

Aussie Hearts SBK08

South Bend/Kenosha, 2008

Competing in **South Bend**, Indiana and **Kenosha**, Wisconsin, the American Midwest and the shores of Lake Michigan will be the setting for the Aussie Hearts 4th international tour in four years.

The Can-Am Tournament- The Can-Am event is entering its 2nd year. The event will take place from June 27-29 in South Bend, Indiana and will include a visit the AAGPBL museum ("A League of Their Own"). Six club teams from Canada and the U.S. will participate in two divisions.

The Hall of Fame Classic- This is an invitation-only, elite event and it will take place from July 4-6. There will be four top-flight American teams plus the Hearts at this tournament in Kenosha. This is the only event that USA Baseball is using to select the 2008 Team USA group that is bound for the Women' World Cup in Japan. This Kenosha tournament is expected to be one of the best events in the world this year.

Game will be played at Simmonds Field in Kenosha, the last remaining field in its original configuration from when it was used by the All-Americans in the 1940's and 1950's. Many of the old-time AAGPBL players will be there ("A League of Their Own"). Indeed, there will be a special ceremony to rededicate their old field in their honour.

SBK08 - Wed, June 25

A weary crew goes to bed tonight! It has been a long time in transit from Korea. We are officially tired of airplanes.

But a lot of positives today. Along the way, we have picked up Ahn from Korea, Mihoko from Japan, Samantha from Canada, and assistant coach Mitch from Chicago.

Also, we had a short and sharp little practice to get the kinks out and to start bonding as a team. Coach Narelle has a system....

We are excited to be sharing our journey with the Karle and Pittman families who are graciously hosting us. Lights out at 10pm, up at 6am, for a 4-hour training session.

SBK08 - Thur, June 26

Up at 6am. On the field by 830am for a 4-hour training session in the hot humid weather. Trial by fire.

A strong practice, especially considering the heat, the jet lag, and three different languages being spoken by team members. It was a learning process to be sure given that it was this group's first practice together. But the result was good and a snappy little team is coming together.

A relaxing lunch was cut short by a surprise shopping extravaganza at a local sports store- a virtual feeding frenzy brought on by the name-brand clearance prices and the towering strength of the Aussie dollar. After agonizing for an hour, even Jacinda got a new glove! (The more expensive one.)

The evening brought a wonderful barbecue hosted by Mr. and Mrs. Karle at their lovely little mansion located just over the border from Indiana into the state of Michigan. Wonderful hospitality, great food, and cold drinks on tap were the order of the day. An introduction to backyard cricket was, of course, mandatory. Even Mr. and Mrs. Novotny made the 3-hour drive down from Kenosha to join in the fun.

The evening wrapped up by watching dvd's of broadcast television coverage from the 2006 Women's World Cup of Baseball in Taiwan. Lots of cheering and teasing as Simone, Kelly, Shae, and Sam from Canada graced Mr. Karle's big screen plasma TV. A splendid time was had by all.

Games begin on Friday against the South Bend Blue Sox and Chicago Gems. The evening will bring a tour of a local museum exhibit dedicated to the AAGPBL players of the 1940's and '50's.

Also please note that the fabulous shots from today's training session were taken by team H2A Dean Watson. Great job!

SBK08 - Fri, June 27

Today the women of SBK08 finally got underway with their first games.

1st Game vs. South Bend Blue Sox

The South Bend Blue Sox plated three runs off game one starter Eryn Shipp. The scoring was the result of a fielding error by Shipp, a walk, and two singles. The Hearts answered back in the bottom of the inning as shortstop Shae Lillywhite doubled with two outs and later scored to make the score 3-1 in favor of the Blue Sox.

Shipp came out in the top of the 2nd to retire the side on nine pitches, including nine strikes and two strikeouts. In the bottom of the 2nd, the Hearts scored six runs to make the score 8-3. Second baseman Jenn Zielke led off with a single and was immediately followed by another single by first baseman Lou Binet. Runs were scored on a single by center fielder Julia Watson, a double by third baseman Kelly Manzie-Novotny, a triple by right fielder Tahlia McDonald, and a single by catcher Mihoko Ikari.

Kitt Allenser came on to pitch for the Hearts in the top of the third inning. She walked the first three batters and then retired the next three in a row. In the process South Bend plated two runs, closing the gap to 8-5 in favor of the Hearts. The Hearts answered back again with a lead-off double by Korean sensation DH Hyangmi Ahn who later scored to make the tally 9-5.

In the 4th innings, Allenser retired the Blue Sox on 12 pitches, including 9 strikes and 2 strikeouts. In the bottom of the inning, Both Kelly Manzie-Novotny and Shae Lillywhite scored thanks to a double by Lillywhite and a single by Mihoko Ikari. After four innings the Hearts led 11-5.

In the fifth, Jacinda Barclay took the hill and gave up one run on three singles. The Hearts scored a further two runs in the fifth, highlighted by a Jenn Zielke double. In the sixth, the Hearts scored two more, highlighted by singles by Hyangmi Ahn and Julie Watson. DH Hyangmi Ahn came on to pitch and close out the game.

Final score: Aussie Hearts 15 – South Bend Blue Sox 5

Between games the Hearts team received a special presentation from the Novotny family in attendance.

2nd Game vs. the Chicago Gems

In the top of the first, the visiting Hearts scored one run on singles by center fielder Tahlia McDonald and DH Eryn Shipp. In the bottom of the first, the Chicago Gems answered with a run on two singles against Hearts starting pitcher Jenn Zielke. The score stood at 1-1.

In the top of the 2nd, the Hearts came back with another run on singles by first baseman Lou Binet and right fielder Julia Watson. Pitcher Zielke shutout the Gems in the bottom of the inning while giving up a single and a walk. The Hearts held the lead 2-1.

In the third, the Hearts were held hitless while Zielke shut down the Gems again. In the fourth, the Hearts scored two runs on singles by Lou Binet, right fielder Jacinda Barclay, and Julia Watson, running their lead to 4-1. In the bottom of the 4th, new pitcher Sam Ostrom shut down the Gems, striking out one and giving up a walk. Third baseman Hyangmi Ahn made a acrobatic catch of a high, blazing line drive to end the inning and preserve the 4-1 lead.

In the top of the first, shortstop Shae Lillywhite led off with a single and later scored. Next Eryn Shipp reached on a throwing error while second baseman Kitt Allenser and Jacinda Barclay walked. All later scored on a double by catcher Mihoko Ikari and a single by Julia Watson. In the bottom of the inning, pitcher Ostrom continued to hold the Gems scoreless while giving up two walks and a double while striking out one. The Hearts led 8-1 after five digs.

In the sixth, the Hearts put the game away with five further runs to make the score 13-1. Highlights included a bunt single by Tahlia McDonald, a monster triple to center by Korean sensation Hyangmi Ahn, and single by Kitt Allenser. Ellen Young came in to close out the game in the bottom of the 6th, retiring the side on 7 pitches with two strikeouts.

Final score- Aussie Hearts 13 – Chicago Gems 1

After the game, the Hearts drove to the South Bend Center for History to view an exhibit of the All America Girls Professional Baseball League made famous by the movie "A League of Their Own". Both South Bend and Kenosha were original cities in the league.

Beside viewing an amazing collection of photos and other documents, the Aussie Hearts got to spend time with two All-American players- Louise Arnold and Betsy Jochume. It was an inspiration and joyful time for the Hearts players...and the two All-American Girls.

Particularly this emotion was powerful for Hyangmi Ahn who was inspired by the All-Americans and the movie to start a women's league in South Korea in 2004.

Later, All-American Ms. Arnold led a beautiful rendition of the All-American girls song and promised to come to Kenosha next weekend to support the team.

SBK08 - Sat, June 28

Day four of the tour and the second day of the 2nd annual Can-Am Women's Baseball Tournament in South Bend, Indiana.

A dramatic outburst of rain threatened to derail the day's games, as the Hearts were scheduled to again face the Chicago Gems and South Bend Blue Sox. The skies opened up at about 830 and delayed the 9am game by an hour and a half before the field was fixed. Much thanks to official Aussie Hearts groundkeeper Peter Binet for helping the locals to get the field safe and ready to play.

The game started well for the Hearts as young Western Australia native Jacinda Barclay dazzled the Chicago Gems, holding them hitless for the first two very quick innings. The Hearts offense helped her cause with a five-run outburst in top of the 3rd inning.

Young California girl Kitt Allenser battled against tough calls to yield two runs in the bottom of the third. Though the Hearts came back with an answer in the top of the 4th to make the score 6-3. Calgary, Ontario native Sam Ostrom came on to throw two scoreless innings in the fourth and fifth. Then head coach Narelle Gosstray came on to get her scheduled tune-up work and promptly threw a scoreless sixth.

Unfortunately, the wheels fell off in the bottom of the 7th as the Chicago Gems came back to load the bases on a tough-call walk, two singles. Next, a high pop-up a bleeder single fell just between shortstop Shae Lillywhite and leftfielder Holly Hafner to allow the Gems to score their fifth run.

Next a sacrifice fly allowed the Gems to plate another run, making the score 6-5. Unfortunately a missed cutoff throw allowed the Gems runners to advance runner to 2nd and 3rd base. A quick warm-up by pitching coach Simone Wearne and she was in for an unscheduled appearance. Wearne promptly got the first batter to pop up. Then former American team player Jennifer Hughes hit a double to win the game for the Gems by a score of 7-6.

In the 2nd game against the South Bend Blue Sox, the Hearts came back with a vengeance. Melbourne native Simone Wearne started and threw two scoreless innings. Sydney-sider Ellen Young followed with two scoreless innings and Korean Hyangmi Ahn closed out the game with a scoreless fifth. Why only five innings? Well, the Hearts scored six runs in the first, six runs in the second, on the way to a 21-0 victory over the Blue Sox.

In round-robin play, the Hearts finished tied with the Chicago Gems at 3 wins and 1 loss. The two teams will face off in the Can-Am grand final at 9am on Sunday morning. The Gems are the defending runner-up from the 2007 U.S. national championships.

Jacinda Barclay will get the nod on the hill, pitching in her first international grand final. Earlier this year in Hong Kong, Barclay pitched a strong preliminary final game in a 5-3 loss to a tough Far East Bloomers team from Japan.

SBK08 - Sun, June 29

Because of the long rain delay, the Hearts took an unscheduled, private tour of the Notre Dame campus to pass the time. Ironically, the Chicago Gems

player who had the game-winning double yesterday is a graduate of the university and an old friend who attended the Manzie-Novotny wedding.

Game delayed 4.5 hours by heavy rain.

Hearts take an unscheduled, private tour of the Notre Dame campus to pass the time. Ironically, the Chicago Gems player who had the game-winning double yesterday is a graduate of the university and an old friend who attended the Manzie-Novotny wedding.

Continuing drizzly rain makes the game look doubtful. But after photos in front of legendary Touchdown Jesus and prayer in the world-famous Notre Dame Grotto, the sun comes out less than an hour later.

The 9am game begins at 1:30pm. And Jacinda Barclay arrives! Five innings, 55 pitches for her first international grand final. A determined Ellen Young goes the final two innings. Great team batting by Lou Binet and an acrobatic catch by Shae Lillywhite are highlights of the game.

The Aussie Hearts win 2-0! The win comes over the Chicago Gems, the runner-up at the 2007 U.S. nationals.

The Hearts return home to say goodbye to their host families and receive a sudden call that makes them rush out of South Bend and into Chicago before the sun sets. An old family friend has called and invited the team for a private, behind the scenes tour of legendary MLB park- Wrigley Field.

At Wrigley Field, the Hearts sit in the Cubs dugout, take pictures on the field, and a special ceremony is held in the press box to award Jacinda Barclay the game ball. Welcome to the club Jacinda, you have won your first international grand final!

It has been a legendary day in the annals of Aussie Hearts history. Check back again in the next 24 hours to see extensive pictures from today.

We were in the process of packing up and saying goodbye to our host families when we got the call. An old friend, we'll call her Madam K, tells us she has organized a private tour of historic Wrigley Field.

The ballpark, built in 1914, is the oldest in the National League and sits in a residential area on the north side of Chicago. It is home to the Chicago Cubs.

So we get the surprise call for the tour and have to drop everything to high tail it out of South Bend. Many players had to miss their showers so we could quickly make the 2.5 hour drive from South Bend to Chicago.

Once at Wrigley Field, we were allowed on the field for pictures. We got to sit in the Cubs dugout and hang out in the on-deck circle. After that, we

headed up to the upper deck and took in the great city views from the Cub's press box.

Next we heading down underneath the outfield bleachers and emerged near the beautiful scoreboard. Lastly, back on the field, we all took pictures in the left field corner back in front of the yellow 355 foot marker.

This 1.5 hour, private, Sunday night tour was the icing on the cake to a wonderful day: A very special day becomes legendary. Special thanks to our good friend Mary!

SBK08 - Mon, June 30

Last night we arrived into Chicago in a rush for a surprise, private on-field tour of Wrigley Field, home of the Chicago Cubs. We went in the dugouts, on the field, and in the press box.

What else could compare?

Well, how about a watching a Chicago White game in the owners luxury box Diamond Suite?

Another great day for the team. After sleeping in and going to the Taste of Chicago festival in the afternoon, the team headed on the train to U.S. Cellular Field (formerly Comiskey Park).

