

## Robert C. Osborn - HoF - 2004

ROBERT C. (BOB) OSBORN - Davenport, Iowa



When Bob Osborn is inducted into the International Softball Congress Hall of Fame at the traditional Hall of Fame Induction breakfast in August, 2004 in Fargo/Moorhead there will be a standing ovation from his peers. And that will include more than the hundreds of persons attending this annual event. Fastpitch softball players from many parts of the globe, and from many eras of the sport, will be rising to applaud this induction.

But let's let Hice Stiles, a Hall of Fame member himself, and the person who formally nominated Bob Osborn, lay out the details of this outstanding career as he did in placing Osborn's name in nomination:

"The election of Bob Osborn to the International Softball Congress Hall of Fame is long overdue. Occasionally, recognition of outstanding achievements by an individual, whether it relates to career, special interest, or other life's work, can be overlooked or neglected. Those who know Bob also know that under no circumstances would he solicit this recognition on his own behalf. As years have gone by and past players who really appreciated and understood his talents, achievements, and contributions to world class fast pitch softball, became less active and involved in the I.S.C., the well deserved nomination had seemed to fade with time; until now!"

"Bob was a young man, just out of Whittier College in 1958, when he was asked to join a group of players on a team led by Hall of Fame pitcher Les Haney."

"Bob Osborn's talents lie in hitting, or in Bob's case "placing", the ball into play, to the appropriate location; not in hitting home runs, or alley shots. He would bunt for a hit or two, "push" for another, or draw a crucial walk. Whatever it took to get on base or to advance a base runner. If the third basemen were too quick to charge Bob would punch the ball just beyond their reach, or if they stayed back, Bob would drop a bunt and "leg it out". These were his refined world-class softball skills. Of course there were also the occasional double or triple."

"Bob recalls that the talent in the ISC was so great in those years that games were decided by playing solid, error free defense, and the execution of basic offensive fundamentals each and every inning of the game."

Hice Stiles continues, "Bob's uncanny ability was being able to size up the opposition's offense and defense, its strengths and weaknesses, and then tailor each game and each at bat with these in mind. He used this gift while at bat or in the field."

"Bob was a clutch hitter, a quick smart base runner, and smooth infielder and outfielder, who played the game as a world-class chess player would play chess."

"His teammates say that he would look for any advantage that either he or his teammates could use against an opponent. They will also attest to his unbelievable ability to "read" a pitch from the opposing pitcher. "World tournaments were won because of his masterful ability to 'read' even the supposedly 'unreadable' pitcher," says Don Sarno. Don further says, "I was a fairly good hitter when I played, but when I had Bob signaling when the rise ball or drop or change was coming, I became a power hitter on those pitches; it's really sweet when you know what was coming".

Stiles recalls that "Bob's first World Tournament appearance was in 1961, playing for the Downey (CA) Impalas. But it wasn't until 1964, while playing for Downey and behind the pitching of Don Sarno, that Bob played on his 1st ISC World Championship team. This ISC World Championship was the first of what would later prove to be a total of four ISC World Championships that Bob won, while playing for three different organizations."

"Bob was truly a team player -- constantly counseling, teaching, and helping players to realize and achieve their potential. His counseling led him in the direction of managing and in 1973 he played for and managed the Lakewood Jets to his 4th ISC World Championship. He followed up the next year in 1974 by taking the Jets to a 4th place ISC Tournament finish. It was in this tournament that he injured his knee on a play at first base that ended his softball career."

Bob's ISC World Tournament credentials speak for themselves:

- 11 I.S.C. World Tournaments Played
- 1964 I.S.C. World Champions-Downey Impalas
- 1968 I.S.C. World Champions-Long Beach Nitehawks
- 1971 I.S.C. World Champions-Long Beach Nitehawks

- 1973 I.S.C. World Champions-Lakewood Jets \*\*Played and Managed
- 1964 All World-Outfielder - Downey Impalas
- 1965 All World-Outfielder - Downey Impalas
- 1966 All World-First Baseman - Long Beach Nitehawks
- 1966 Leading Hitter I.S.C. World Tournament (.545)

- 1969 R.B.I. Leader I.S.C. World Tournament (5)

As Hice Stiles presented his nomination for Osborn, he was able to cite the active support and encouragement of fellow Hall of Fame members: K.G. Fincher; Don Frazier; Bob Guy; Nick Hopkins; Don Sarno; Milt Stark; Bob Todd; John Wilson; Herb Wisdom; and Dave Ball along with himself and Dave Blackburn, ISC Commissioner for Streaming and Broadcasting.

A worthy career indeed! Hall of Fame credentials? You bet!

The doors of the Hall swing open to welcome Bob Osborn - - - and let the standing ovations begin.

By: Gordon Wise - - - ISC Information Officer