

Jerry Ralfs



Jerry Ralfs, one the greatest pitchers in the history of men's fastpitch was inducted into the ISC Hall of Fame in 2004. Photo By BOB OTTO

ORIGINAL STORY by Bob Otto from Moline at #ISCWT2016

MOLINE, IL - Jerry Ralfs gazed out on the ball diamond as pitchers Sean Cleary of the Toronto Gators and New York Gremlins Andrew Kirkpatrick battled each other pitch-for-pitch, Thursday, in the ISC World Tournament.

Seeing their intensity, their talent, their will to win, brought back memories of the bygone days when he too was locked in intense battle with some of the games greatest teams and pitchers of the 1950s through 1995 when he finally retired.

Ralfs, an ISC Hall of Fame pitcher (2004), battled against and defeated some of the greatest pitchers ever to step on the ball diamond: There's Dick Brubaker, Don Sarno, Art Bunge, Ralph Salazar, Ed Klecker, and perhaps the greatest of all-time - Ty Stofflet.

The two left-handers tangled several times. In 1969, Ralfs pitched Rock Island Sportshop to second place in the ISC World Tournament, and put together a great resume with a 5-2 record and 79 strikeouts in 47 1/3 innings.

In that tournament, he beat the defending champion Long Beach, Calif. Nitehawks twice. Both shutouts.

But his two loses? To Stofflet. But by the slightest of margins possible in the sport, both 1-0 setbacks.

But a smile comes to his face when he remembers when he did get the best of Stofflet.

"It was in 1971 in Springfield (Missouri) and we beat Stofflet," said Ralfs, now 80 years old, but looking 15 years younger. "I even got a bloop single to win the game."

And again he smiles at the delightful memory. That was a great year with Welty Way of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. A year in which he teamed up with fellow ISC Hall of Famer Richie Stephen to win the ASA Major National Championship. He beat the famed Raybestos Cardinals to win the title, and was selected an All-American for his 3-0 record and unblemished 0.00 ERA.

He finally retired at 60, only because arthritis in his left hand prevented him from snapping off one of his best pitches.

“I couldn’t throw the rise ball anymore,” he said.

The Davenport, Iowa resident started playing fastpitch at 14 in the Walcott, Iowa men’s league. He played in his first ISC World Tournament at 18 and in 1957 was named the Outstanding Young Player of the tournament.

His ISC accomplishments include two no-hit games, and twice selected ISC All-World in 1969 and 1972.