

Fastpitch

SOFTBALL

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"Price Is Right"

AAU Men's International
Fastpitch Tournament Coverage
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"Price is Right"

for Team USA

at 2006 AAU Men's International Fastpitch Tournament

By Jim Flanagan, Editor, *Fastpitchwest.com*

Photos Courtesy of Maddy Flanagan - *fastpitchwest.com*

Orlando, FL - January 22, 2006 – The USA Men's National team claimed gold at the 2006 AAU International Men's Fastball tournament when Adam La Londe of Kentwood, Michigan, singled home teammate Blake Miller with the winning run in the bottom of the seventh inning, for a dramatic 3-2 win over Team Minnesota. Team USA was a perfect 7-0 in the tournament, with a staggering team batting average of .400.

For Team USA, this year, "Price was Right", as pitcher Travis Price, from Santa Ana, California, went the distance to pick up the win in the championship game, and also the trophy as the tournament's Most Valuable Pitcher, with 2 wins, 2 saves and a microscopic 0.70 ERA. Price struck out 13 strikeouts in 10 innings pitched, starting the tournament with a mercy-rule shortened no-hitter and finishing with the championship game win.

Price's battery mate, catcher Frank De Groat, Jr. of Ringwood, New Jersey, was tabbed as the tournament's Most Valuable Player, hitting .412 for the tournament, with 7 hits, 7 runs scored, 8 RBI, 3 home runs and an on-base percentage of .444, all in addition to handling the catching duties in all 7 games for Team USA's world-class pitching staff consisting of Travis Price, Michael White, Terry Luster, Cody Thompson and rising star, Sonny Perkins. Price, White and Perkins had two wins each, with Luster picking up a win in their semi-final win over Ontario, Canada's Hallman Twins, a pitching gem against a team that finished third in the (ISC) World last summer. The USA pitching staff as a group had an unbelievably stingy ERA of .083, while their teammates gave opposing pitchers a collective ERA of .902. USA pitchers struck out 52 in 42



innings.

The starting pitchers for this year's AAU finalists, Team USA and Team Minnesota are no strangers to international competition. Travis Price pitched for Team USA at the ISF World Championships held in January 2005 in Christchurch, New Zealand, while Gerald Muizelaar pitched for the silver medal winning Team Canada. In 2005, Team USA just missed winning a medal, with New Zealand, Canada and Australia finishing on the medal stand. Since then, USA head coach Pete Turner and assistants Rich Clements and Mitch Munthe have been hard at work toward the goal of winning a medal next time around. If the AAU results are any indication, the squad is headed in the right direction.

Team USA received standout performances from Landy Rodriguez, who hit .529 for the tournament, with 9 hits, 8 runs scored, 7 RBI and a tournament leading 5 home runs and veteran Chad Boom, who hit .450, 9 hits, 6 RBI and 6 runs scored. Runner-up Team Minnesota would like to have had Boom, who lives in Minnesota himself, on their squad.

In earlier semi-final games on the final day of the tournament, Team USA defeated the Hallman Twins of Kitchener, Ontario, 4-1 and Team Minnesota took a 6-4 win over Heflin Builders of Stillwater, NY, to set up the championship game. Hallman finished third in last year's ISC World Tournament and will host this year's ISC at Kitchener, Ontario, Canada.

The tournament was the 7th annual event held at the Disney's Wide World of Sports® Complex in Orlando, Florida, which once again hosted a field of 28 international teams hailing from the United States, Canada, Mexico, the Bahamas, Panama, Jamaica, the Virgin Islands, and Venezuela. (Last year a USA team from Wisconsin, Circle Tap, topped Venezuela) While many in colder regions were shoveling snow, ballplayers on 28 teams enjoy gorgeous sunny weather, with temperatures in the low 80's during the four day event, organized by Tournament Directors Alex Linares and Ken Hackmeister. Linares established the event seven years ago, starting with just eight teams, growing each year to become one of the largest – and most anticipated tournaments of the men's fastball season. In addition to Linares's efforts and contacts throughout Florida and that region of the world, a large reason for the tournament's success is the organizational skills of Ken Hackmeister, who serves year 'round as the Executive Director of the ISC (International Softball Congress), which hosts the premier tournament in all of men's fastball every August, the ISC World Tournament.