The women thought they were going to watch the game from the top of the upper deck. They were pleased that we could at least provide them an elevator to relieve walking up the long ramps.

You can guess the looks on their surprised faces when that elevator led them to the luxury box!

Tuesday we have a friendly game and then off to Kenosha.

SBK08 - Tues, July 1

After an amazing night in Chicago, it was on the road on Tuesday morning for a non-tournament tune-up game. The opponents were the Chicago Pioneers, a team the Hearts will face in Kenosha on July 5.

It was a rocky start as Eryn Shipp gave up six runs in the first inning before Kelly Manzie-Novotny came on to settle things down and get out of the

inning. Manzie-Novotny also held the Pioneers scoreless in the 2nd and 3rd.

On offense, the Heart battle back with three runs in the 2nd innings and two runs in the 4th inning. This made the score 6-5 in favor of the Pioneers.

Then young Holly Hafner came on to pitch for her first outing of the tour. Hafner held the Pioneers scoreless for both the 4th and 5th innings. During that time the Hearts scored four more runs to take the lead by a score of 9-6. This put Holly in line for her first pitching victory in an international friendly game.

But first the relief pitchers had to do their job. Kitt Allenser came in to pitch a scoreless fifth inning and Sam Ostrom pitched the bottom of the 7th for the save and to seal the win.

Final score: Aussie Hearts 9 - Chicago Pioneers 6

From the game, the Hearts headed up to Kenosha to settle in with host families for the next week.

BK08 - Wed, July 2

There's no place like home...at least for Aussie Hearts general manager Rob Novotny. Historic Simmons Field is the place where he has been playing baseball for twenty years, many years with the beloved Kenosha Kings.

The Hall of Fame Classic will start on Wednesday at Simmons and will feature teams from Boston, Nashua, Washington, and Chicago, as well as the Hearts. The tournament will mark a rededication of the field to the women of the All-American Girls Baseball League (AAGPBL) who once played there from 1948-1951. Many of the former players will be there for ceremony.

For all involved with the Aussie Hearts, it was a thrill to have our first workout as a team on the historic Simmons diamond. The team will continue with a youth clinic tomorrow.

SBK08 - Thur, July 3

Another day at Simmons Field. Today the Aussie Hearts had a light workout and conducted a youth clinic for local Kenosha girls. A great time was had by all.

The biggest highlight of the day was the arrival of All-American legend Jeneane Lesko to once again join the Aussie Hearts coaching staff. Jeneane

pitched for the Grand Rapids Chicks in 1953 and 1954, helping the team win the championship in '53. After the AAGPBL ended, she barnstormed the USA with a group of league all-stars playing against men's teams in 1955 and 1956. After that she toured France on a motor scooter and later joined the LPGA tour. Professionally, Jeneane also spend many years as a school teacher. Her energy is still amazing. Hope you enjoy the photos of our dear friend and coach.

Another highlight of the day was the chance to reconnect with our old friend Sammy Kane who starred as Amanda in the recent remake of "The Bad News Bears." Sammy pitched against the Hearts juniors in San Francisco in 2005 in the first-ever international junior girls baseball game. These days Sammy is in Kenosha trying out for Team USA with the hope of going to the World Cup in Japan this August. In the midst of her preparation, Sammy was very kind to spend a moment talking to the young girls at the clinic and giving them autographed pictures. Thank you Sammy Kane.

All in all a great day teaching a wonderful group of kids at the clinic. Afterwards the Hearts stuck around to watch Team USA trials before getting together for a team dinner in the evening.

Also, on a fun and highly coincidental note- While having a meeting at a local establishment to pick the starting lineup, the coaching staff happened to meet a man who was the son of the AAGPBL Kenosha Comets general manager in the 1940s. Highly interesting.

We are up at 530am tomorrow to face New England is the 800am tournament opener.

SBK08 - Fri, July 4

Game started at 8am and finished at 11:45am.

A tough loss for the Aussie Hearts today.

6-5 in 13 innings.

By the end of the game, hundreds of people were in attendance.

Our opponent was the 4-time defending U.S. national champions from New England. They have 11 players who were part of the previous Team USA national team.

Pitchers Simone Wearne, Ellen Young, Sam Ostrom, and Kelly Manzie-Novotny did a great job pitching out of a number of difficult situations. And the defense turned in some gems. The offense did well, but also did miss a

couple chances to put the game away in earlier innings.

Apologies for the short write-up, but we have to prepare for another game tonight at 6:30pm.

