

FLOYD "BLUE" LA VERGNE, Los Angeles, CA



Courtesy Fastpitch West

As a 1972 Graduate of Pepperdine University, Floyd LaVergne began his fastpitch softball playing career soon after his college baseball days ended. That was when he was approached by Softball Impresario Alan Rueggsegger, to join his fastpitch softball Club, an upstart team of youngsters from Southern California. At the first workout session, Floyd was issued blue sweat tops, blue sweat pants, a blue cap, and blue cleats. Outfitted head to toe in his new Blue softball duds, it wasn't long until Floyd LaVergne would be known throughout the Southern California fastball circuit simply as "Blue".

From that point on, Blue was also a staple in the LA area urban fastpitch leagues, where he continued to learn the game at LA's Manchester Park in their year-round Sunday morning leagues, and at Inglewood's Centinella Park on Thursday nights. Popular with his teammates, and a menace to his opponents, LaVergne worked hard to turn himself into one of the sports all-time great hitters. His were still in that era, when pitching completely dominated.

Although his star shined briefly in the sport, he clearly left his mark on the ISC World Tournament, and completed an impact career worthy of his 2008 ISC Hall of Fame induction.

In the off-season between the 1980 and 1981 circuits, "Blue" accepted an offer to join Dr. A. DeeWayne Jones, who was aggressively building his Ventura County-based Camarillo Kings ball club into a viable Western Softball Congress League franchise, and an ISC World Tournament participant and contender. Blue would now be able to join fellow Manchester League star Larry Nolan, as a teammate for the first time, after competing against him for numerous years.

Nolan, who was also inducted into the ISC Hall of Fame in 2002, had this to say about his buddy and teammate Floyd. "In late 1980, we had lunch together and decided to join the Camarillo Kings, where along with Mark Smith, we knew we had something special. Floyd kept a batting average over .400 every year, and had the power to hit homeruns on either side of the plate."

"It was in the first game of the 1981 ISC World Tournament that Floyd hit a base hit to win the tournament," Nolan continued. "I think that was the key to us winning the championship, you could always count on Floyd in clutch situations, because he was always focused on each game."

"One of the amazing things about Floyd, before each game we would be warming up then all of a sudden he would say Show-Time and everybody got serious, and everybody would focus on the task at hand. We knew it was time to play ball."

Nolan concluded with "It was always Floyd challenging me. Whether it be a batting championship, or a key hit, he would always be right there, on top. It is hard to put into words all the things that Floyd has done over the years in softball, but this great softball player belongs in the ISC Hall of Fame, because he's among the best ever."

Using today's baseball/softball terminology to assess his abilities, "Blue" was a "five-tool" player. He hit for average and power, could steal you a base and hit home runs from either side of the plate. He had above average foot speed, an exceptional throwing arm and the ability to make the "big play" when it was needed most. As the clean up hitter on a team of good hitters, he brought a presence to the plate and opposing pitchers respected him. Floyd Lavergne became one of the premier hitters in the Western Softball Congress, a league that was arguably the top men's fastpitch softball league in North America during the late 70's early 80's.

In 2004, Floyd's Camarillo Kings teammate Mark Smith was also inducted into the ISC Hall of Fame. Smith had this to say about his former teammate.

"In 1981 when Camarillo won their first ISC world title, it was Blue's two out, two strike check-swing single in the bottom of the 7th inning that started Camarillo's two-year title run. He hit a mammoth home run in the championship game against the Tulsa Firebirds to seal the first of consecutive Camarillo world tournament titles. Blue received his first of three consecutive all-world awards at the 81' ISC World tournament."

Writer Jon Pozenell of the Saginaw (MI) News covered the 1981 ISC World Championship Game. Pozenell wrote:

Leftfielder Floyd LaVergne, like Nolan, voted to the ISC All-World Team, smashed a tremendous home run over the centerfield bleachers in the bottom of the third inning off starting and losing pitcher Bob Childress. "He got behind me (2-0) and I decided if the next pitch was in my zone, I was going to go for it. He put it right there," said LaVergne, holding his hand belt high. "I didn't get cheated" he added, with a big grin. "I knew it was out, as soon as I hit it!" LaVergne also lifted a sacrifice fly to score another run, and Second Baseman Chad "Corky" Corcoran singled in Nolan with the games final run.

LaVergne had 6 RBI's to lead the ISC in that department. Nolan said LaVergne's 2 run single in the bottom of the 7th inning of the Kings very first game against the St Louis Budweiser's a week earlier, may have been the key to Camarillo's ISC championship. "That was the big hit of the Tournament" said Nolan. The Kings were losing 1-0 but pulled it out on LaVergne's hit. "That was the biggest hit of my life," said LaVergne. "When I went up there, I just said to myself that there was no way we were going home so soon, after coming so far to play here. I kept telling myself that I was better than the pitcher."

LaVergne said he thought before he left California, that the Kings would be, at the very least., competitive with other teams in this year's ISC. "I kept telling everybody we were going to win it," he said, "but, I knew, we would have to beat everybody, who was anybody to do it. That Tulsa team deserves a lot of credit, because they did beat everybody, that was anybody. Man, they battled back!"

In the end, Floyd LaVergne was a 3 ISC Time All-World selection, with two World Championship rings. He hit a home run in the 1981 Championship game and lead that Tournament in RBI's. Fittingly, he is now a member of the ISC Hall of Fame.