The Road to the Championship

Game 1: USA 16, Burke Explosion, North Carolina 0

Team USA set the tone for things to come, scoring 10 runs in the first two innings, and breezing to a 16-0 opening game against Burke Explosion of North Carolina. Frank DeGroat, Jr. and Landy Rodriguez homered for USA, and everyone marched in the hit parade, banging out 16 hits to support pitcher Travis Price, who threw three no-hit innings to pick up the win.



Game 2 – USA 14, Florida Fastpitch 3

Terry Luster, Sonny Perkins and Cody Thompson combined for the win, scoring 7 in the first three innings, and coasting to a 14-3 final. Ben Fjelland; Adam LaLonde, Chad Boom, Sonny Perkins, and Blake Miller all homered, while Frank DeGroat hit two, for a total of seven in the game. Blake Miller was 3 for 4, scoring three runs and driving in 5 with the homer and a pair of doubles.

Game 3 – USA 8, Virgin Island Ambassadors 0

Michael White and Cody Thompson combined for a one-hitter and easy win, as USA scored eight runs on 11 hits. Landy Rodriguez led the way for the USA offense with two home runs, and Frank DeGroat, Jr. and Craig Daniels added one home run each. De Groat, Jr. was the eventual tournament MVP, while Craig Daniels, from Northern California, is the newest member of Team USA. Daniels had 2 hits, driving in 3, while Rodriguez was 3-3 driving in 3.

Game 4 – USA 7, Venezuela 2

Newcomer Sonny Perkins picked up the win for USA, settling down after Venezuela took an early lead, the only time USA trailed in a game until the championship game. Venezuela turned a couple of hits and wild pitches into a 1-0 second inning lead. USA tied the game at 1-1 in the bottom of the second inning, then exploded for six more on four hits and three costly Venezuela errors in the pivotal third inning. LaLonde reached on a fielding error, Rodriguez singled up the middle, advancing to second on an error, with LaLonde advancing to third. DeGroat, Jr. walked; Boom reached on a fielding error with DeGroat, Jr. and Rodriguez moving over to second and third. Sonny Perkins drove in one with a sacrifice fly. Rey Garcia then singled home two more runs; Blake Miller doubled home another, followed by an RBI single by Miljavic.





**Game 5 – USA 14,
Texaco Pirates,
Bahamas 0**

USA scored early and often in this one, pounding out 17 hits. Six in the first, 2 in the second, 3 in the third and 2 more for the 14-0 run-rule victory. Michael White and Cody Thompson combined for the win, while teammates Chris Miljavac, Chad Seeman, Landy Rodriguez, Sonny Perkins, and Rey Garcia all homered for USA.

**Game 6 – Semi-Final – USA 4, Hallman
Twins, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada 2**

USA's Terry Luster pitched a gem of a game, holding a powerful Hallman Twins, Ontario, Canada, team to one run on 6 hits. The Twins finished third in last summer's ISC World Tournament. USA scored two in the first and two in the fourth, surrendering just one run to Hallman in the first for the semi-final win. In the USA first, Adam LaLonde and Landy Rodriguez walked, and scored on a two run single up the middle by Chad Boom. The hit proved to be the game winner. The Twins notched their lone run on a home run to center by Dale Levy. In the USA fourth, it was Chad Boom again, leading off with a double, scoring on a Sonny Perkins triple. Matt Darling then drove home Perkins for the final 4-1 score.

**Game 7 – Championship Game – USA 3,
Team Minnesota 2**

A see-saw battle saw Team Minnesota jump on top in the first inning, 1-0, when Scott Deutch doubled home Greg Cascaes. Excepting an early lead by Venezuela in a round robin game, it was the only time that USA trailed in a tournament game. Team USA tied the game in the fourth inning when Landy Rodriguez hit a solo home run to right field, then took the lead in the bottom of the 5th, when Ben Fjelland doubled to center field, then scored on an error. Pitcher Rick Lang came on in relief in the 5th, and his teammates got things even in the sixth, for a 2-2 tie. Once again, it was Scott Deutch driving in Greg Cascaes. A line drive double play ended the Minnesota scoring threat and set the table for the dramatic finish in the seventh. Darling struck out looking. With one out, speedster Blake Miller walked. A ground out put him at second, with two outs. With the game on the line, Team USA's Adam LaLonde singled to deep short, driving home Miller who sprinted home with the game, and tournament winning run.



