

If Twinsburg isn't the Wiffle Ball capital of America, we're getting close.

One of my favorite parts of our annual tournament is the buzz in the city in the weeks leading up to the event. The pictures we get of people that created home fields in their backyards. Seeing kids playing Wiffle Ball in their yards and at the parks while driving around town. The guy at the metal store calling me to joke that the orders are starting to flock in for 30 x 22 pieces of sheet aluminum. All the kids that flock to Liberty Park on the Friday night before the tournament to practice on the newly created fields. Kids wearing their custom wiffle uniforms around town and to school.

94 teams from five states came to the city this weekend to play in the 4th Annual Twinsburg World Series of Wiffle Ball. This was up from 72 teams a year ago, and from 41 when we started this event four years ago.

In this day and age of kids staring blankly into their iPads, phones, or other electronic devices, helping make Wiffle Ball seem cool to kids (and adults) once again is pretty rewarding. You can get a ball and a bat for \$3. You can play anywhere, don't need a huge yard or 10 kids, can't break anything with the balls or bats, and its fun for kids and adults of all ages, genders, and skill levels. In many ways, Wiffle Ball defines what many of us miss about the way we spent our time as kids.

This year's tournament went so well. The positive comments we received via email, text message, on social media, and in person at the fields this weekend was so cool and overwhelming. There were well over 1,000 people up at Liberty Park this weekend, amidst outstanding weather, with everyone having such a great time. So many people there from our community of Twinsburg, and many others in town getting a chance to see what a great city we live in. Over 50% of this year's players resided outside Twinsburg, which was a first, and speaks to the growth of the tournament. And speaking of out-of-towners, seeing the kids get a total kick out of getting autographed wiffle balls and lessons from the MLW All-Stars (48,000 You Tube subscribers) and WiffleBoy28 (14,000) was also very cool.

The ask from us. Come back and play again. Tell others. And please send any good pictures you got this weekend to me via text message to 440-552-0691. Capturing all the great moments from this event is a big part of it.

Before I go any further, there are some people to thank. The planning and execution of an event of this magnitude is no small task, and takes a village. Jim Porach, as always, did a lot to make sure we were set from a fields and equipment standpoint. Patty Taneja spearheaded a ruthlessly coordinated effort on concessions, which drew rave reviews from the crowd all weekend. All the parents from my soon to be Cooperstown-bound 12U travel baseball team contributed greatly to that effort as well. Katie Sorace and Jackie McHugh coordinated the flyers, t-shirts, pre-party execution, game draws, home run derby and overall marketing of the event. Rick Hollan secured the field paint, paint striper, led the field creation efforts, and him and his son Max helped set up and tear down the fields. Tony Dye put in probably close to 24

hours, entering teams into Tourney Machine, umping games, and being to the go to answer man in the hospitality tent all weekend. Raj Taneja took care of trophy ordering, and also gave so much of himself this weekend at hospitality. Bill Burson and Jason Passek, in addition to helping create the fields, gave a lot of themselves towards the event as they always do. Aaron Davis created and tuned up the backstops. Paul Baird handled signs and sponsors. Bill Tisone coordinated umps. Bob Bryan marketed the event to other youth baseball organizations. Nick Labella picked up the trophies and helped with fields. As did Mason Goodman, Jeff Luca, Art Bailey, Chad Bryant, and Dean Cook.

On to our contest winners from the weekend ...

Best Team Name – Vicious, Delicious, and Wiffle-licious – Carmella Hack, Ella Gorta, Celine Puscian (rest of top five – SWIG and a Miss, Unicorn Toots, One Hit Wonders, Old and Fat)

Long Distance Travelers (Hagerstown, MD) – Sceamin’ Eagles – Chris Carlton, Mark Swaim-Fox, Mike Brady, Greg Deegan

Best Uniforms (kids) – Unicorn Toots – Emmy Occhipinti, Bailey Licht, Brynne Smith, Madison Grams

Best Uniforms (adult) – 4 Ballers – Joe Susa, David Post, Scott Dimuzio, Jason Schmitt

\$200 Dicks Gift Certificate – Chloe Swerbinsky

Overnight Stay at the Hilton Garden Inn – Joe Liotta

Usborne Books Gift Basket – Kevin Gahagan

And our champions, who will forever be enshrined into the Twinsburg World Series of Wiffle Ball Hall of Fame. For the first time ever, all the championship game wins were shutouts, which speaks to the absolutely dominant pitching displayed all weekend by these four champions:

7-10 Age Division

Corn Doggers 4 Hen Men 0

Everyone loves the 7-10 age division, which features by far the biggest crowds, and the action was once again fierce on the smaller fields this year. Our champions were the Corn Doggers from Aurora – Matthew Harrell, Alex Kaczmarek, Brock Habbyshaw, and Logan Sadd, prevailing over the hometown Hen Men from Twinsburg (A.J. Sorace, Truman Goss, Nate Luca, Owen Shinada). The Doggers went 6-0 on the weekend, and allows just six total runs in their four Sunday wins.

11-14 Age Division

Backyard Ballers 8 The Runner Ups 0

Navigating a field of 35 teams in the 11-14 age division is a tall task – this is always our largest age division, with no shortage of talented 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th graders. Hailing from Orange, Bryan Cooper, Trevor Moss, and John Boyle put on a display all weekend, scoring 62 runs in their 6 wins, and throwing shutouts in four of them, including the semis and finals. Their finals opponents, The Runner Ups (Ryan Tierney, Justin Burick, Zach Williams, and Dominic Trivisonno) pulled off an amazing feat – getting all the way to the title game as 6th graders in a division historically dominated by 8th and 9th graders.

15-29 Age Division

Victorious Secrets 11 Quit Your Pitching 0

This was a new age division for is this year based on growth of the tournament, and also in an effort to give hope to those 30 and older. ;-) The level of play in this age division was downright scary for those of us lucky enough to be able to watch it. And check this run that Martin Harrison, Remy Davis, and Remy Rheadon (yes, two players named Remy) of Victorious Secrets pulled off on Sunday: A 5-4 quarterfinal win over last year's 11-14 champs the South Park Cows, a 4-3 semi-final win over last year's 15+ champs and YouTube sensations the MLW All-Stars, and a 11-0 shutout in the title game over a Quit Your Pitching (Max Hollan, Sam Krakowski, Tim Sekerak, Kaden Kimmel) team that had scored 57 runs in their first three games.

30+ Age Division

Never Bunt 2 Rec N' Crew 0

The championship game in the 30+ division featured two ferocious right arms – Rob Rose of Never Bunt and Cody Stickdorn of Rec N' Crew. Both starters for both these squads were throwing pitches that had to be close to 70 MPH on the radar gun, and were mowing down people on the adult fields all weekend. Not surprisingly, the title game was a pitcher's duel with Rob Rose, his brother Ryan Rose, and James Miller of Never Bunt getting two key third inning runs across in the third to edge out Stickdorn, Ryan Bush, and Even Bush of Rec N' Crew. Playing at 11 AM, 12 PM, 2 PM, and 3 PM to win the title – Never Bunt allowed just 5 runs total in those four games.

As always, we get a lot of great suggestions on ways to continue to improve the event, which you can be assured we will do. Bringing in portable lights, doing the HR Derby Friday night, and making a spectacle of it is one no-brainer you can count on.

Your participation and feedback is greatly appreciated! Thanks for being a part of this year's event!

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