

TODD BUDKE, Lancaster CA



Back in the early 1990s, Todd Budke sat in the bleachers at a Palmdale city league game dressed in attire more befitting a day at the beach than on the ball diamond. Then came the call. A team on the field was short a player. "You want to play?" the manager asked him. Budke thought, hey, why not. "They pulled me out of the stands and I was wearing shorts and flip-flops," Budke says with a chuckle. "The first batter was a slapper and he hit me with the ball. I had three at bats and did put the ball in play, so they asked me back."

From that less than stellar start, Budke went on to become one of the most feared and respected hitters in International Softball Congress (ISC) World Tournament history, making a successful transition from baseball to fastball in California after growing up in Iowa.

Todd was one of the best hitters in fastpitch for over a decade. His first taste of ISC competition was in 1994 as a member of the Long Beach Painters. Following a one-year stint with Heflin Builders in 1999, Todd joined Rod Peterson's Farm Tavern in 2000, where he became a fixture for seven seasons. Todd was selected ISC All-World five times and captained Team USA to a gold medal in the 2002 Pan-Am games qualifying tournament in Guatemala.

TODD BUDKE

Lancaster CA – Infielder (Born September 7, 1964)



A native of Mason City IA, Todd Budke from his earliest years was carted around softball diamonds in the mid-west by his mom following his dad's on-field softball exploits. At this early point of his life, Todd's passion was baseball, having carved a successful career at Mason City High and Kirkwood Community College and becoming a 30th round draft of the Minnesota Twins – as a pitcher – before succumbing to a rotator cuff injury in 1988.

Fast forward – in the early 1990s, Todd sat in the bleachers at a Palmdale CA city league softball game. One team was short a player and Todd recalled the manager's invitation "You want to play?"

Todd complied, and a successful transition was made to fastball. His first ISC competition was in 1994 at Summerside PEI as a member of the Long Beach CA Painters. Following a one-year stint with the Ballston Lake NY Hefflin Builders in 1999, Todd joined Rod Peterson's Madison WI Farm Tavern in 2000, where he became a fixture for seven seasons.

Todd had a brilliant 15 year ISC World Tournament streak beginning at the ripe age of 35 – with impressive offensive stats – in 2001 his 16 hits ranks 2nd all time; in 2006 he hit .647 ranking fifth best all time; and another batting title in 2009, hitting .538. Todd was voted All-World six times and holds the all time career batting average for players who participated in a minimum 10 ISC World Tournaments.

Former teammate Dean Holien states, "everyone in this game should get a chance to be "Butter's" teammate for one year. One of the things I absolutely loved about playing with Todd was how he could do or say the perfect thing to relieve the pressure or tension."

Manager/teammate Fred Hanker offered that, "Todd is the most prepared hitter I have ever seen in my 25 years of baseball and fast-pitch. Todd is the picture of excellence on the field in the way he plays the game, his demeanor on the field, and his unmatched talent as a ballplayer. He is a class act and a great role model for young players."

Kitchener ON Hallman Twins teammate Dave Bailey shared "I was always impressed with the way Todd studied the game - in particular the art of hitting. He never quit learning and striving to be better. "Butter" played the game with passion and a smile on his face and far beyond his on-field talents, He will be remembered as one of the greatest gentlemen to ever take to the field."

Farm Tavern teammate, slugger Colin Abbott adds, "I was either hitting before or behind Todd in the Farm Tavern's lineup. Even after certain pitches we would confer to see what we were doing right or wrong. Todd was a great resource to have when analyzing at bats. He is a natural hitter and to be able to confer like this so many times in the run of a game or season was invaluable to my career."

Todd also excelled at the international level, where he was a captain and gold medal winner as part of Team USA in the 2002 Pan-Am Games in Guatemala and was voted the tournament's outstanding hitter.

Todd will always be recognized as one of game's greatest hitters and one of the most likeable players to ever put on a uniform. His softball accomplishments are only a small part of who he was as a teammate, a mentor and a friend to many ballplayers.