After the game was a wonderful ceremony to rededicate Simmons Field to the All-American Girls of the AAGPBL. It was moving ceremony where over a dozen players were recognized and a beautiful plaque was unveiled.

SBK08 - Sat, July 5

The time with the All-American Girls and our host families were the quiet things that made this experience very special. Please enjoy some of the photos.

Special thanks to the Pittmans and Karle's in South Bend. In Kenosha, we will never forget the Zorn's, the Koepsell's, the Novotny's, as well as Nita's family. On Saturday evening, six former All-American Girls drove from Simmons Field to the Novotny family home to celebrate and support the ladies from Australia. Some of their legendary All-American magic was definitely in the air. It was an honour to be in their presence.

Subsequently, the members of the Aussie Hearts have signed up to become associate members of the AAGPBL Players Association. Ballplayers have to support each other!

SBK08 - Sun, July 6

On Sunday in the grand final of the Hall of Fame Classic, Jacinda Barclay took the mound for her second international grand final in eight days. Opposing her were the mighty New England Women's Red Sox- the top seed of the tournament. The Women's Red Sox have been the best team in America since 2004. Since that year, the Women's Red Sox have won every U.S. national championship and every tournament they have played in.

The visiting Hearts came out slugging in the 1st inning of the rematch. A leadoff single by shortstop Shae Lillywhite, a walk by third-baseman Kelly Manzie-Novotny, and a single by right fielder Tahlia McDonald loaded the bases. First baseman Lou Binet then broke the scoring open with a two-run single. Right fielder Narelle Gosstray added another RBI on a fielder's choice. The fourth run of the inning scored on an error.

In the 5th inning Tahlia McDonald smacked a two-run double, driving in Lillywhite and Manzie-Novotny who had each just singled. This made the score 6-0. New England answered with their first run against Barclay in the

bottom of the 5th inning to make the score 6-1.

In the 7th inning, McDonald answered the New England run and drove in her third RBI of the game with a deep sacrifice fly to send Lillywhite across the plate and make the score 7-1. On the day Manzie-Novotny had three hits, while Lillywhite, McDonald, and Binet each had two hits. McDonald drove in three runs, Binet two runs, and Gosstray drove in one run.

Young Jacinda Barclay acquitted herself well on the hill. Though not quite in possession of her best stuff, she showed poise in battling for five innings. Barclay gave up one run (earned) on four hits, with two strikeouts and two walks. Ellen Young threw one inning of scoreless relief. Sam Ostrom threw a scoreless 7th inning to seal the win. The game ended on the second Aussie Hearts double play of the day.

It was a convincing 7-1 Hall of Fame Classic grand final win for the Aussie Hearts over the four-time defending U.S. national champions. Also, it was an emotional homecoming to Kenosha, Wisconsin for organizer Rob Novotny. Both Novotny and head coach Narelle Gosstray wish to thank all those who have been supporting the team every step of the way.

SBK08 - Mon, July 7

An easier day today. Time to relax and enjoy each other's company.

After a sleep-in, we gathered at the Jelly Belly Warehouse to get some bargains on the world's largest variety of jelly bean flavors. While there were many tasty flavors, the notable flavor was the "vomit" jelly bean that Jacinda used to upset the taste buds of many unsuspecting teammates.

Also we gave away the team awards. While acknowledging that every player had a role and did it well, we did name four award winners.

-Best Pitcher- Jacinda Barclay

-Best Hitter- Lou Binet

-Gold Glove- Mihoko Ikari

-MVP- Shae Lillywhite

Finally at Jelly Belly, we said goodbye to Kitt and Patricia Allenser as they headed back to California. Joining them was our All-American legend Jeneane Lesko who had to fly back to Washington. There were some baseballs left to be signed and Lesko signed them like pro as she walked to the car.

Next the team headed up to Milwaukee. First was a brewery tour at the Lakeside Brewery on the muddy Milwaukee River. Quote of the day from our brewery host- "What do you expect for \$6?"

At last we made it to Miller Park, home of the Milwaukee Brewers. No surprises this time, we were in the upper deck with \$8 tickets. But before the game, the Hearts got to experience the Wisconsin tradition of tailgating (barbecuing) in the parking lot before the game. Indeed many players got most of their food and drink needs taken care of by friendly the friendly 'Cheeseheads' of Wisconsin.

Unfortunately, the Brewers lost 4-3 despite a late inning comeback. Also, the roof amazingly closed without us even noticing. Rain showers followed us home.

On our last night together, a fun time was had by all just being together.