

Tryouts bring out the best in senior softball players

Englewood league welcomes players in their 60s, 70s and 80s

By RUDY DAVIS

SPECIAL TO THE SUN

The Englewood Men's Senior Softball league held its annual draft for new player this past week, and by all measures, it was a great success, with nearly 60 men trying out for spots on teams in the three league divisions.

"We had a great turnout

once again" said Rich Entlich, league commissioner, "with this year's draft both deep and talented."

Mike Geddes, manager of Beyond the Sea in the Gold division, commented that "this is the highest quality draft we've had in many, many years. I think every team got better, maybe much better, given

the talent. It was great to see such a turnout."

The Gold division, comprised of eight teams, held its draft Jan. 7. "We had 30 guys in the tryouts," said Mark Johnson, assistant manager of the End Zone, "and the event went very smoothly."

Players all had a chance to individually demonstrate their hitting, fielding and throwing skills, and then participate in a practice game while team managers met to make draft choices. Sixteen slots were filled. "It was pretty cool," said Gary Atkinson, a recent retiree from Massachusetts who was selected by Howard's. "Well-run, and a good time as well. I can see why guys like this league."

Johnson noted that the Gold division, considered the more competitive and talented division, is typically comprised of

guys under 70, and at least 60 years old, "though we have a few guys in their 70s that are still very competitive."

The men not selected at the Gold draft typically will return the next day for the Silver division draft and often end up on a team in that division. The Silver division draft, held Tuesday, had 25 guys trying out. "The draft this year was great," said George Schwager, manager of the Orange Crush team in the Silver division, which also has eight teams. "I think every team picked up some good talent. It should be a very competitive year for us."

The league continues to offer opportunities for guys even as they age further. "This year we've formed a new Bronze division, generally for guys over 77 whose skills have diminished, but want the comradery and exercise that softball provides," said Bill Rice, Silver & Bronze Division coordinator. "We expect to field two teams in Bronze, as some of the guys in the Silver division have moved up to Bronze, which then opens up positions in the Silver division."

Englewood is one of the few leagues in the state with a division for more aged players. All in all, as the league continues to grow, the mechanism to handle continued growth is in place. "I'm told we had about 25 guys playing on two teams when the league first formed. We expect to have over 250 guys in the league this year and, importantly, we're all friends," said Entlich.

The regular season begins Friday.



Tom Niemuth gets a strong hit as he connects with the ball.



SUN PHOTOS BY SANDY MACYS

Englewood Senior Softball League commissioner Rich Entlich speaks to the players as tryouts begin Monday.



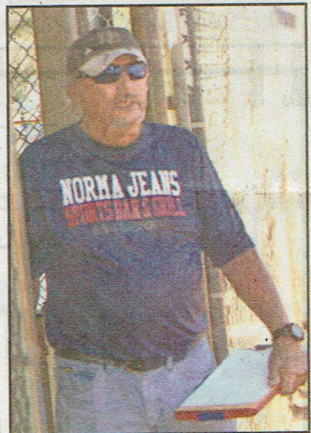
Phil McGouldrick, 77, who plays for the New Faulk Inn, is all smiles as he watches the players try to make the roster.



Steve Ricci connects with the ball in his effort to make the league.



Neil Meneghini gives instructions to Gary Atkinson during tryouts.



Norma Jeans Sports Grill team manager Mike Panas checks out his potential draft players.



Mike Albin fields a ball in the infield.



Pitcher Mark Murphy tosses the ball to hitters during batting tryouts.



League coordinators Bill Rice, left, and Rudy Davis help keep tabs on the players.