

RR75 – Robson Ranch’s First Ever Over 75 Softball Tournament Team

It all began in November of last year when Mick Calverley was asked to explore the feasibility of forming a Robson Ranch Tournament Team for those over age 75. With the help of others, that initiative began. We received from the RRSA board a list of all RRSA members over the age 75, added a few players to the list who had played in previous years, and then reached out to everyone. Eleven players said yes and two said ‘maybe’ depending on injuries. Sadly, it was not going to be enough. We cancelled our organizational meeting.

Out of nowhere, the Senior Softball Association said for this year only, we could add up to five players who were aged 74. We found four, asked those players and bingo, we had enough, just barely.

We asked Larry Studinski to manage us; he said yes. More bingo. We held our organizational meeting on January 30. We decided to give it ago for 2023 playing in just one tournament. Not just any tournament. That tournament was to be the Texas State Championships in Grapevine the first week in May.

Som every Wednesday in February, March, and April, weather permitting, we practiced at the Field of Dreams. Manager Larry shaped and molded our group of players into a softball team. Our roster of fifteen players can be seen below. We had some experienced tournament players who played on the RR65 and RR70 teams of the past and some players who enjoyed their softball playing in the Co-ed and Seniors league but never dreamed of playing in out-of-town tournaments.

Come May 2nd we were ready. We organized into carpools, 2-4 players per car; Jerry Bennett borrowed balls from the RR70; we met at the batting cage at Oak Grove Park in Grapevine, two hours before the historic first game of a 75+ Tournament team from Robson Ranch.

Our first game was against a team from Kansas City; they called themselves the KC Antiques. What a great name for a team at this age. Coach Larry’s philosophy, supported by all, was that in every game, we would bat everyone but one player. That one player was held in reserve in case we suffered an injury. And how did we do that first ever game for our neighborhood 75+ guys playing a team from metropolitan Kansas City? We won the game, 19-16! You should have been there. We were just plain giddy as we took the field in the last inning, leading 19-7 knowing we were three outs away from winning our first game ever. What seemed like an hour later we were one out away, leading 19-16, and not feeling so giddy. But by golly, we prevailed, winning 19-16.

We turned right around and played our second game, this time against a team from around Conroe, TX, just north of Houston called the Texas Knight Riders. It was a nip and

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tuck game, with us tying the game in the top of the 7th, but the Knight Riders scored a run in the bottom of the 7th to win 14-13. They could hit the ball.

On Wednesday, our carpools met at the batting cage at 0700 for an 0800 first pitch against the San Antonio 80’s. We went right from hitting in the cage to hitting in the game and pounded out a 16-6 convincing win. Like the previous day, everyone contributed either on offense, defense or both. We felt good entering into the double elimination phase of the tournament where you keep playing until you lose twice.

And who did we draw in the first round? The Texas Knight Riders who beat us in pool play. We avenged that loss with a convincing 16-12 victory to advance in the winner’s bracket to play once again, the Kansas City Antiques. The Antiques sent to the mound a pitcher whose had style and a variety of pitches none of us had ever seen. He had a deliberate, herkie jerky wind up and threw a knuckler that jumped all around and a curve ball that broke the width of the plate. Amazing. While the top half of the order struggled somewhat, especially early, the bottom of the order delivered big time. And our bottom half was made up mostly of first-time tournament players. They came through to lead us to an 18-13 victory to move us into the championship game the next day.

We arrived at the ballpark, to await the play among the one loss teams to see who would advance to take us on in the Championship game. While we were able to beat the Antiques twice in the tournament, we were not exactly looking forward to seeing the herkie jerky guy again. And then there were the Knight Riders who could really hit and had beaten once already in pool play. Those two teams played each other in the finals of the elimination bracket and the Knight Riders beat em.

So here we go. Our new RR75 team, playing in its sixth game in three days, was going to take on the Knight Riders, who had beaten us earlier in the tournament. Your team won 17-9, our most convincing win of the tournament. Wow.

Texas State Champions, 75AA Division. A record of 5-1. As Howard Cosell would say, ‘How about that!

One more note. You know what the real highlight of this adventure has been? The friendship, the bond, the camaraderie among the quality of men we have at Robson Ranch. Well done, RR75.

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RR75 Team Roster		
JERRY	BENNETT	
RANDY	BREWER	
MICK	CALVERLEY	
MIKE	CONLEY	
LEE	FIGUERIEDO	Injured, DL
BRUCE	HOREFTIS	
SHIELDS	JONES	
KEN	LILLEY	
MYRON	MCKINNEY	
PAUL	NEAL	
KELLY	PETRE	
TERRY	SCHOLZE	
WILLIAM	SMILEY	
JOHN	THOMPSON	
WELDON	WALLACE	
SCOTT	WILSON	
CLYDE	ZIEGLER	
LARRY	STUDINSKI	Manager