

NATIONAL AMPUTEE BASEBALL TEAM PLACES 2ND IN 2018 MSBL WORLD SERIES

by Dennis Turner, Louisville Slugger

The LS Warriors National Amputee Baseball Team played five doubleheaders in five days to finish in second place at the 2018 Men's Senior Baseball League (MSBL) / Men's Adult Baseball League (MABL) World Series Tournament held in Phoenix, Arizona, the week of October 14-19, 2018. The annual MSBL/MABL World Series Tournament is by far the most prestigious and competitive adult baseball tournament and just finished hosting their 31st World Series.

Louisville Slugger knew we were thinking outside the box when we, along with a number of other national companies and individuals, including MSBL, agreed to sponsor and support this team wearing and playing in the latest prosthetic technology. Our vision was correct and right on target when this team of extremely talented and competitive amputee baseball players made up of U.S. military active-duty personnel, veterans, Wounded Warriors and current and former college amputee ball players exceeded their rehabilitation goals and our expectations by reaching the championship finals.



LS Warriors

The MSBL/MABL is the premier amateur baseball league for adults 18 years of age and older. Founded in 1988, it is the fastest-growing adult baseball organization in the country. The league has 325 local affiliates, 3,200 teams and 45,000 members who play organized amateur baseball in local leagues, 30 regional tournaments and six national tournaments.

The LS Warriors Team was hand-selected in 2018 by former Major League Baseball (MLB) players Curtis Pride and Kevin Mench during an open tryout. The selected players live throughout the country and practice and play in local leagues to keep in shape and enhance their baseball skills in between national tournaments. They also only play against able-bodied baseball players.

Upon arriving in the Valley of the Sun on Saturday, October 13, the LS Warriors assembled for a team meeting Saturday evening held by head coach Curtis Pride and general manager David Van Sleet to outline the team logistics, game plans and expectations for the week. On Sunday, October 14, a team practice was held to prepare the LS Warriors for a grueling schedule of pool play baseball games. Please keep in mind, this week in the Phoenix area was only the third time the LS Warriors National Amputee Baseball Team had played together.

The Warriors were placed in Bracket 1 of the three-bracket Cactus Division consisting of 23 teams who all had doubleheaders scheduled Monday, October 15 through Wednesday, October 17 in the pool play round. After completing these six competitive games in the initial round, the LS Warriors had a three-win, three-loss record, averaging seven runs a game, which was good enough to qualify for the MSBL playoffs as a wild-card team due to their three wins and runs allowed total.

With the single-elimination playoffs starting on Thursday, October 18, there was the unthinkable message going around the MSBL World Series Tournament that the LS Warriors National Amputee Baseball Team had qualified for the playoffs despite playing six doubleheaders, all nine innings long with three-hour game time limits and 90-foot bases in three intense sun-filled days. The LS Warriors were elated to hear they qualified for the playoffs and were ready for the challenge, hoping their momentum from Wednesday evening would carry over to Thursday morning.



For their first-round playoff game, the LS Warriors drew the Chicago Orioles, who finished in second place in pool play in Bracket 3 and automatically qualified for the playoffs based on their overall record. The game was no contest as the hot-hitting Warriors took their first playoff ever, winning the game, 23-1.

For their second playoff game scheduled for Thursday afternoon, the playoff quarterfinals schedule paired the LS Warriors against the undefeated and top-seeded Bracket 1 winners, the extremely competitive and heavily favored Austin Angels. It was in this game that the Warriors displayed their finest effort in the tournament, defeating the talent-laden Angels, 14-4.

Advancing to the tournament semifinals on Friday morning, it would be the LS Warriors' ninth game in five days. The LS Warriors National Amputee Baseball Team was now set to play the Diamond Dream Mustangs from the Washington, DC Metro Area, who were the Cactus Division Bracket 3 winners in pool play. Continuing their excellent defensive play, the Warriors won this semifinal game over the Mustangs, 9-6, to advance to the Cactus Division Finals.

On Friday afternoon, October 19, the physically exhausted LS Warriors National Amputee Baseball Team was set to play its 10th game in five days against the Hawaii Islanders in the MSBL World Series Championship Finals. The Warriors took an early lead and maintained that advantage through six complete innings before running out of gas and hitting the wall, losing 6-2 to the Islanders.

Warriors player Carlo Adame said, "I've been playing ball with a handful of these guys missing limbs for years going back to the game of softball and we have yet to win a championship. To even play in the MSBL World Series Championship Final is amazing in its own right. But if we were to win a championship, it would be so satisfying, especially with the group of guys we have. We all inspire each other and our goal is to inspire everyone else even more."

Throughout the MSBL World Series, the LS Warriors National Amputee Baseball Team played exceptional defense with at least two plays in the field that were worthy of ESPN Top 10 plays of the day by Carlo Adame and Dan Williams. But it was definitely the offense behind the consistently strong hitting of Derrick Victor, Mike Rose, Carlo Adame and Stephen Lutz that powered the Warriors. On the mound, the Warriors were led by pitchers Matt Kinsey, Mike Rose, DJ Vanderwerf and Jose Quiroz.

"It was an extreme honor to coach the LS Warriors in the MSBL World Series," said head coach Curtis Pride. "Quite honestly, I didn't expect us to go deep in the playoffs because of our lack of pitching depth. I was extremely impressed by the way our guys stepped up and played their very best baseball for 10 games in five days. It was their heart, determination, passion and, most importantly, their strong belief in themselves as a team that really bonded them and carried the team to the championship game. I could not be more proud of this team's accomplishments. They really lived up to their team name. In every way, they played like warriors!"



According to team general manager David Van Sleet, "I have been around dozens of amputee ball players the past few years, but it was simply remarkable to see this team of unprecedented athletic baseball playing amputees come together and play five doubleheader baseball games in five days and reach the championship finals of the MSBL World Series. I am honestly amazed by this team and what they accomplished."

As the only hardball playing team of amputees known to exist, we at Louisville Slugger are simply amazed by and thoroughly impressed with this LS Warriors National Amputee Baseball Team and can't wait to see them play in their next national MSBL Tournament. Plus, we are always searching for that next best amputee baseball player to join this team!