



***Veteran commissioner James Ellis returns to head Tennessee ASA***

# Memphis ASA merges with state association in 2016

FOR YEARS THE PEOPLE who played softball in Tennessee could register either with the Tennessee ASA or the Memphis ASA. But with the dawn of the 2016 season, there is now only one association for the people of Tennessee. It's the Tennessee ASA headed by state commissioner James Ellis of Johnson City.

Ellis has returned as state commissioner, having served as state commissioner from 2005 to 2012 and afterward as association president and as a district commissioner. But when he learned that his old commissioner position was open, he submitted his resume.

In April, Ellis received a call from the national office that he once again would be the Tennessee ASA commissioner. "This is unbelievable. I never thought that I would get this opportunity again," said Ellis. "Like recreation, ASA softball has been a large part of my life, and to receive the support and approval from my family and the ASA National Office is overwhelming."

The 57-year-old Ellis has developed a three-year plan to move the Tennessee

ASA forward. Merging Memphis with the Tennessee ASA was approved by the ASA board of directors and Ellis feels the move will give the Tennessee ASA an "automatic increase as well as the opportunity to realize additional increases in other West Tennessee areas."

In 2015 the association had 440 adult teams, 2,006 JO teams, 2,111 individual registrations and 307 umpires. The individual registrations and the umpire totals increased from 2014, while the adult teams and JO teams decreased slightly.

"We must continue to grow the association, both in registration numbers (adult teams, JO teams and umpires) as well as financially," he said. "We plan to fill vacancies in several districts and anticipate registration increases in the team, individual and umpire categories."

To better serve the teams in Tennessee, Ellis said the Girls Class A Fast Pitch National Qualifiers will be strategically placed with Chattanooga and Hendersonville again hosting qualifiers. A third will be held in Knoxville the first weekend in June.

"Knoxville's teams and communities have supported the ASA program for years and we feel it is time to show our appreciation for their support," said Ellis. "This will give the upper East Tennessee teams the opportunity to participate in a National Qualifier without a lot of travel."

In 2016 a background check will be conducted on every umpire that registers with the Tennessee ASA as well as every officer of the state association. "This is a step in the right direction," said Ellis. "It will assist the organization in providing additional security and safety for all participants."

For the first time, he will appoint two deputy state umpires-in-chief. All districts will conduct their own local clinics and Tennessee ASA will host three state-level clinics strategically located to better serve the umpire program. In 2015 Tennessee ASA hosted more than 100 tournaments, and the goal is to increase that number by 20 percent in 2016, said Ellis.

Last but certainly not least, in 2016 the Tennessee ASA will have a new and improved website to better serve its customers. "We are optimistic that with the new website and with social media that the players, teams, umpires and families will be able to stay up to date on current happenings in the program," Ellis said. □



ASA executive director Craig Cress tells of ASA plans in the years to come while attending the annual Tennessee ASA Hall of Fame banquet in December. (Page 2)

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# Comments From the Commish

**James Ellis,**  
*Tennessee ASA Commissioner*

## Making Tennessee the best it can be

THE TENNESSEE ASA was one of the original associations when the ASA was formed in 1933. Since that time a lot has happened and many people have contributed to making Tennessee ASA the best it can be.

Tennessee enters the 2016 season with optimism that working together

we can improve over last year. Although we were slightly down in a couple of areas (JO and adult teams), we had increases in individual registrations and umpires in 2015.

For the first time since 1950, the Tennessee ASA will now be the only ball game in town—so to speak. At the No-

ember annual meeting in Louisville, the ASA board of directors voted that Memphis would be part of the Tennessee ASA. That is great news for everyone involved in Tennessee ASA, but that also means we will have to appoint people for positions within the former Memphis ASA.

We are optimistic that we will find the people to fill those vacancies and improve the organization, registrations and finances. We won't be able to do the things we want to do if we aren't on solid ground financially.

As state commissioner for a second time, I am fortunate to have dedicated staff members who are loyal and committed to making the Tennessee ASA the best it can be in 2016 and in the years ahead. I salute them and thank them for their efforts. Let's make 2016 the best year it can be for the Tennessee ASA. □

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## Tennessee inducts 11 into ASA Hall of Fame

### ***2015 honorees raise membership to 70 since start in 2006***

NINE INDIVIDUALS AND ONE couple were inducted at the annual Tennessee ASA Hall of Fame banquet December 5 in Knoxville. More than 100 people attended the event at the Airport Hilton Hotel.

