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‘Knights’ edge out ‘Witch Hunt’ in softball championship

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CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE Q-WEST, Iraq – The 16th Sustainment Brigade ‘Knights’ captured the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Softball League Championship with a win over ‘Witch Hunt’ from the 395th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, here Aug. 18.

The Knights staved off a rally by Witch Hunt late in the game to complete their undefeated run in the double elimination tournament with a 22-17 victory to secure their second Q-West softball title.

At the start of the game, the Knights unrolled a nearly 20-foot banner reading “Rock Steady ain’t ready,” mocking the 395th CSSB’s battalion motto, “Rock Steady, support ready.”

Witch Hunt, fueled by the Knights taunt, sparked an impressive offensive rally in the top of the first inning, jumping out to a 7-0 lead. The lead was short-lived, however, as the Knights capitalized on the challenger’s disastrous game-time decision to experiment with an inexperienced starting pitcher in the crucial match. Deciding that pitcher Staff Sgt. Mike Cornell’s services were more required in the outfield, Witch Hunt captain Staff Sgt. Sam Kessler reconfigured his infield to move Capt. Jeoff Hall from second base to

pitcher. Hall struggled from the outset, walking twelve batters and conceding more than a dozen runs to give the Knights a convincing 14-7 lead.

Kessler brought Cornell in to relieve Hall and close out the first inning, halting the flow of runs at 17. Never ones to back down, Witch Hunt staged an immediate comeback against their seasoned foes. Chipping away at the Knights' considerable lead, Witch Hunt scored three runs off an in-the-park home run by designated hitter, Spc. Kyle "Captain America" Magoon. Magoon's round-tripper was his third of the tournament.

Cornell looked masterful on the mound and also contributed with the bat, knocking in his own in-the-parker. Slugger Spc. Larry Franklin remained solid in the outfield, grabbing three pop flies to deep left while Kessler, who had injured his foot in one play, continued with his defensive tenacity at third.

A voice of reason and motivation on the field, First Sgt. Charles Dailey was unyielding at first base as Witch Hunt continued to hold the Knights to just five runs over the next five innings.

Witch Hunt would rally for five more runs in the top of the sixth, but the Knights' armor withstood the final attack. The Knight's defense was led by left-center fielder, Sgt. 1st Class Adam "Big Sexy" Shaw, who made the play of the game by running down a deep fly ball to right field to end the CSSB's third inning rally and gunned out a base runner at third base to end the fifth.

"I was put on this planet to play softball," said Shaw, "When the spotlight is on, I want to be standing in it."

The self-proclaimed, "best softball player at Q-West" who went 3-3 with a walk, hitting in four runs and scoring four more, talked about the competition.

“They are one of the best teams that we have played on this deployment,” said Shaw. “They talk a lot of smack, but so do we and I think that is why the game was so much fun. Both teams have a mutual respect and I think they will probably be the next Q-West champions since we are redeploying soon.”

Knights’ captain, Staff Sgt. Victor “Lil Papi” Sotomayor said that it was great take home the championship.

“It felt awesome to be able to close out the tournament strongly and capture the title,” said Sotomayor. “Both teams played a great game, and even though they were playing a far superior team, they never gave up.”

Kessler believes the tournament was a good warm up for the recently assembled team.

“We were unable to dethrone the current league champs, but the team will be much better prepared for the upcoming season than the fresh opponents arriving at Q-West.”



The 16th Sustainment Brigade 'Knights' softball team shows off their trophy after the team captured the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Softball League Championship with a 22-17 win over 'Witch Hunt' from the 395th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion at Contingency Operating Base Q-West Aug. 18. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Keith M. Anderson)