

# ENGLEWOOD

## INSIDE

# Play Ball

### The Englewood Senior Softball League director reflects on 13-year membership and team growth.

Story & photography by Dan Fisher

When Rich Entlich first tried out for the Englewood Senior Softball League in January 2006, he was a little nervous because he played soccer from age 14 to 65 – not softball. Finding comfort on the field, Entlich said he felt good to be part of a team again.

"There was one guy who was picked ahead of me, who had played softball his whole life, and even played on a traveling team up in Michigan," Entlich said. "He was really good, and I would have picked him, too. Back then, I felt like a good enough athlete that if I practice, my skill level would increase and get better on the field, and I have been in the league ever since."

In 2007, Entlich was offered by one of two individual league board members to serve as their third member, accepting the role without hesitation. In 2008, Entlich became the league director, where he would provide continued leadership in improving player safety and implementing strategies for membership growth.

Now a 13-year league member, Entlich announced at the board meeting on February 2nd that he will resign as league director, allowing for new leadership to provide the opportunity for men over 60 to play softball in a safe and recreational environment.

"Since the early 1990s, the league's purpose has been to give men 60 or older the opportunity to play softball, whether they are new or former players," Entlich said. "My hope is to see the work that I have done preserve the foundation of the league being a competitive and friendly environment so that players can get out of the house and have fun outdoors."

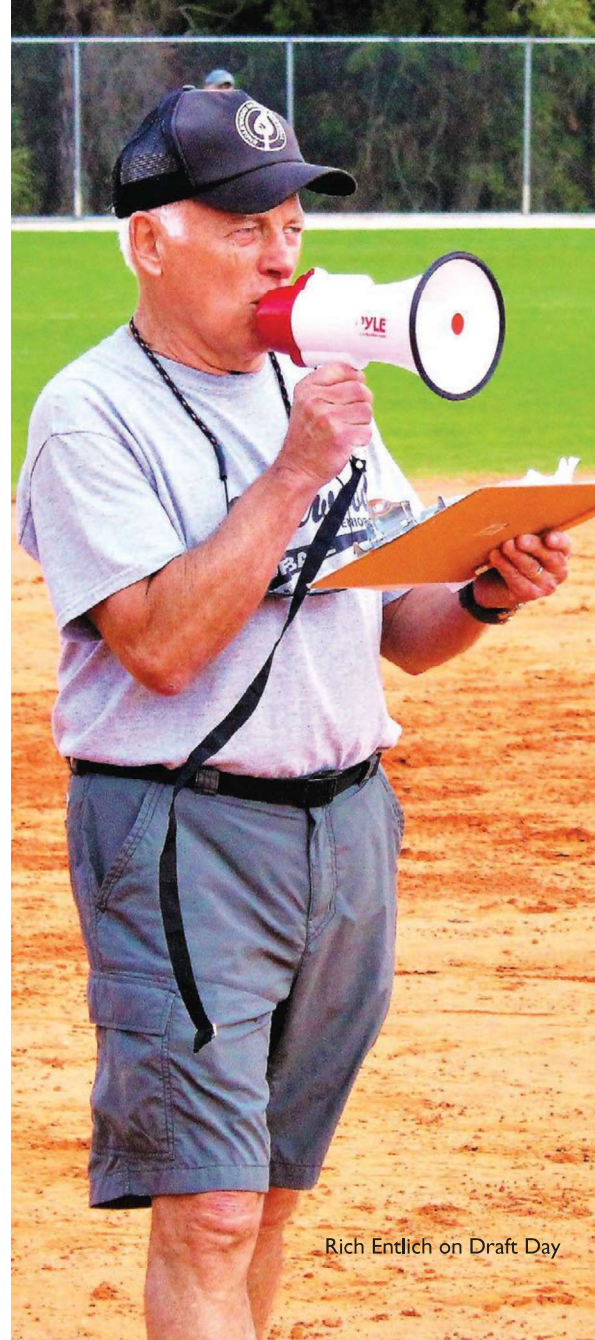
According to the league's website, the Gold Division has approximately 120 players over age 60 while the Silver Division has about 120 players over age 67. Open practice sessions are held every Monday at 8:30 a.m. at the Englewood Sports Complex on River Road from January to March, and from April to December on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8:30 a.m.

Though being the league director has its challenges, Entlich said he contributes diligently in maintaining communications with board members and division coordinators. To balance the workflow of administrative tasks, Entlich and the board committee expanded the committee from three to seven members in 2017.

Pursuant to the league's system of governance, the league board contains five board members and two division coordinators, where the board meets twice a year in "preseason and postseason, plus other occasions as necessary." Each division coordinator requires a "manager's committee" to determine the rules of play while providing input "on overall league policies through their coordinators to the board." The league's governing statutes also said that a manager or assistant manager cannot serve as a board member or division coordinator, "but can be a player in the league."

Leadership in sports programs requires passionate and motivated members capable of managing a high level of coordination and communication and responding to the changing needs of players and team managers while supporting local businesses that sponsor the teams.

And Englewood Senior Softball League members recognize the league's efforts in promoting the sport in Englewood.



Rich Entlich on Draft Day





to have lunch with the players at noon. Her husband, Cliff Martin, also plays in the league for the End Zone-sponsored team. Donna said watching league games and seeing her husband play for three years has been a positive

experience, and she believes the league shows promise in seeking team expansion.

"I have played softball throughout my whole life since high school and have lived in Florida for seven years," said Dave Young, a Gold Division player on the Howards Restaurant team. "For six years, I have been in the league, and I also help out in tryout sessions."

Young said the division coordinators, Rudy Davis and Leo Bacchieri, are effectively running each of the divisional drafts, including overseeing team rosters in selecting players while supervising player pools. He said their efforts provide players a chance in playing for future softball seasons.

"If a guy shows up without a glove or bat, we make sure to have plenty to share because we value camaraderie in the league and giving guys the opportunity to play," the Pittsburgh native said.

Despite the competitive nature of the league, Young said the divisional players give credit to all teams that give their best on the field and spend time together in fellowship sharing some laughs while having lunch at the Sport Complex's Adult Softball parking lot.

"Some teams are more competitive than others, and there some teams that give their best in a game while playing to have fun," Young said. "So it all comes down to the fact that winning is not everything."

Fresh out of watching two Gold Division games at the Englewood Sports Complex at Field #1 on February 7, Donna Martin made time

"It's fun because you also get the chance to meet all the players from each team and even socialize and connect with them," the Michigan native said.

Cliff Martin, also a Michigan native, said he is impressed with the league in reserving softball fields that are well-maintained by the groundskeepers of the Englewood Sports Complex.

"The grass is always nice, and they cut it so nice and leveled," he said. "The guys here at the Sports Complex do an amazing job, and they deserve credit for their work."

Though recreational senior softball was not Entlich's first pick after moving to Englewood, he said the experience was worth trying out.

"There was, I think, less pressure than I thought when I started played in the league because of the mindset of 'I got to win, I got to win,' but it's more than that," Entlich said. "We are a recreational league, and we are out here to have fun."

For more information regarding the league, contact Entlich at (941) 460-9645 or visit [www.engagewoodseniorsoftball.weebly.com](http://www.engagewoodseniorsoftball.weebly.com). Registration forms can be obtained at the Englewood Sports Complex office or from the league's website. ■■