Honorees included David "Hank" Bassett and Dan Blair in the meritorious service category; Cecil Hale, Larry Hunt, Doug McBrayer and Bill Wilson in the umpire category; Fred Morris, fast pitch player; and Tom Cox, Bob McKamey and Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Webb in the sponsor category.

This year's inductees increase the membership in the Tennessee ASA Hall of Fame to 70 since its inception in 2006. Blair and Bassett are also members of the ASA National Softball Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City. Blair was inducted in 1993 in the umpire category while Bassett was enshrined in the manager category in 2007.

Bassett had an outstanding career as a

manager in slow pitch softball from 1971 to 1991. His teams won 73.6 percent of their games and finished with an overall record of 1,060 wins and 381 losses. His Starpath men's team gave slow pitch national recognition, winning 434 games and losing 141 for a 75.5 winning percentage. In five ASA Major Nationals, Bassett's teams compiled a record of 26-8. After ASA established the Super Division in 1981, his team won the national title in 1988.

In 1989 he managed his team to a gold medal in the U.S. Olympic Festival in Oklahoma City at the Hall of Fame Stadium. That was the debut of slow pitch in the Olympic Festival. Bassett is the third slow pitch manager from Kentucky to earn enshrinement in the ASA National Softball Hall of Fame.

Blair, who retired from softball in 2001, started his umpiring career in 1954 and officiated his first ASA national in 1964.

He was a member of the ASA national umpire staff and served as the UIC at 19 ASA national championships. He was one of the umpires to work the first North American Slow Pitch Championship in 1977 and also officiated the first ISF Men's World Slow Pitch Championship in 1987.

As the only fast pitch player inducted, the 89-year-old Morris compiled an amazing record during his career from 1941 to 1968. During that span, he won 1,069 of the 1,203 games that he pitched. During his career he averaged nearly 15 strikeouts per game for a total of 18,272 strikeouts. He hurled 199 no-hitters, 334 one-hitters, and 22 perfect games. In seven of his perfect games, he struck out all 21 batters.

Two of his best seasons were 1957 and 1958, compiling a 54-3 record in both seasons. He had a record of 58-15 in state tournaments and was a member of three

Please see **HALL OF FAME** next page

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## HALL OF FAME

state tournament championship teams. He had previously been inducted into the Nashville Fast Pitch Hall of Fame.

Guest speaker was Craig Cress, ASA executive director, who talked to the group about the current status of ASA as well as its future.

"It was an honor for us to be able to recognize these individuals who have contributed so much to the success of the ASA program in Tennessee," said Tennessee ASA State Commissioner James Ellis of Johnson City, "and to have our executive director be part of this program really made the evening even more special." □

The Tennessee ASA Hall of Fame inducted 11 people in Knoxville, including from left on front row: Bill Wilson, Robert McKarney and Cecil Hale. Back row, from left: Commissioner James Ellis, Hank Bassett, Doug McBrayer, Fred Morris, Dan Blair, Tom Cox and Mickey Webb, accepting for Jay and Alama Webb.





**TENNESSEE  
AMATEUR SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION**



**2016  
STATE TOURNAMENTS**

**Junior Olympic**

Girl's 18-16-14-12-10-8/U Class A FP	Chattanooga	July 9-11	Kim Swafford (405) 987-4402
Girl's 18-16-14-12-10-8/U Class B FP	Pigeon Forge	June 17-19	Kim Swafford (405) 987-4402
Girl's 18-16-14-12-10-8-6/U Class C/Rec FP	Knox Country	May 20-22	Missy Jones (865) 803-2876

**NOTE:** Class A Entry Fee is \$300 Double Elimination  
 Class B Entry Fee is \$265 Three Game  
 Class C/Rec & Slow-pitch Entry Fee is \$225 (Two Pool + Double Elimination)  
 Softballs are furnished for all State Tournaments

All teams (including those who have won a qualifier) must participate in the State Tournament in order to advance to the National Championship.

**Adult**

Men's Class D Open Slow-pitch	Maryville	August 5-7	Joe Huff (865) 983-9244
Men's Class E/Rec Slow-pitch	Maryville	August 5-7	Joe Huff (865) 983-9244
Men's Church Slow-pitch	Maryville	August 5-7	Joe Huff (865) 983-9244

**NOTE:** Entry Fee is \$200.00 (Three Game)  
 Each Division must have a minimum of four teams.  
 Softballs are furnished for all State Tournaments

## Softball ingrained in Ellis Family

BEING INVOLVED IN SOFTBALL RUNS in the Ellis family. In fact, 17-year-old Heather Ellis, the daughter of James and Marsha Ellis, has signed a scholarship to play softball at Milligan College (NAIA) next year.

