

# Former Spokane UIC Rich Hobson voted into USA Softball Region 9 Hall of Fame

Rich Hobson of Spokane, who has spent more than one-third of his 40-year softball umpiring career in leadership positions, has been voted into the USA Softball Northwest Mountain Region 9 Hall of Fame.

A member of the Class of 2022, he has umpired and instructed at the highest amateur levels. He will be inducted in January.

“Rich has all the qualities a hall-of-famer should have,” said longtime friend and colleague Malcolm Boyles of Bothell, a former Amateur Softball Association Western Deputy Director of Umpires. He has “the ability to demonstrate excellence on the field and leadership abilities that are known and respected nationally.



“He was a change-maker and visionary,” Boyles added. “He changed the long-held practice of top-down leadership” in the region “to a collaborative approach by state and metro associations to encourage working together to make the whole region stronger on the national stage.”

Hobson started umpiring in 1980 and almost immediately was sought out to serve or lead in several areas. He has held multiple positions on the Spokane Softball Umpires Association board of directors, including twice as president, and is currently the association treasurer and with wife Sandy handles uniform and equipment sales.

In the mid-1980s, when the organization was splintered, Rich was the glue that bound it together, starting as the first president of a new, unified association.

He was selected the Spokane Amateur Softball Association umpire in chief in 1989, a position he held until he was named to the ASA National Umpire Staff in 1994. He was one of the most sought-after instructors on the staff, leading training schools and clinics around the country, and was even sent to Germany in 1998 to teach a school. He retired from the NUS in 2004.

During that period, he was UIC for 19 ASA national championship tournaments, including the top-of-the line men’s and women’s major modified and men’s and coed major slowpitch.

He umpired men’s and women’s major fastpitch and men’s and women’s major slowpitch, and twice umpired Olympic-bound U.S. Women’s National Team exhibitions, one in Spokane, one in Seattle. He was a charter member of the Pac-10 umpire staff in 1993.

Hobson was inducted into the Inland Empire Softball Hall of Fame in 2001, the USA Softball of Idaho Hall of Fame in 2018, received the Washington Officials Association Meritorious Service

Award in 1998, the Inland Empire Sports Writers and Broadcasters' 25-Year Award in 2016 and was named an ASA Elite Umpire in fastpitch in 2011.

"Rich umpired the highest level of fastpitch softball, men's major fastpitch, many times. He is as good as it gets," said "Wild Bill" Silves of Mount Vernon, another longtime friend and colleague who succeeded Hobson as regional UIC.

"What made him special was he always had time for all umpires, from the lowest to the highest levels," Silves said. "He would always listen to any umpire and make them feel important.

"He had a way of letting an umpire figure out the answer (to a question). It's great to watch a new umpire get in the rule book and find it and look at Rich and say, 'I got it! I understand it now!'

"As UIC, he was always pushing to get more umpires from our region selected for national tournaments. He took pride in all the umpires from our region.

"He has always given back to the game and to USA Softball, and is still giving back" through his work with the Spokane association," Silves added. "He has done it all and done it with class."

Silves touched on the intangibles that made Hobson a success. Rich is a people person and genuinely loves to spend time with them; listen to them.

"I still regularly encounter umpires from out of town who ask about Rich before regaling me with stories about how a tip or suggestion from him at some game or tournament strengthened their game," said Chuck Stewart, who followed Hobson as Spokane UIC.

"I have been the ASA Representative at national tournaments when Rich was the UIC," said USA Softball of Idaho Commissioner Bill Parks. "I was also the Regional Director while Rich was the UIC of the region. During those times, he always handled everything ethically, honestly and professionally.

"Rich has a resume that speaks for itself, and certainly the credentials for the Region 9 Hall of Fame."

## USA Softball Northwest Mountain Region 9

