



Event overview

Dozens of women who made history playing professional baseball during the 1940s and 1950s will reunite and meet some of the most skilled female baseball players in the world during the Women's Hall of Fame Classic July 4-6 at historic Simmons Field in Kenosha, Wis.

During what is going to be a truly historic weekend, a contingent of women who played in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League -- the league made famous by the 1992 film "A League of Their Own" -- will be on hand to rededicate Simmons Field, the home of the AAGPBL Kenosha Comets from 1948 to 1951 and one of the last remaining AAGPBL fields in the country.

"The All-Americans will not be with us forever," said Jim Glennie, head scout for the USA women's baseball program and the president of the American Women's Baseball Federation (AWBF), which helped organize the weekend tournament along with MSBL Kenosha. "It is important that a bond be forged between that generation and this generation's young pioneers. There must be a commitment by the associates who will carry on the All-American's legacy to support these young players and let the youth have the same chance the AAGPBL had."

Surrounding the rededication ceremony, a women's baseball tournament will showcase some of the most elite women's baseball teams in the world. The New England Women's Red Sox, Nashua Pride, Chicago Pioneers, Washington Stars and the Aussie Hearts are scheduled to play. The New England Women's Red Sox are four-time national champions, while the Chicago Pioneers roster includes 16-year-old Sammi Kane Kraft, who played Amanda Whurlitzer in the 2005 "Bad News Bears" film and is a bonafide prospect for the USA women's national team.

USA Baseball will scout the tournament and have tryouts to identify players for the 2008 women's national team, which will compete in the Women's World Cup of Baseball Aug. 24-29 in Japan.

Former AAGPBL players are coming to Kenosha from as far away as California, Arkansas and Tennessee for the July 4 rededication ceremony, which also will give fans an opportunity to meet and interact with former players like Dolly (Brumfield) White, an infielder who played for the Kenosha Comets from 1949 to 1951.

White joined the league with the South Bend (Ind.) Blue Sox in 1948 as a 14-year-old from Mobile, Ala. She also played for the Fort Wayne (Ind.) Daisies in 1952 and 1953. When she first tried out for the league in 1946, she had never played organized baseball.

After learning AAGPBL scouts were coming to her town for tryouts, White convinced her mother to take her out of school on an April afternoon. They took her grandparents' car and drove to the tryout, which was being supervised by then-AAGPBL President Max Carey.

White recalled that Carey initially wasn't sure about taking her into the league because of her age. "Afterward, I said I was 13 but I'd soon be 14," White said. "And my mother said (to Carey), 'I don't want you to take her, I want to know what you thought!' Well then he wanted me to go to Chicago to be put on one of the teams. So Mr. Carey must've been impressed."

Her memories are still vivid of using Kenosha's electric streetcars to get to the ballpark and to do errands in Kenosha's vibrant downtown. The players lived with fans, hung out in soda

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shops, and civic groups were instrumental in supporting the teams. "It was an experience certainly," White said.

In addition to the stories told about the AAGPBL, there's no doubt classic stories about Simmons Field will linger throughout the weekend as its former players and tenants reminisce on its history.

Simmons Field was built as it stands today with its classic old-time grandstand in 1930 for the Simmons Bedding Company's baseball team. In addition to being the home ballpark of the Kenosha Comets, it has since been the playing grounds for various amateur baseball teams, Warren Spahn, Satchel Paige, the minor league Kenosha Twins and chart-topping pop group 'N Sync.

These days, a local group is working to ensure Simmons Field will build on its history. In 2007 the Kenosha Simmons Baseball Organization (KSBO), a non-profit group interested in raising awareness of the ballpark, began leasing the stadium. While MSBL Kenosha also has been a major proponent of KSBO and the ballpark's restoration, the groups already have undertaken multiple refurbishing projects that included rebuilding the field's once-treacherous infield areas.

"Simmons is a rare gem and one of only a few old-time community ballparks with real history," said Tom Carlson, a member of the KSBO and MSBL boards. "Restoring Simmons Field is about the future."

The Women's Hall of Fame Tournament will provide fans an unparalleled opportunity to talk with AAGPBL players and watch World Cup level baseball. Additionally, fans will get a taste of the ballparks old-time feel by purchasing concessions and perusing the products and exhibits offered at various vendor booths.

"Unlike a trip to Wrigley Field or Miller Park, this is an up-close experience," Carlson said. "They will get to hear the crack of a bat and view the key play at home."

Simmons Field is located at 78th Street and Sheridan Road in Kenosha, Wis., which is located on the shore of Lake Michigan about 50 miles north of Chicago and 32 miles south of Milwaukee. Admission will be \$4 for fans 11 years and older; children and senior citizens will be admitted for free.

MSBL Kenosha was formed in the spring of 2006 as a non-profit affiliate of the Men's Senior Baseball League (MSBL)/Men's Adult Baseball League (MABL), a national organization with more than 3,200 teams and 45,000 members who play organized amateur baseball in local leagues. For more information, go to www.msblkenosha.com.

The American Women's Baseball Federation (AWBF) is a non-profit organization founded to help women's baseball teams throughout the country network and compete in organized tournaments. AWBF is responsible for identifying elite talent for the USA women's national baseball team. For more information, go to www.awbf.org.

(For more information about the Women's Hall of Fame Classic, including Web links, tournament team profiles and Hi-res photos, go to www.msblkenosha.com.)

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