Runner-up Team Minnesota turned in a fine performance in their first ever AAU Tournament, led by pitchers Gerald Muizelaar and Rick Lang, veteran slugger Roman Foore, and a roster of young, talented ballplayers. Minnesota finished with a 6-1 record:

Game 1: Team Minnesota 4, Orlando Kings 0: Team Minnesota scattered 6 hits in their opener. Jeff Ellsworth (two), Gregg Cascaes and Eric Lewis drove in runs. Rick Lang earned the win with 9 strikeouts in 5 innings of work. Gerald Muizelaar worked two innings of relief.

Team Minnesota 4, Team Colombia 0: Muizelaar and Twordik, HR-Ellsworth (1, 2).

Jeff Ellsworth led the charge with two home runs. Two more runs were added in the sixth inning on Lucas Goring's 2 RBI double. Gerald Muizelaar earned the win, striking out 9.

Team Minnesota 10, Oklahoma Fastpitch 2: Kammuller and Twordik, HR-Roman Foore (1). Team Minnesota scattered 11 hits in their final pool play game. Lucas Goring was 1-4 with 2 RBI, Gregg Cascaes 2-3, Scott Deutsch 2-4 with 2 RBI, Roman Foore 1-3 with a Home Run,

Charlie Rambo 2-4 with RBI. Kevin Kammuller earned the win as he struck out 10. Team Minnesota finished 3-0 in pool play and earned the number three seed in bracket play.

Bracket Play: Team Minnesota 9, Radio 560 (Mexico) 0: Lang, Kammuller and Twordik, HR-L. Goring (1), Ellsworth (3), Foore (2).

Lucas Goring, Jeff Ellsworth and Roman Foore each hit home runs in the victory. Rick Lang earned the win, striking out seven. Kevin Kammuller pitched one inning of relief, striking out three.

Team Minnesota 12, FedLock (Washington, DC) 2: 5 innings: Muizelaar and Twordik, HR-Ellsworth (4), Foore (3), Rambo (1). Jeff Ellsworth two-run homer in the first inning set the pace in this quarterfinal game. Roman Foore hit a towering three-run homer in the third inning. Jeff Ellsworth finished 2-3 with 4 RBI. Gerald Muizelaar posted another win, recording 6 strikeouts.

Semi-Final: Team Minnesota 6, Heflin Builders (NY) 4: Muizelaar and Twordik, HR-L. Goring (2), Wandler (1). Lucas Goring led off the TM half of the first with home run. Two batters later, Jeff Ellsworth tripled then scored on a wild pitch. Heflin took the lead back in the top of the second. The game was brought back to even when Lucas Goring singled to score Jason Wandler. The back-and-forth battle continued as Heflin posted a run in the top of the third. Jeff Ellsworth led off the TM third with a walk. Then with two outs, Jason Wandler's home run put TM up to stay. An insurance run was added the next inning when Charlie Rambo led off with a triple, then scored on Lucas Goring's fielder's choice. Gerald Muizelaar earned his third win on the weekend as he struck out 8. Minnesota's only loss came in the Championship Game.



Team USA



Team Minnesota



Hallman Twins



Heflin Builders

Texas, Jan. 18 Results

Round Robin Games

Oklahoma Fastpitch - 11
 Jamaica - 0
 WP - Peterson & Perry
 LP - Adams & Francis

Team USA - 9
 Saskatchewan - 0
 WP - White & DeGroot
 LP - Nason, Pava (4) & Alvey

Team USA - 7
 Missouri - 5
 WP - Vaska & Olszowski
 LP - Johnson & Finkelman

Team USA - 11
 Big Green - 2
 WP - Muehlenkamp & Stone
 LP - Hill & Laddford

On Park - 1
 Ontario's All Stars - 3
 WP - Stremmel, Gentry (7) & O'Neil
 Schreiber, S. Pflieger (6), Alger (LP 7) & Bakula

Team Minnesota - 4
 Ontario Kings - 0
 WP - Stone, Muehlenkamp (5) & Loring
 LP - Gross, Hinesley (5) & Castillo

