



## The SASA's is Proud to Salute Three Olympians



With Saskatoon being so well known for producing outstanding men's players and teams through the SASA's 50 year history, it's understandable if it appears at times that the women have not enjoyed the same success. That could not be farther from the truth as they have contributed 11 of the 21 Canadian titles won by SASA teams including the last 4. SASA's women's teams have produced countless outstanding players including three who have played in the pinnacle event of amateur athletics, the Olympic Games.



Jacki Nichol was of the first of the three to go to the games. She was born in Swift Current in 1972 and moved with her family from Calgary to Saskatoon in 1978. Her first experiences on the diamond came with a T-ball team when she was five years old and later played for

Fairhaven Community teams. At an early age she soon became regular at Canadian tournaments, first with Lorne Lazars at the Midget nationals, five years in a row with the Lazars at the juniors and seven times with the Saskatoon DBJ team at the senior nationals. Jacki is a graduate of E. D. Feehan High School, where she was the Basketball team's leading scorer and also played for the Basketball Saskatchewan team at a World Youth tournament and the 1989 Jeux Canada Games in Saskatoon.

Nichol holds the distinction of being the only player in Softball Canada history to play on two National Junior teams as she started on the team as a 15 year old in 1987. Jacki joined the Canadian National Women's Softball team in 1998, for which she won a silver medal at the 1999 Pan-American Games in Winnipeg and was shortstop and captain of the Canadian team at the 2000 Summer Olympics and the 2002 World Championships. In Sydney the team ended up a disappointing 8th, winning only one game and losing six, four of which were by one run.

At the end of her career Jacki was the shortstop and captain who got a big thrill, being able to play for Canada when the ISF World Women's Championships came to Saskatoon in 2002, her last

year of competitive softball. Upon her retirement from the national team she told softball Canada, "My years with the National Team have been absolutely amazing... one of my most precious memories is of competing in the 2000 Olympics. It had always been a dream of mine to compete for my country at the Olympic Games and with the support of my family and friends and everyone involved in the sport of Softball, I was able to realize my dream. Not only has playing for the National Team allowed me to compete as an elite athlete, it has also provided me with valuable tools and skills that I have used in school, in my career and in my life."

She has certainly put those tools to good use as presently Jacki is a doctor with a specialty in pain management and physical rehabilitation.

The second of the three Olympians; Erin Cumpstone played in two Olympic Games. Cumpstone was raised on softball. Her mother played competitive softball in Saskatoon and her involvement had a profound influence on both her daughters. Erin took up the sport at the age of seven. She played her minor ball in the city's eastside and moved into the Midget Selects program playing in the SASA top division. A number of years later she was to return to the SASA where she joined Jacki Nichol on DBJ Leasing. Upon graduating from Holy Cross High School she moved out west on scholarship to play in the Greater Vancouver area. Cumpstone played her university career with Simon Fraser University from 1999 to 2003 capturing a bronze medal at the NAIA Nationals in 2000, a silver medal in 2001 and a gold medal in



2003. She was also selected to the NAIA All-Tournament Team in 2001 as well as the NAIA 2nd Team All American in 2003. After playing her final game for SFU in 2003, Cumpstone returned to the university and completed her degree in Arts.

As the starting catcher at the 2004 Olympics in Athens, she helped the team to secure an impressive fifth place finish losing 1-0 to Australia in a game that would have given them a shot for a medal. Four years later, Cumpstone came even closer to winning an Olympic medal when the team lost 5-3 to Australia in the bronze medal game. As a 29 year old Cumpstone helped Canada win the bronze medal at the 12th International Softball Federation Women's World Championship in Caracas, Venezuela in 2010. The medal for Canada was its second in the history of the championship, which started in 1965. It was really their first as a National Team Program, as Canada won a silver medal in 1978 in El Salvador with the Vancouver Doc's Blues, the last club to represent Canada at the world championship before the national team was formed.

Erin has been very busy with hockey and especially ringette. She made the Canadian Ringette Team that participated in the World Championships in Finland in November, 2010. She continues to stay active in softball as she has worked on Softball Canada's coaching manuals and is a Pool Coach for the Women's national team coaching staff.

The third Olympian has an interesting connection to the other two. Although 9 years younger than Jacki Nichol, Dione Meier has similar roots in softball as she grew up playing softball on the city's west side and is a graduate of E.D. Feehan High School. She has even a stronger connection with Cumpstone who she played minor ball against in her younger years as a Phantom when Cumpstone was a Hustler and spent some time together in the Midge Selects program. After taking different paths out of high school, they eventually met up together as pitcher and catcher on the 2008 Olympic Team.

Unlike Cumpstone who played college ball in Canada, Dione pursued the dream of going to an American college. Meier attended a junior college in Galveston, Texas, where she led the team to a conference title and was named to the National Junior College Athletic Association All-America first team. She then went off to a four-year NCAA school in Louisiana where she rewrote the Nicholls and

Southland Conference record book by fanning 341 batters in just 223 innings. She played a season in Australia, followed by a year in Italy and then another season down under.

"After that I came back home. I just wanted to give it the last shot to see if I could get myself onto the national team," says Meier. The national team came calling after she was selected as the top pitcher and most valuable player at the 2006 Canadian championship while playing for the Delta, B.C., Sunfire. She remembers vividly, waiting impatiently in her room for the call from National Team Coach Lori Sippel and the excitement of being able to share the good news with her mom who was waiting outside the door when she got the call. In the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, China, Meier joined Cumpstone in the disappointment of losing the bronze medal. Her highlights of the Olympics included walking into the stadium in front of over 90,000 people for the opening ceremonies singing O Canada and shutting down the Americans in her only start before the game was postponed due to rain.

Meier presently is a member of the Saskatoon Police force. Still actively playing softball in the SASA where she has taken on a leadership role with the Saskatoon Outlaws, where she pitched them to the 2013 Western Canadian Senior B Championship.

