take control from behind the plate.

"He was a natural catcher," said Hackmeister. "He worked well with pitchers and tactfully conveyed that he was in charge of the game. Brad was mechanically sound: Good throwing arm, good at blocking pitches, good pitch selections, and he studied hitters and knew how to pitch to them."

Burrup not only caught and managed Peter Meredith, who he cites as "maybe the best pitcher ever." But he also lists one of his greatest memories coming at Meredith's expense.

"My most memorable game as a player came in the 1987 World Tournament. I hit a home run in the bottom of the 13th inning to beat Peter and his team 1-0."

"You could call him "Mr. Clutch", Pattison had said in nominating Burrup for the ISC Hall of Fame. "During the late innings Brad would always, without fail, come up with the clutch hit. He earned himself great respect among his peers."

A respect and clutch ability that earned Burrup a spot in the ISC Hall of Fame. Even as a youngster