

Ty Stofflet - HoF - 1984

Ty Stofflet - Softball's Lefty Legend

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contributions from Bill Plummer and Bill Howell



In the May 28, 1979 issue of Sports Illustrated, Ty Stofflet was the topic of an 11 page article entitled, "This Guy Can Rise It, Drop It and Pop It at 104 MPH." The August 11, 1985 issue of The New York Times Magazine ran an article about Ty, calling him "The Fastest Pitcher in America" In an appearance on "The Dick Clark Show" in 1979, Ty faced Davey Lopes, Reggie Smith and Steve Yeager in Dodger Stadium. After the program, in which a foul ball was considered an accomplishment, Davey asked Ty what he was doing next. After Ty told him that he would be returning to his electrician's job at Mack Trucks, Lopes pointed to his left arm and said incredulously, "with an arm like that, you have to work for a living?"

In answer to the question, Did Ty ever face Eddie Feigner? the answer is "Yes, and he beat him two out of two." For Ty, no game was an exhibition, it was all for real.

The Sports Illustrated article referred to Ty as "The Prince of the Back Porch," capturing the essential character of this Pennsylvania Dutchman. While he has traveled around the globe to play softball, he never drifted very far from his roots. Raised in and around Allentown, PA, Ty and his wife of 41 years, Kathy live next door to his parents, Harold and Melba, and within hailing distance of his brother, Larry, sister Lillian, his three daughters, Brenda, Kris and Kim, and their families. It is impossible to think about Ty without considering the importance of his family in his life.

It starts with Harold, a baseball and softball pitcher, showing his oldest son, Ty and his one year younger brother, Larry, the place of sports in a person's life including the advantage that a lefty might have over a righty. During his children's early years, Harold put all balls into their left hands. Even though he was a righty, all his children are southpaws. Harold took the boys with him for his local ballgames and later was a coach on the first Allentown team that went to the ISC World Championships, The Allentown Patriots.

According to Bill Howell, who played a career's worth of games with and against Ty: "In 1963, the Allentown Patriots won an ISC qualifying tournament and accepted a bid to participate in the ISC World Tournament. The Patriots were led by a 22-year-old phenom from Coplay, PA, Ty Stofflet, who threw hard but hadn't as yet learned the intricacies of pitching. Nevertheless, some people within the ISC recognized the star power that Stofflet projected because he was voted the most popular player in the ISC tournament two years in a row."

Stofflet and the Patriots rose to 2nd place in the 1967 ISC World Tournament. Ty was selected MVP of the tournament. It should be noted that throughout his 30 years of competition at softball's highest levels, Ty maintained a .300 career batting average. His MVP status typically included recognition for timely hits, RBI's and runs scored, as well as catlike fielding and overpowering pitching. Ty had all the tools, and "between the lines" he neither gave nor expected less than full effort. However, outside the lines, this phenom was a guy from Coplay who invariably showed interest in players, officials, and fans. He was often a one man embassy, extolling the virtues of his chosen sport and bringing new fans to the game.

In 1968 and 1969 Stofflet went from the Allentown Patriots to Sal's Lunch, a team from Philadelphia, PA. He competed in ISC World Tournaments in both years and in 1969 won first place for a team best described as great pitching, good fielding, almost no hitting. Sal's Lunch batted 19th out of 23 teams and scored a total of seven runs in five games. Ty struck out a record 86 batters in 42 innings without giving up a run in the tournament. He batted .279 in the tournament and was voted Tournament MVP.

In 1970 Ty moved back home to the Reading Sunners and played for them under one or another team name for the next 16 years. The Sunners were aligned with the ASA and therefore were restricted from ISC competition until 1984. Ty appeared in ASA National tournaments with the Sunners from 1971 through 1986. In his first six ASA Nationals, 1971, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977 and 1978, he was voted Tournament MVP in every tournament but 1976. The Sunners, with Ty as their ace, won the ASA Nationals in 1975, 1977, and 1978.

Because of the 1975 victory, The Reading team was selected to represent the United States in an International Softball Federation Tournament held in Lower Hutt, New Zealand in February 1976. Stofflet had, by his estimation, the best tournament and best

game of his life. In a contest against New Zealand, and Kevin Herlihy, their world class righty, Stofflet threw a 20 inning no-hitter including a perfect game for 18 2/3 innings. He drove in the winning run in the 20th inning, to go along with three other game winning hits for the US in this tournament. For his all around excellence, he was voted, separately, Most Valuable Pitcher and Most Valuable Player in the ISF World Tournament.

It should also be noted that during the years 1977-1978, Ty won a total of 71 straight games for the Sunners. To say that he was unstoppable certainly felt accurate to those who faced him throughout the '70s. In 1980, Stofflet suffered a work injury to his left wrist that would turn him from a reliably overpowering presence to a pitcher who could beat anyone in a single game. From 1980 through the rest of his career, Stofflet retained days of brilliance, but was unable to single-handedly get his teams to the gold ring.

In 1984 Stofflet was voted into the ISC Hall of Fame. We will never know the full extent of what he might have accomplished, but it is safe to say that the contributions in World Tournament would be dwarfed by those that would have occurred at the height of his career. After receiving the Hall of Fame award, Ty pitched in ISC World Tournaments for the next ten years. Incredibly, in 1984 and again in 1992, at age 51, Ty was voted to the All-World Team. Currently he is rated sixth for all-time ISC World Tournament wins with 38.

Today Ty continues the traditions that have provided supports throughout his life. He is active in his community, particularly as a bowler who has thrown two 300 games and is pursuing an 800 series. He has been a high school softball coach and enjoys helping girls master the intricacies of fast pitch, but mostly he can be found with his wife near his family being a very proud grandfather.