



Overview

For eight years the Central California Men's Softball Association has done its part to promote the game of fastpitch softball in California. In 1993 the CCASA had high hopes of achieving the goal of competitive statewide fastpitch, with the inception of the CCASA Travel League. Two of the initial driving forces behind this league were Richard "Dick" Grove, Central California Metro Softball Commissioner, and Tim Lyon, manager of The San Luis Obispo Bucks. At the time, the Bucks were just an up and coming team in Central California, having just recently won the 1990 ASA "C" National Championship. With Tim Lyon's ability as a manager, and as a pitcher and player at that time, Mr. Grove appointed him to be the first President of the CCASA Fastpitch Travel League. Dick thought Tim would be able to relate closely with the players and managers, structuring a league that would be both competitive and fun for everyone. Tim Lyon ran the Travel League from 1993 to 1996.

In 1996, Mr. Lyon was finding it increasingly difficult to run the Travel League and still be committed to the development of his own team, The Bucks. So, In 1996, Mr. Lyon stepped down and Dick Grove appointed another President, Iren Hodge. Mr. Hodge is currently in his sixth term as President of the Travel League. In his six-year term, the CCASA has seen the league grow and prosper, unlike any sustaining league in the western United States. Between Dick Grove, Tim Lyon, & Iren Hodge the league has enjoyed a steady growth in the number of fastpitch teams that participate, and a steady rise in the competitive nature of these teams. Many of the teams that play in the CCASA challenge for the top spots in every tournament they play, including the ASA Nationals or the N.A.F.A. World Tournaments.

In 1993 the CCASA wanted to put something together that enticed people to play the game of fastpitch at a higher level. From the inception of the league, they knew they had something. The league started off with six dedicated teams looking for a more organized and competitive form of fastpitch. Since then, it has grown immensely. In 1999 the league had climbed to an amazing twenty-one teams. The league dipped to fifteen teams in 2000, primarily because of the bad taste the 1999 ASA pitching rule left in the mouth of fastpitch teams all across California. Now, with the pitching rule one year removed from ASA, the 2001 Season promises to be something special. The registration in the league is back up to 18 teams, with many "guest teams" attending throughout the season. These teams represent "C" level teams, on up to "Major". Most of these teams are located up and down California. Even Las Vegas has representation in the League.

The league consists of A, B, & C teams split up into two divisions, an upper and a lower. The A/B teams are grouped together in the upper division, and the C teams are grouped together in the lower. Central California invites all teams into the league who wish to play at an organized and competitive level. Unlike other leagues or organizations, all metros within the Pacific Coast Region are allowed to play and compete for Central California's National and Regional Berths. No other metro does this. Central California Believes in its' teams, and their ability to win the berths outright. This year, there are 7 National Berths (A, B, & C) at stake, as well as 6 Regional berths (A, B, & C). The first place teams in each division also receives paid berths to the National Tournament and travel money as well.

The league is primarily based out of Central California. However, the areas where most of the teams originate, usually determine the locations of possible league sites. The league has gone as far North as Sacramento, and as far south as Lancaster. We have even had dates in Las Vegas as well. The Central California Travel League starts in March and extends to the end of July. There are typically five weekends, spaced three to four weeks apart, consisting of five to six games per weekend, usually totaling twenty five games for the league. The teams that play in the Central California Travel League are some of the best in Region 14, stretching from Northern to Southern California (and Las Vegas) and over 5 metros. These teams are not afraid of the high competitive nature of the league, and in fact, they embrace it. The competition is usually fierce, and on any given weekend, any one of these teams could go undefeated. Conversely, the next weekend, they may only win one game.

The upcoming 2001 CCASA Travel League season promises to be something special. The A/B Travel League will be the strongest it has been since the inception of the league in '93. You will see solid representation from three of the very best teams in California. From the North (Maverick Electric Sharks – 2000 ASA "B" National Champions), from the Central (Team Lyons – 1999 N.A.F.A. "AA" World Champions, 2000 CCASA Travel League Champions), & from the South (Team Rainey – 2000 ASA "B" 5th place finish). All three of these teams are currently rated ASA "A", and are planning on going to the 2001 ASA "A" Nationals in Decatur, Alabama. Other notables in the league are The Elk Grove Merchants (1999 N.A.F.A. "AA" 11th Place, 2000 ASA "B" National 9th Place), Sunset Life (1999 ASA "B" National 5th Place), & The Quest



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(Perennial top 10 finisher in 1996, 1997, & 1998 N.A.F.A. "AA" World Tournament). In Addition to these teams, guest teams like the L.A. Doughboys (2000 ASA Men's "Major" Modified Champions) are planning on stopping in a few times for top-notch competition, as they did for ten games in 2000, on their way to a 7-3 record, and an ASA Modified National Championship.

The C Travel League will also have a number of teams competing for National and Regional berths. Most of the "C" league is made up of teams from Central and Southern California. The Sun Devils (2000 ASA "C" National Tournament – 13th place) won the 2000 "C" Travel League crown with a record of 20-4. The Silverhawks from Bakersfield followed closely behind with an 18-6 record. This year the "C" league promises to be a little more difficult to obtain a National Berth. There will be roughly eleven teams competing for the two berths in the league. Being that the Region did away with player ratings this year, there probably will be a lot of "C" teams loading up with talented, upper division ball players. The league was already the strongest around with the 1998 (Mixed Company) & 1999 (Rancherio Coyotes) Regional Champions both competing in it. Throw in The Lumberkings (ASA "B" in 2000), and you have one hell of a fight for the title.

The Central California Travel League definitely believes that it has the best teams in the state playing currently at competitive levels. In fact, they believe this so strongly, that they have the CCASA Travel League challenge. If a guest team can come into the league and go undefeated, they play for free. This invitation extends to any level or association of fastpitch in any State or Nation (ASA "Major", "A", "B", "C" / N.A.F.A. – "AAA", "AA", "A" / and even the ISC) the league has no bias. If you can throw it, hit it, and field it – we don't care how hard it comes, how far it goes, or how dirty you get trying to track it down! We want the best, and except no imitations. If you don't bring your "A" game, or "Major" for that matter, to this league, you might as well not come at all! Contrary to public belief, we have some pretty good ball teams, at all levels, in California! These teams have consistently proven that they are for real. If you don't believe it, just try us out. If you want to be a pretender, then stay away, and keep telling yourself you are good. Until you play the best, how will you know for sure?

In all, since the inception of the CCASA Travel League in 1993, there has been a steady growth of competitive fastpitch teams in Central California. We know that we are doing our part to help fastpitch grow. Often times when we make tournaments or leagues metro specific, the better teams are left out to dry. This is something the CCASA Travel League tries very hard to guard against. Shouldn't the best teams in the State go to the Nationals? History has shown that the CCASA travel league teams do better in National Tournaments. We had four teams place top five, or higher, in their respective National tournaments last year, two of them went on to win their National Championship. We had another team place ninth in their tournament (Elk Grove Merchants – 2000 ASA "B" Nationals) & thirteenth (Sun Devils – 2000 ASA "C" Nationals).

With all of the competitive teams in the CCASA Travel League, it seems like the best source of top competitive fastpitch in the state. Hopefully, other teams will take the CCASA challenge in 2001, and compete against these extremely good teams. Maybe then we could actually see who the best teams in California really are!

Any takers?