

## Lou Novikoff, Long Beach, CA



Lou "The Mad Russian" Novikoff had an amazing career on the softball and baseball field. He was a softball star in the '30s then he crossed over to baseball. In 1940 he had a .363 batting average with 41 home runs and 171 RBI for the Pacific Coast League Los Angeles Angels. Novikoff's five years in the major leagues included a .300 batting average with 64 RBI for the 1942 Cubs. He returned to softball after his baseball career and helped the Nitehawks to several more titles and was the first player inducted into the ISC Hall of Fame.



### Lou Novikoff - HoF - 1965

Lou Novikoff, the famous "Mad Russian" of baseball and one of the great stars in softball history, was the first player inducted into of the International Softball Congress Hall of Fame.

Lou began playing softball at the age of 12 on the playgrounds of Boyle Heights in Los Angeles, and two years later, at the age of 14, he was pitching for the top teams in the Los Angeles area men's leagues.

He was considered on softball's finest "twirlers", and was recognized as a spectacular hitter, until he went into baseball at the age of 22. Even then, at the completion of the baseball season, he'd go back home and pitch for Joe Rogers' famous Huntington Beach teams in the tournaments.

Accurate records weren't kept in softball then, but Rogers remembers that the "Mad Russian" could go directly from baseball to softball and hit the first pitch. As a softball pitcher, he was considered "un-beatable" in the strong National Niteball League.

He began his baseball career in 1937, with Ponca City, OK., with a .351 BA and 112 RBIs. 1940 was his best year as a member of the Los Angeles Angels (PCL) where he hit .363 and drove in 171 runs.

In 1940, in answer to a Hollywood club official's inquiry about Novikoff's batting weakness, his manager Jigger Statz replied, "All I can say is that if your pitchers will pitch the ball somewhere in the ball park – in the general direction of the plate, anyway – Novikoff will probably hit it."

Part of the reason Novikoff was hard to strike out was that he was an exceptionally effective bad-ball hitter. According to Lou - *"If I can get to 'em with a bat, they ain't bad balls no more,"*

He was a Chicago Cub regular in 1942 where he batted .300 with 64 RBIs.

Following the "war years" Lou gave up baseball and returned to California where he became a slugging outfielder for the Long Beach Nitehawks. In 1950 the Nitehawks entered their first ISC World tournament at Greeley, CO., and Lou was selected to the All American team.

Lou was selected to three All American teams (1951-1952-1955), played in a total of 42 ISC World Tournament games making only one error, struck out only eleven times, and had 19 RBIs

That's Lou Novikoff, a spectacular minor league hitter, and perhaps one of the great softball batsman who ever lived, one of the game's standout pitchers and, more important a guy who loved the game and gave it everything he had.

Lou Novikoff died on September 30, 1970, in South Gate, CA..

