



over Florida on Saturday night, Jose Manillo put on an offensive show, with two home runs, including a grand slam, driving in five of his team's seven runs.

Championship Game: Fittingly, the Championship game pitted the #1 and #2 seeds from pool play, Mexicali and Los Socios, Venezuela. Both teams entered the game with perfect 5-0 records, but it was the #2 seed, Los Socios that came out on top, by a 9-1 margin.

Mexicali jumped out to a 1-0 lead in the first inning on a leadoff triple by Edgar Martinez, and double by Jose Luis Mendez. Mexicali's starting pitcher, Panfilo Valdez held the lead until the 3rd inning, when Los Socios turned a walk and couple of base hits into a run to tie the game. Los Socios took control of the game the following inning, when four hits and an error led to three runs. Los Socios third baseman Jose Luis Shera's two run single was the big blow in the inning. Mexicali's Alejandro Villalobos came on to strike out the final two hitters of the inning, but the damage was done, and Los Socios had a 4-1 lead they would never relinquish. Los Socios took advantage of another Mexicali error in the 5th, when Carlos Ramirez singled home Asuncion Figuera, for a 5-1 lead. The Venezuelan squad added another run in the 6th on a single by MVP Elis Ugetto, his fourth of the game, a sacrifice by Carlos Zambrano, and RBI single by Jose Manillo. Leading 6-1 in the final inning, Los Socios third baseman Jose Luis Shera capped the scoring with a two run homer in the 7th inning, for the 8-1 final margin of victory, and giving Shera four RBI in the game.

Los Socios shortstop Elis Ugeto was four-for-four in the championship game, which helped him earn honors as the tournament's Most Valuable Player, while starting pitcher Santiago Perez went the distance, and picked up the tournament's Most Valuable Pitcher award.

Postscript: After the 2004 tournament was "in the books," we had a chance to speak with co-tournament director Ken Hackmeister, who had this to say about this year's event:

"The 2004 edition was both exciting

and rewarding. Exciting from the standpoint of having many good teams playing good, competitive games. No one came into the tournament as the consensus favorite to win. Rewarding because we're seeing the successes of four prior tournaments result in the highest number of teams in the tournament's history (24). Bill Hillhouse's ISC pitching clinics on Friday and Saturday attracted between 15 & 20 pitchers and pitcher prospects, with many of the students returning for more than one session with Bill. Seeing the final 4 teams represent 4 different countries was also exciting for me (Mexico, Venezuela, Canada and USA). We were also pleased to have Jim and Maddy Flanagan join our staff this year, lending their talents, including Jim's broadcasting play-by-play and Maddy's photographs posted to their website to share not only with the players, but the rest of the fast-pitch community."

Next Year's Tournament: What's in store for 2005? Ken Hackmeister has already started preparations for next year: "I'm looking forward to 2005 when we'll attempt to host thirty-two teams and use all six of the available Disney diamonds." The AAU's Alex Linares knows that the growth of the tournament has been largely word-of-mouth, and hopes that this year's field of teams will have plenty to talk about when they get home. He'd like to get some of the "big" teams from Canada, the U.S, and maybe even some of the top finishers from this year's ISF World Championships, Japan, New Zealand, and perhaps a return appearance by Argentina, who played in the 2001 AAU tournament. He may not have a crystal ball, but one thing is for certain: The AAU International tournament has become one of "the" most desirable fast-pitch tournament destinations around, and will draw plenty of attention come January 2005.



While I have known Jim Flanagan for perhaps 20 years, January at Disney was the first time I had the opportunity to meet his beautiful wife, Maddy. Together, they formed one of the best technical teams our sport has ever seen. And interestingly, it was all done through a series of emails just before Christmas.

Jim and I were communicating about some other fastball topics and he asked about the AAU. He had never been to Disney World. His wife Maddy, a Cuban by birth, had emigrated to Florida as a young girl but hadn't really been back since then.

We bantered back and forth about the tournament, the teams, the weather, Disney World, etc., etc. Then Jim asked about perhaps doing some Streaming if he decided to attend. I checked with Alex and Mike at AAU and they gave the thumbs up. Long story short, they decided to attend, bring their Streaming equipment and see what they could do.

I knew Maddy was a photographer from displays on Jim's website from last summer. However, the original plan was Jim would Stream a few games and Maddy would do a Spanish summary each 1/2 inning. If there was time, she would take a few photos.

Jim coordinated all the technical aspects with Disney personnel and had everything lined up when they arrived.

As it turned out, Jim did all

AAU MEN'S INTERNATIONAL

the play by play for six games and Maddy was out on the diamonds taking photos and meeting people. She was an absolute delight. I think she enjoyed her experience so much, she forgot about Jim doing the Streaming by himself.

As it turned out, the Streaming was an unqualified hit with everyone worldwide who listened, Maddy's photos are unbelievable and here's the kicker, they paid all their own expenses to travel there and Jim paid for the Streaming costs himself. It resulted in by far, the most extensively and professionally covered non-championship fastball tournament I can remember.

Jim's day job is an attorney in the Los Angeles area. He has pitched fastball most of his life and continues as an active pitcher today. He loves the game. It his hobby and his passion. He has developed his own Fastpitchwest.com website and covers all aspects of our game. And now, with Maddy, he has a professional photographer who has also come to love the game and the new people she meets. It is one terrific combination and our sport is the beneficiary.

I can't thank Jim and Maddy enough for all they have done to cover and promote the AAU Men's International Tournament and I now look forward to the Red Rock tournament in St. George, Utah May 1st & 2nd when we get to do it all over again. - Ken Hackmeister, Executive Director, International Softball Congress