



LOS SOCIOS OF VENEZUELA

RECLAIMS AAU INTERNATIONAL MEN'S FASTPITCH CROWN AT DISNEY'S WIDE WORLD OF SPORTS®, ORLANDO, FLORIDA

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 Cover photo by Madeleine Flanagan
 The Flanagan's contributions are courtesy of www.fastpitchwest.com

For the second time in the last three years, the Los Socios team from Venezuela has captured the AAU International Tournament's championship trophy, posting a perfect 6-0 record, including a 8-1 championship game win over runner-up Mexicali, Mexico. The Sebringville Sting of Ontario, Canada and Bloomington Stix of Illinois tied for third.

The talented Los Socios team from Venezuela has been in the championship game the last three years, winning the tournament in 2002, and finishing as runner-up to Harter's Falcons of Washington DC last year. Los Socios won this year's title in convincing fashion, with a 9-1 semi-final win over Bloomington Illinois, and 8-1 title game win over previously unbeaten Mexicali, Mexico. Los Socios relied on solid veteran pitching of Ramon Bigot and Santiago Perez, stellar defense, and a potent offense led by the likes of Elis Ugeto, Jose Manillo and Jose Luis Shera.

Los Socios shortstop Elis Ugeto was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player, going 4 for 4 in the title game, while teammate Santiago Perez, the winning pitcher in the championship game was named the tournament's Most Valuable Pitcher. The Championship squad included Carlos Zambrano, Jose Manillo, Luis Regnault, Lenin Rodriguez, Nick Seud, Asuncion Figuera, Carlos Ramirez, Jose Luis Shera, Pedro Gonzalez, Ramon Bigot, Florencio Bapreto, Maicoll Ruiz, Renaldo Garcia, Rob Schwand, Oblajio Pedrone and Mario Teran.

The Tournament: This year's 5th Annual AAU

International Men's Fastpitch tournament was held January 22-25, 2004, at Disney's Wide World of Sports® Complex in Orlando, Florida, regarded by many as the finest softball facility in the country. "Gorgeous weather," "Beautiful facility," "Well organized" and "Great competition" were some of the comments heard 'round the Disney complex during the four day tournament. The 2004 AAU tournament truly lived up to its "International" name, hosting twenty-four teams from a variety of countries, including Canada, Mexico, Panama, Columbia, Venezuela, the Virgin Islands, the Bahamas and the United States. The top four finishers in this year's tournament hailed from four different countries, Venezuela, Mexico, Canada and the United States.

The AAU International tournament began in 2000, with just eight teams, and has grown steadily, to twenty-four teams this year, with talk that it could even expand to thirty-two teams in 2005. The AAU International event is the first big tournament of the calendar year for the fastpitch community, drawing teams from a number of countries, including a number of Caribbean region countries, as well as those in cold weather parts of North America, including Canada and the Midwest. While many back home in Canada



Los Socios Most Valuable Pitcher Santiago Perez and Most Valuable Player VP Elis Ugeto

and the Midwest and Northern United States were shoveling snow from their driveways in sub-zero weather, fastpitch teams at the AAU tournament in Orlando were enjoying beautiful sunny skies, with an opportunity to play quality, competitive fastpitch against teams that they would not normally get to see.

Disney's Wide World of Sports® Complex:

Disney's Wide World of Sports® Complex is located in Orlando, Florida, amidst other Disney resorts such as Epcot Center, Animal Kingdom, and others. The complex is minutes from the host and other conveniently located hotels. Florida is well known for its affordable travel and lodging facilities. The facility houses four main fields, laid out in "wagon wheel"