Positioned at second base and outfield, Heather has played softball seven years including three years of travel ball for East Tennessee Tribe and the Blue Blaze 96, which finished 24th in the ASA/USA 18-under Girls' Class A Fast Pitch Nationals in Spartanburg, S.C. In 2014 the Blue Blaze won the ASA Eastern Showcase.

Besides excelling on the diamond, Heather excels at Science High School in Johnson City with a 3.65 GPA, which earned her a spot on the Tennessee Softball Coaches Association All Academic Team in 2014-15.

"We're excited that Heather is joining Buff Nation and our Milligan softball family," said Wes Holly, Milligan head softball coach. "She is a good student and athlete and has a good supportive family. We look forward to her contributions to our softball program over the next four years."

"I chose Milligan because its reputation for strong academics, its strong softball program, and the good people that surround the campus," said Heather.

Milligan College is a selective Christian liberal arts college founded in 1866 and located in the mountains of Northeastern Tennessee. □



**Heather Ellis at bat for Blue Blaze 96 in 2015.  
Tennessee ASA INSIDER/JAN. 2016**

# ASA offers most benefits at reasonable cost

IN TODAY'S ECONOMIC TIMES, local Recreation Departments are challenged with budget constraints more so than ever before. There are many options when trying to choose which softball organization can provide your program with the most benefits at a reasonable cost. When you review all the offerings, the clear choice is the ASA.

The Amateur Softball Association is a non-profit organization recognized by the United States Olympic Committee as "The National Governing Body of Softball." Through its 76 local associations, the ASA has a membership of more than 1.2 million girls, 1.8 million adult players, and more than 35,000 umpires. Whether it is a six-year-old or a 75-year-old, slow-pitch, fast-pitch, or modified pitch player, the ASA program truly has something for everyone. Examples of this include:

## INSURANCE

Competitively priced plans for municipalities, field owners, teams, tournament and clinic insurance. These plans assist cities in reducing their liability exposure when hosting league and tournament play. For more than 50 years, Bollinger Insurance and ASA have partnered to provide excellent insurance plans to their players, teams, umpires, tournaments, and cities.

## BG CHECKS

We offer background checks for all volunteer coaches and umpires. These checks are mandatory for championship play and they are made available through ASA at a fraction of the cost of most background checks due to the quantity conducted.

## UMPIRES

The umpire training program is one of the finest in any sport. Clinics and



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Schools are provided to all registered umpires on a Local, District, State, and National level. ASA has released an animated DVD to better assist umpires in developing and enhancing their skills. All ASA umpires are required to complete/ pass the ASA National Umpire Exam and their insurance is provided with their registration.

## PLAYERS AND COACHES TRAINING

ASA offers clinics, camps, videos, and publications to assist coaches and players of all ages to advance their skills. ASA offers the ACE Certification program for its volunteer coaches and this program can be administered on-site or online. Some of softball's greatest coaches and players have assisted ASA in producing these educational materials.

## MATERIALS

Every team who registers with ASA receives a copy of the ASA rules of Softball, a team scorebook, *Balls & Strikes* online publication, and other softball related materials. These materials are a benefit

to our registered teams and umpires and are not for sale.

## EQUIPMENT

Participant safety is one of our priorities and ASA maintains the highest level of equipment standards ensuring the utmost safety to all its participants. This is an important factor when considering which organization you should register your rec league with.

## TOURNAMENTS

ASA has Championship Play beginning at the local level and continuing to the District, State, and National Championships for teams of all ages. In addition, cities that register their teams and umpires are eligible to host such events, thus realizing a large economic impact for their community.

## SUPPORT

Tennessee ASA is divided into Districts with each having a District Commissioner, JO Commissioner, and an Umpire-In-Chief. These individuals are available to you when you need them. Whether it pertains to questions concerning registration, rule interpretations, playing equipment, fundraising programs, etc., we are here to assist you in ensuring a successful season.

**For more information about Tennessee ASA or to register, please contact James Ellis at (423) 747-9883 or by email at: [ellisjmha@charter.net](mailto:ellisjmha@charter.net)**

## Johnson City to host national championship

BESIDES THE STATE, DISTRICT, national qualifiers and invitational tournaments scheduled in 2016 in Tennessee, a girls' fast pitch national championship will be held in Johnson City. In the mountains of northeastern Tennessee, the city will host the Fast Pitch Girls' Class A 18-under Southern National Championship, Aug. 4-7. Deadline to enter is July 28. Tournament director is Rick Poole, who can be contacted at (423) 646-9624. Entry fee is \$550.