Ontario Kings - 5
 Ontario Kings - 6
 WP - Stone, Muehlenkamp (5) & Loring
 LP - Ford & Castro

Saskatchewan - 8
 Duke's Expedition - 7
 WP - Muehlenkamp & Alvey
 LP - McCarroll & Propp

Los Angeles - 2
 Oklahoma - 3
 WP - Pease & Grogans
 LP - Muehlenkamp & Stremmel

Florida Fastpitch - 5
 Florida Fastpitch - 11
 LP - Vogel, Gilmore (5) & Peil
 Radio 500 - 0
 WP - Simpson, Finkelman & Gansway
 LP - Castro & Covantes

Hallman Twins - 15
 Jamaica - 0
 WP - D. Martin & Gibson
 LP - Hedberg, McCabe (5), Farnon (7) & Stone

Team USA - 14
 Oklahoma Fastpitch - 0
 Oklahoma Fastpitch - 11
 LP - Simpson, Zach (4) & White

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team Minnesota - 10
 Oklahoma Fastpitch - 2
 WP - Kammertiller & Stremmel
 LP - Muehlenkamp & Stone

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Team USA - 11

Florida Fastpitch - 3
 WP - Loring, Perkins (5), Thomson (7) & Hedberg, Finkelman (5)
 LP - Back, Mitchell (5) & Gray

Radio 500 - 8
 Los Angeles - 7
 WP - T. Johnson & Kalambeck
 LP - Stone, Muehlenkamp (5), Pava (5) & Alvey

Columbia - 11
 Minnesota - 5
 WP - Muehlenkamp & Finkelman
 LP - Castillo & Olszowski

Hartley's All Stars - 7
 Ontario Kings - 1
 WP - Pflieger, Scheller (4) and Emery
 LP - Gilbert, Vogel (4) & Peil

Yamalo/Miami - 4
 Oklahoma Fastpitch - 2
 WP - Hagan & Castillo
 LP - Berger, DeBry (7) & Perry

Texas Power - 11
 Oklahoma Fastpitch - 0
 WP - Muehlenkamp & Alvey
 LP - Taylor & Hagan

Radio 500 - 1
 Big Green - 1
 WP - Castro & Covantes
 LP - Hill & Laddford

Oklahoma - 7
 Oklahoma Fastpitch - 6
 WP - Muehlenkamp & Stremmel
 LP - Stone & Loring

Florida Fastpitch - 0
 Oklahoma Fastpitch - 5
 WP - Stone, Muehlenkamp (5) & Loring
 LP - Ford & Castro

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Team USA - 11
 Ontario Kings - 2
 WP - Chapman & Stremmel
 LP - Hagan, Ford (4) & Castro

Florida - 3
 On Park - 2
 WP - Dyck & Bell
 LP - Gentry & O'Neil

Final Results

1. Champion - Team USA
2. Second Place - Team Minnesota
3. Third Place - Hallman Twins

4th Place - Ontario, Canada and Heflin Builders, New York

Most Valuable Player - Frank De Groot, 5, Team USA

Most Valuable Pitcher - Tim Price, Team USA

Standings - Jan. 21 Results

CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Team Minnesota - 2
 Team USA - 1
 WP - Pease & DeGroot
 Muehlenkamp, Finkelman (7) & Taylor

SEMI-FINALS

Team Minnesota - 6
 Heflin Builders - 1
 WP - Muehlenkamp & Finkelman
 LP - Simpson, Mitchell (5) & Gansway

Team USA - 1
 Hallman Twins - 1
 WP - Loring, White (7) & DeGroot
 LP - Stone, T. Martin (5) & Stremmel

Four of the games were broadcast live on the Internet, on www.ballparkradio.com, including the semi-final between the Hallman Twins and Team USA, and the championship game. Archived copies of the broadcasts can still be heard by logging into Ballparkradio.com. Tournament photographer Maddy Flanagan was once again on hand, taking hundreds of action photographs which may be viewed at her husband's website, Fastpitchwest.com, as well as the AAU's own website, www.ausports.org. Plans are already being made for the Eighth Annual AAU International Men's Fastball Tournament, January 2007. Interested teams can obtain more information at www.ausports.org.