

Todd Budke - HoF - 2012

TODD BUDKE, Lancaster CA – Infielder

Todd Budke was introduced to fast pitch softball at an early age. Since birth he was carted around the softball diamonds of Northern Iowa and Southern Minnesota with his mom following his dad's exploits on the field. At this early point of his life his passion was still baseball. He enjoyed the game of fast pitch, but the astounding offensive numbers he would eventually post were still in his distant future.

In the early 1990's one of the greatest men's fast pitch softball careers of all time would begin in a very subtle way. Back in the early 1990s, Todd Budke sat in the bleachers at a Palmdale city league game dressed in attire more befitting a day at the beach than on the ball diamond. Then came the call to play. A team on the field was short a player. "You want to play?" the manager asked him. Budke thought, hey, why not. "They pulled me out of the stands and I was wearing shorts and flip-flops," Budke says with a chuckle. I had three at bats and did put the ball in play, so they asked me back." Over the next 15 years Todd would put up some amazing offensive numbers. Former teammate Dean Holien said of Todd, "everyone in this game should get a chance to be Butter's teammate for one year." Dean also added "one of the things I absolutely loved about playing with Todd was how he could do or say the perfect thing to relieve the pressure or tension.

Todd was voted outstanding hitter, all tournament and all world numerous times. He was the ASA Major home run leader on three different occasions. Manager/teammate Fred Hanker says this of Budke, "he is the most prepared hitter I have ever seen in my 25 years of baseball and fast pitch softball. Todd is the picture of excellence on the field in the way he plays the game, his demeanor on the field, and his unmatched talent as a ballplayer. He is a class act and a great role model for young players." Dave Bailey would echo the same thoughts "I was always impressed with the way Todd studied the game. In particular the art of hitting. He never quit learning and striving to be better. I believe this is one of the reasons that this converted professional baseball player became one of the greatest players the game of fastpitch has ever known. Butter played the game with passion and a smile on his face and far beyond his on field

talents, he will be remembered as one of the Greatest Gentlemen to ever take to the field. I'm honored to have been a team mate of Todd's and privileged to call him a friend"

Todd had a brilliant 15 year ISC World Tournament run beginning at the ripe old age of 35. He was voted all world at the ISC World Tournament six times. In 2001 his 16 hits ranks 2nd all time. In 2006 he hit .647 which was fifth best all time. He won the ISC World Tournament batting title in 2009 with a .538 average. He holds the all time career batting average for any player who has participated in 10 ISC World Tournaments or more. Todd also excelled at the international level. He was a captain and gold medal winner as part of Team USA in the 2002 Pan Am Games in Guatemala. Todd was voted the tournament's outstanding hitter. Blake Miller who was a roommate of Todd added this from that tournament. "I looked up in high deep centerfield and there was a billboard written in Spanish. I had no clue what it said. Turning to ask Joe Morales what it said he replied: "Welcome players hit this sign and get \$500 in souvenirs." Miller replied, "What a damn sucker bet no one is hitting that sign. And I was right, not a half a hour later in the first inning of our game Butter hit a bomb over the sign. The sign just wasn't high enough."

Todd would join The Farm from 2001-2006 and put together a six year run of incredible offensive numbers. Todd Martin recalls those years. " At the World Tournament in Eau Claire Wisconsin Todd took a major step in becoming one of the most feared hitters in the world. He was always good but that's when he became a lethal hitter. He will be remembered as one of the true gentleman of the game and one of the greatest ever." Legendary slugger Colin Abbott says, "I was either hitting before or behind Todd in the Farm Tavern's lineup. Even after certain pitches we would confer to see what we were doing right or wrong. Todd was a great resource to have when analyzing at bats. He is a natural hitter and to be able to confer like this so many times in the run of a game or season was invaluable to my career."

Todd Budke will always be recognized as one of game's greatest hitters and one of the most likeable players to ever put on a uniform. His softball accomplishments are only a small part of who he was as a teammate, a mentor and a friend to many ballplayers. He was a joy to be around and a great inspiration to any player who was lucky enough to call him a teammate and a friend.