



Stewart replaces Buckenberger as Spokane commissioner

There's been a softball leadership change in Spokane. Fuzzy Buckenberger has retired as commissioner after 22 years. Jamie Stewart has been appointed his replacement.

"USA Softball is excited to have Jamie on board to help upgrade the quality of our sport in the Spokane community," said Bill Parks, the USA Softball of Idaho commissioner in announcing the change. "His knowledge of the sport should help us make great strides in upgrading our programs in both youth and adult play."

Since 2015, when Spokane lost its status as a stand-alone metro association, it has been District 8 under the Idaho state umbrella. This summer, Stewart was appointed northern districts player representative by Parks.

Stewart, 46, got involved in the sport as a player in adult programs in 1989. In 2000, when his daughters began playing the game, he moved on to coaching. The last 17 years he has coached girls fastpitch at the Junior Olympic and high school levels.

He and wife Renee started the Spokane Dawgs, which quickly turned into an organization. At one time they had five teams under their guidance and took four different teams to national championship tournaments.

Stewart was an assistant coach at North Central for four years before taking the Northwest Christian head coaching position in 2012. In three years, he took the Crusaders to the State 2B tournament each year, reaching the title game twice. He was the 2013 Washington State Coaches Association 2B Coach of the Year.

He also assisted at Spokane Falls Community College and was on the 2015 staff when the Sasquatch won the NWAC championship.

"It's time," said Buckenberger, 69, a "softball lifer" who has been involved in the game for five decades, of retiring. "It was a nice ride. It was fun."

"Fuzzy is a sensitive heart who remained loyal to ASA softball for over 30 years," said Parks. "I wish him good luck in his future endeavors."

Buckenberger is leaving the position, but not the game. "I'm still going to coach my granddaughter," he said.

Skyla Mangis, a senior at Shadle Park, is on the Spokane Diamonds select team Buckenberger led to the USA Softball 16U A Western National championship in July 2017. It was the sixth national title he won as a coach, following five at the adult level.

Buckenberger became a second-generation commissioner in 1995, six years after his late father, Clarence Sr., retired after serving 15 years.

During his tenure, Spokane staged 17 USA Softball adult and girls fastpitch national tournaments, hosted the women's U.S. Olympic Team twice for exhibitions and held multiple other championship events, including two national invitationals and Native American nationals.

He was also host commissioner for the 69th ASA General Council Meeting in Spokane in 2000.

His resumé as a player, coach and administrator has gained him residence in three halls of fame, including the Inland Northwest Sports Hall of Fame in 1999.