

A TEAM EFFORT AT ITS FINEST MOMENT

Our **Florida Half Century** tournament team, **Acousti**, is an amazing group of players that are all friends who just have great chemistry together as a team, very few superstars, but just a good group of talented players. **Teamwork is the name of the game...**

A little history here, in **January 2013** our team was ranked team **#41**, out of the **41 teams in the Florida Half Century 60's Tournament League**. As of the **February 2014** tournament, we had risen to team **#15, which boosted us 26 positions of ranking in 13 months**, and put us into one of the top brackets in the whole FHC league.

With team manager **Terry McIlrath** being out of town for this tournament, leadership went to myself, assistant manager **Dan Deratany**, who took over the helm for the February tournament. We started the tournament without three of our top hitters and starting position players, this put us into a disadvantage situation right from the beginning.

The tournament was played on **February 15TH & 16TH** and our opening game was against the top team in our bracket, **Classic Logos**. Still having a good solid team left, we managed to beat them handily **19-13**. After sitting a game, our next opponent was the **Silver Rays**, a very solid tournament championship team, who had already won their first game. Needless to say **they run ruled us 26-5 in four innings**, and seemed to dash our hopes of the possibility of winning the championship. Basically demoralized by that loss, we headed home for the day to return Sunday to finish the tournament.

Already missing three of our top hitters, I received word, after the games Saturday that yet another top hitter, and previous batting champion, would not be able to play in the final games Sunday. This was hard to take, since **now four key players wouldn't be able to play**, which severely reduced our fire power...Wait, it gets better... Now, while trying to figure out my strategy for the Sunday games, I get yet another phone call from the team's power hitter and our third baseman, saying that his back blew out on him and he wouldn't be able to play Sunday, **that makes five key players missing** and you can understand just how the frustration was working on me. **Now missing our first baseman, second baseman, third baseman, and two good outfielders**, and all great hitters, I said, well at least we still have the best shortstop in the whole league in **Dave Carden**, so defensively I figured we could still hold our own. Well, guess what, at **5:30 Sunday morning I got a message from Dave saying that he was having an Achilles problem and could hardly walk, let alone play**. Well, as you can imagine now I was just numb at that point. Now I was **missing six of our top hitters and starting position players, including the whole infield**. What to do...what to do... I took a deep breath and nearly gave up all hope of us being able to play, let alone win the championship Sunday. Being so shorthanded, I called in a reserve player, **Stan Levine** an hour before we were to leave for the games; thank goodness he was available to play. This now gave us a team to put on the field to at least make a descent showing.

When we arrived at the field on Sunday morning we were shocked to see that the team that had just destroyed us 26-5, the day before, had already lost both of their games on Sunday, **taking them out of contention for the championship**. At that point **I realized that we were in control of our own destiny**, all we had to do was win both of our games on Sunday. However, it would have to be against two really tough teams, the **Suncoast Outlaws** and the dreaded **Jax-Max** team from Jacksonville, if we did that we would surely capture the championship, easier said than done. Both teams were 2-1, and just like us, in control of their own destinies. But, of course our team was missing a lot of talent. I gathered the team together and let them know exactly what we were up against. I told them we still had a fighting chance, all we had to do was win both of our games left and we would seal the championship.

This is where the teamwork comes in... We were visitors in our first game against the Suncoast Outlaws, who we had just witnessed slaughtering the team that blew us away the day before, the Silver Rays, now we had to face the **Outlaws**. Being the visitors, we came out swinging, and **in four innings we had 34 hits, and scored 26 runs, and held them to only 4 runs total**, run ruling the Outlaws.

Now things were really getting interesting, again I got the team together before the second game, which would be for the championship, and we knew if we played and hit like we did in the last game that no team would be able to stop us from the championship. The game started quickly and after only four pitches we had gotten three outs on them, and now it was our turn to continue our hitting attack, and that we did. **On eighteen clean hits in the first inning we managed to score fifteen runs**. In the second inning, again on no more than four pitches we had gotten another three outs on them, and then **we continued to batter them by scoring another six runs**, making the score **21-0**, the run rule is a twenty run lead after three innings. All we had to do was allow no more than one run and the game would be over. At this point in the game we realized that our pitcher, **Joe Pavlock was staring a perfect game in the face**. The first batter grounded the ball back to the pitcher for the first out; the next batter hit a hard shot up the middle, where our shortstop, **Ernie Thibodeaux**, made an unbelievable leaping grab of the bounding ball in midfield and facing away from first base managed to throw a strike to **Gary Kolumbus** at first for the second out, I remember left center fielder **Rick Orcutt** yelling to me in leftfield after that play *saying "Dan, I can't believe that play, how in the hell did he even know where first base was from that position"*. **Now, we are only one out away from the championship and a perfect game by our pitcher**. However, the next batter managed to draw a walk, making him their **first base runner of the game and dashing the hopes of the perfect game**. The next batter flew out to right field for the final out, ending the game **21-0**, which meant that **we were the champions, and our pitcher still had a no hit shutout**. That's what I call a team effort, when things were down for us we kicked it in gear and all pulled together as a team, and what a team it is... **Great Tournament Guys!!!**

The hitting stars for this tournament was the whole team; however the following were the standouts for batting average:

1. **Stan Levine** (played Sunday only) **.857**
2. **Charlie Giordano** (played Saturday only) **.833**
3. **Donnie Verner** **.833**
4. **Tony Gennaro** **.750**
5. **Ralph Simon** **.727**
6. **Rick Orcutt** **.727**
7. **Jack Sprunger** **.714**
8. **Dan Deratany** **.667**
9. **Dave Carden** (played Saturday only) **.667**
10. **Jorge Lara** **.625**
11. **Ernie Thibodeaux** **.615**

Other mentionable plays include: In the first game on Saturday **Dan Deratany** made a game ending shoestring catch in left field killing the comeback efforts of the other team and sealing the victory. In the second game on Saturday, new teammate **Roger Jubert** hit the only inside the park homerun of the tournament, in the third game he also had a triple. Other players with triples include **Ernie Thibodeaux 3** triples, **Dave Carden 1**, **Jorge Lara 1**, **Gary Kolumbus 1**, and **Joe Pavlock 1**. On Sunday **we scored 47 runs** in five and a half innings and **gave up only four runs. WHAT A TEAM!!!**