

Mike Piechnik - HoF - 2009

Michael Piechnik, Player- Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

Mike was born in Victoria, BC in 1961 as the youngest of 5 children. He was raised on the family farm which left him with little time for sports outside of school time. Tragedy struck his family in the spring of 1976 when Mike's father was killed in an industrial accident. The many changes that occurred during that spring resulted in Mike being given permission to join a group of school friends who were playing club team fast pitch softball.

Mike began playing softball as an outfielder who possessed a strong arm as well as a strong bat, yet he marveled at the pitchers on his team. While at home Mike practiced pitching with his brother Andy who played a level above him. Mike recalls throwing "tens of thousands" of pitches to Andy over the years, and credits him for much of his early success in the game. Mike also credits his coach Ron Hill who coached him for the 1st 6 years as the man who made the journey to the top level possible. "Ron was especially valuable to me during the difficult months following my father's death. After practices he would often listen to me when I would share my thoughts of an uncertain future without my dad, and he always encouraged me during those tough times. He was a good coach and became a well respected father-figure to me."

Mike's dedication to fitness and his disciplined work ethic paid dividends the next season when he rose to the top of the pitching rotation. His team began winning many provincial championships and he started to receive frequent calls from other teams who needed to strengthen their pitching staff. Being a left-hander was a huge asset in a game of predominantly right-handers.

Mike honed his skills in the Stuffy McGinnis League in Victoria (which produced many of Canada's National Team players) before traveling to New Zealand for the 1983-84 season. He returned to Victoria and joined the defending national champion "Victoria Royals" for the 1984 season. An important time as Mike was mentored by superstar Rob Guenther who helped prepare Mike for much of the success to follow. "Rob's work ethic and dedication to softball showed me what it was going to take for me to be my very best and achieve my highest goals."

Returning for another season in N.Z., Mike fine-tuned his pitching against many of New Zealand's top pitchers, at the same time developing his stamina as he pitched 73 games for a 58-15 record! He teamed with American All-Star catcher Rocky Vitale at the NZ National Championships and soon received a call

from Rocky's sponsor Rod Peterson from the "The Farm" of Madison, Wisconsin. Joining "The Farm", Mike found himself pitching alongside another recent Hall-of-Famer Peter Meredith. The 2 power pitchers enjoyed a strong season in 1985, and with Rocky Vitale calling the pitches, Mike pitched his 1st of 4 perfect games at the International Softball Congress World Tournament. That feat established him as one of the game's newest elite players. Mike spent 5 seasons with "The Farm" in Madison and rose to the top group of elite pitchers. In 1990 he returned to his hometown Victoria. Over the next 18 years Mike traveled often, playing with numerous Canadian and American club teams. He was most proud though when playing for Canada's National Team (1987-1999) which he considered an honor.

Mike has played with quite a number of teams, and he has very fond memories of playing with many of the game's elite players. He honestly admits that he was blessed with the best catchers in the game. "Without my catchers, (namely Doug Chase, Tim Wahl, Rocky Vitale, Gary Bachus, and others!) I wouldn't have had such consistency in my game. They tactically called the pitches to lead us to victories during the times when I wasn't at my best, so I willingly and gratefully share my accolades with them."

Mike resides in Victoria, B.C. with his wife Heather and 2 boys Lucas and Caleb.

Mike's Fastpitch Career Highlights

4 Canadian Championships: 1991 (pitched final 6 games in 2 days to win) & 1992 Most Outstanding Player, 1993- back-to-back perfect games-MVP, 1997, 2001 (age 40) Most Outstanding Player

International Softball Federation: 1992 Gold Medal (Manila, Philippines), 1996 Silver Medal (Midland, Michigan) - No losses in ISF career starts.

Pan American Games: 1995 Gold (Argentina), 1999 Gold (Winnipeg, Canada) No runs allowed.

North American Challenge Cup- 1991 1st Place, 1992 2nd place (Most Valuable Pitcher, Most Valuable Player), 1993 2nd place

Amateur Softball Assn. Championships: (U.S. National Championships) - 1998-Silver Medal Co-Most Valuable Player, Co-Top Pitcher with Peter Meredith. 46 strikeouts in 1-0 win vs. Peter Meredith in a 20 inning game, 140 strikeouts in tournament (69 innings), an ASA record.

1993 & 1996-Gold Medals- Most Valuable Pitcher & 1st Team All-American in both tournaments.

International Softball Congress: 4 Perfect Games- 1985, 1993, 1998, 2002.

6 No-hitters.

9 All World Selections 4 Silver Medals

1993- 1st pitcher to throw perfect games at the ISC(1), Canadian Championships(2), and ASA championships(1) consecutively in a 3 week span.

10 + British Columbia Championships

3 British Columbia Masters Championships.

3 Western Canadian Masters Championships. 4 Most Valuable Pitcher awards

“I am truly blessed to have played this game!”