

## The Last of the Originals

Since 2012, many players have competed for the cup at the NWLA Tournament. The original year was held in Ohio, across the street from a Gallaway-paid for hotel, in a church softball outfield, behind a Japanese Hibachi restaurant. As we approach 2018, two more original teams (TBW and PWL) will not make the trip, and we are left with only 5 of the original 8 still in this new field of play. All 5 of these teams can win it all. I wanted to write this article though to see if anybody from one of these five teams has played and will be playing, on every single NWLA Tournament roster for their squad dating back to 2012. The answer brought me to just five players who have spent their Julys in Ohio or Michigan for, coming on their 7<sup>th</sup> STRAIGHT year.

### **David Ayres, KWL**

Best Finish: 5<sup>th</sup> Place (2013, 2016, 2017)

Worst Finish: 16<sup>th</sup> Place (2015)

2012 Hitting Stats: 0 HR, 0 RBI, 2 Hits, 21 PA

Career Hitting Stats: 2 HR, 18 RBI, 20 Hits, 137 PA

2012 Pitching Stats: 1-1, 21 SO, 2.00 ERA, 12 IP

Career Pitching Stats: 7-5, 90 SO, 2.88 ERA, 56.33 IP

2018 Outlook: Ayres will look to continue as the KWL #2 pitcher, as one of the best control pitchers in tournament history, walking only 36 batters in 6 years of play.

### **Ryan Bush, OCWA**

Best Finish: 1<sup>st</sup> Place (2012, 2016)

Worst Finish: 10<sup>th</sup> Place (2017)

2012 Hitting Stats: 6 HR, 22 RBI, 13 Hits, 64 PA

Career Hitting Stats: 30 HR, 130 RBI, 90 Hits, 400 PA

2012 Pitching Stats: 5-0, 68 SO, 0.96 ERA, 25 IP

Career Pitching Stats: 18-4, 318 SO, 2.77 ERA, 127.67 IP

2018 Outlook: I am sure the goal is for Bush to come back to his normal dominance in 2018 and find the board. He is the best player in tournament history and will have as good of a season on the mound as he had at the plate this year.

### **Jeremy Ratajczyk, GBL**

Best Finish: 5<sup>th</sup> Place (2012, 2015)

Worst Finish: 15<sup>th</sup> Place (2017)

2012 Hitting Stats: 2 HR, 13 RBI, 13 Hits, 32 PA

Career Hitting Stats: 10 HR, 58 RBI, 71 Hits, 233 PA

2012 Pitching Stats: 0-0, 1 SO, 18.00 ERA, 2 IP

Career Pitching Stats: 5-5, 57 SO, 6.04 ERA, 43.67 IP

2018 Outlook: With a new look GBL squad, hitting won't take precedence, but when you need it, J-Rat can and will provide it offensively. He will hit for power and for average, and once again be at the top of the leaderboard on the offensive side of the ball, with the possibility for a save here or there on the mound as their #5 pitcher.

**Sam Skibbe, SWBL**

Best Finish: 2<sup>nd</sup> Place (2016, 2017)

Worst Finish: 7<sup>th</sup> Place (2012)

2012 Hitting Stats: 1 HR, 3 RBI, 6 Hits, 40 PA

Career Hitting Stats: 29 HR, 117 RBI, 79 Hits, 370 PA

2012 Pitching Stats: 1-1, 13 SO, 6.45 ERA, 9.33 IP

Career Pitching Stats: 9-2, 116 SO, 2.66 ERA, 58.67 IP

2018 Outlook: The only player in tournament history to manage and play in every tournament, he'll look to be the second or third best hitter and the second or third best pitcher, on a team that usually finishes second or third in the tournament.

**Jon Suhre, OCWA**

Best Finish: 1<sup>st</sup> Place (2012, 2016)

Worst Finish: 10<sup>th</sup> Place (2017)

2012 Hitting Stats: 1 HR, 17 RBI, 9 Hits, 68 PA

Career Hitting Stats: 11 HR, 75 RBI, 39 Hits, 308 PA

2012 Pitching Stats: 0-0, 0 SO, 72.00 ERA, 1 IP

Career Pitching Stats: 0-0, 0 SO, 64.62 ERA, 1.33 IP

2018 Outlook: A bit of a power threat guy, Suhre will be a pool play presence for OCWA, with a possibility of seeing time in Double Elimination depending on how he does against better pitching.

Who knows how many more years these five have left in the tank, but for now it's interesting to honor their service to the sport and to this tournament. And let's be honest...does it really surprise you that only one of them (Ayres...I think) is married?