

Softball a Summer Tradition at DuPont

DuPont is a company proud of its traditions. Safety and core values have been a tradition since the company's early days. The corporation boasts a long-standing tradition of offering quarterly dividends to shareholders (DuPont recently announced its 424th consecutive quarterly dividend.). [LINK:

http://vocuspr.vocus.com/VocusPR30/Newsroom/Query.aspx?SiteName=DupontNew&Entity=PRAsset&SF_PRAsset_PRAssetID_EQ=114958&XSL=PressRelease&Cache=False]

Philanthropy and community involvement is another tradition for DuPont. The upcoming annual United Way campaign [LINK:

http://www6.lvs.dupont.com/one_it/United_Way_Resources/UW2010Home.html] is a familiar example for U.S. employees.

For the last 35-plus years, one summertime tradition for some Wilmington-based DuPonters has included participating in DuPont's co-ed summer softball league. According to CR&D's Howard D. Jones, the tireless league commissioner for the last eight years, 261 DuPont employees and contractors are playing in the league this year.

Jones traces the league's inception roughly to 1974. Initially intended for Experimental Station employees only, over time the league has expanded to other sites in the greater Wilmington area, with almost all of the local business units represented by at least a few players.

The number of participating teams has varied over the years, with anywhere from six to 28 teams playing in any particular season. Since 2006, the league has fielded ten or more teams each season. The league is currently self-supporting, and survives by collecting dues from each team that go toward paying umpires and procuring equipment, among other expenses. Some business units choose to provide funding for their teams in the interest of building a bond among co-workers.

In fact, many involved with the league credit it for fostering relationships with colleagues. Lynn Rosario of DuPont Performance Coatings feels the league is "a great morale booster for the employees, and a good way to meet people from other

organizations/sites that many of us would never have a chance to meet.” DuPont Titanium Technology’s Jeff Treml feels the league helps build camaraderie, and offers a chance to meet people that he has previously interacted with in various capacities. The after-hours interaction between co-workers can help develop a sense of teamwork and familiarity that might not exist otherwise.

Playing for a team in the DuPont league offers a bit of a stress release, and a chance to meet “wonderful new people within the DuPont organization,” according to DPEC’s Michael Beck. Sourcing’s Kathy Carilli concurs, adding that she has “made several lasting relationships over the years that go beyond the softball playing field.” League interactions have helped build working relationships, and players take advantage of the opportunities to get to know people around the company in a non-work environment.

Over the years, the league has played games across a host of different settings within New Castle County, including Alapocas, Wilmington Friends School, A.I. DuPont High School, Rockford Park, Ferris School for Boys, and the now-defunct Chestnut Run field, which hosted its last softball game on June 30 of this year. Currently, the league manages to squeeze all of the action in on the Alapocas fields located just behind the Experimental Station.

Like the playing locales and the league itself, team names have evolved over the years. Initially, team names were based on Experimental Station building numbers (E352 Bombers, 356ers, etc.). These days, team names range from uninspired (Pioneer and DuET are two examples) to incredibly creative. The imaginative group from DuPont Legal decided to call themselves “The Outlaws”. “Incognito” was founded in 1986 and is still going strong. Former team member Scott Peacock notes the team named themselves after their preferred look of “bright Hawaiian shirts and large dark cheap sunglasses... The name Incognito seemed to fit, since it was difficult to recognize who was up at the plate.” Dipping into the historical archives reveals other amusing team names, such as the Beauties, Rainbow Riders, and River Rats.

The softball league could not exist without the dedication of Commissioner Jones, who deserves special recognition for his efforts. He has played in the DuPont league for 27 years, and has embraced the role of commissioner. Among his many duties, Jones is responsible for managing the league’s finances, creating the league schedule, securing ump, and reserving fields. On rainy days, Jones voluntarily gives up his own time to fix

up fields so they're playable. Additionally, Jones heads a DuPont basketball league that fielded six teams last year.

The level of competitiveness varies from team to team, but the general feeling around the league is that games feature a good mix of competitiveness, friendliness and fun. Jeff Treml notes, "Compared to other co-ed leagues in (New Castle) County, this is a well run league, and has a fairly laid back approach that is calm and ensures safety."

Being a DuPont league, safety is of course a priority. The league enforces a few peculiar and unique safety rules. For example, there are two home plates – one for the catcher to stand behind, and another for base-runners to use when approaching home plate. There are also two first bases. The purpose of these extra bases is to avoid potential collisions.

The season runs from May through August. This season, 12 teams are competing for the league championship. The playoffs are underway, and games are being played on Tuesday and Thursday nights at the Alapocas fields.

2006 DuET team:



2010 356ers, after the final game at the Chestnut Run field:

