

# Pat Thompson, Senior Baseball Blogger

## *A few warm thoughts for the hot stove months*



In our world, the universe spins on baseball . . . and a close-knit group of senior tournament Saints and Bees were the spinners in 2015. It is remarkable to discover the common threads that bind these two gallant, dominating baseball teams and the similarity of the principle characters . . . the master spinners.

These two teams - 1,866 miles apart in the shadows of the Saguardo-studded Arizona landscape and the palm trees-lined Florida byways of Ft. Myers, Florida - played remarkable baseball for one-week periods of tithis fall.

The St. Paul Saints 65s team of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Philadelphia players, plus a Texan, marched all over the opposition in the Major Senior Baseball League (MSBL) World Series for 300-plus teams in various divisions in Phoenix with an 8-0 record the last week in October. The Saints outscored opponents by an astounding margin of 123-20, batted .471 and posted a 0.78 earned run average.

The Bees 60s of Minnesota and Wisconsin players stunned the Roy Hobbs Classics Division premiere AAAA field with a similar 8-0 record the third week in November, taking the role of giant killers with a thrilling come-from-behind 6-3 victory over a Nor Cal Giants team that typically walks off with the hardware in the Florida tournament for almost 250 teams. The Bees outscored their foes 67-27.

The commonalities of these two national champions can be traced to three pitchers, similar in talent and the will to take the ball: they'd pitch every game if they could and often expect it.

**The Saints:** Lefty **Mike Biagioli** (Italian translation: "I am ready to pitch again.") from Mukwonago, Wisconsin in Waukesha County, and **Dave Sobiech**, St. Michael, Minnesota, and one of the winningest senior pitchers in the state.

**The Bees:** **Gary Fritch** of Duluth, Minnesota, whose fastball was clocked in the low 80s in the win over Nor Cal, his second complete game of the day and still an ace pitcher in Over-35 circles in Minnesota, and **Randy Moselle**, from Maple Grove, Minnesota, a University of Minnesota teammate with Twins Manager Paul Molitor and a Roy Hobbs Hall of Fame inductee this past fall by pitching and winning so many Roy Hobbs finals through and Minnesota State Amateur finals through the years.

This is not to neglect the other pitchers on the Saints 65s and the Bees. **John Pepin** of Eden Prairie, Minnesota, won two games for the Saints and **Jerry Barskey**, the Philadelphia doctor of podiatry who once performed life saving CPR during a Roy Hobbs tournament game, hurled a complete game. **Brock Kiecker**, of Eagan, Minnesota, pitched big wins for the Bees.

But Bags and Sobes, Gary and Randy are just a special breed.

### Fritch

I stood among the Bees fans at the Lee County Stadium complex of the Twins in Ft. Myers when third baseman Lee Backhaus of Alexandria, Minnesota, clutched the foul ball pop for the final out of the game. A glow danced up my spine when Gary walked off the mound, threw down his glove and raised his arms skyward. I have seen or heard about this man losing big-game heartbreakers for many years after monstrous pitching performances in which he deserved to win a championship.

Last year, the Bees lost in 14+ innings in the Roy Hobbs playoffs with Gary hurling all



14. And, I have seen him mask his disappointment in Minnesota Over-35 state tournament games in which my teams somehow managed to beat him twice, once when he pitched all 12 innings or another time when his fielding fell apart on him. (He paid us back by no-hitting my Over-35 Eden Prairie team the next time he faced us in the regular season after one of those losses.)

“You will never see Gary get after his fielders,” Bees founder and organizer Vic Marotta said. “He knows that is part of the game. It

was extra special to see him win that game in Florida against such a powerhouse after some of those wrenching defeats he didn’t deserve.”

### Sobes



### Bags



### Randy



### Sobiech and Biagioli

Dave pitched for my Over-35 team for more than 20 years, hurling more than 80 wins and pitching a state championship 1-0 victory in 1987 over a team called - yes - the St.

Paul Saints. His mastery has transitioned into tournament play in the MSBL World Series.

Bags umps and pitches in Milwaukee senior ball, but I know him for a sterling five-year record of 11-4 with a 2.34 earned run average with the Saints in Arizona since 2012.

Our first year in Arizona in 2010, Dave pitched us into the 60s championship game with three straight wins, only to lose the final to the Red Deer Legends of Canada. Guess what? Biagioli, with Sobiech throwing a couple of innings, hurled the win as we buried the Legends in the 65s MSBL World Series opener this year, 25-5. After dancing through our round robin schedule with five straight victories, Bags and Sobes threw blanks in the first two playoff games: Mike skunking Arizona Scorpions 9-0 and Dave looking the strongest he is looked in years in setting aside the New England Red Sox 7-0. (That was our closest game). Bags pitched seven shutout innings in our championship game, 21-5 over the Ports of Napa Valley.

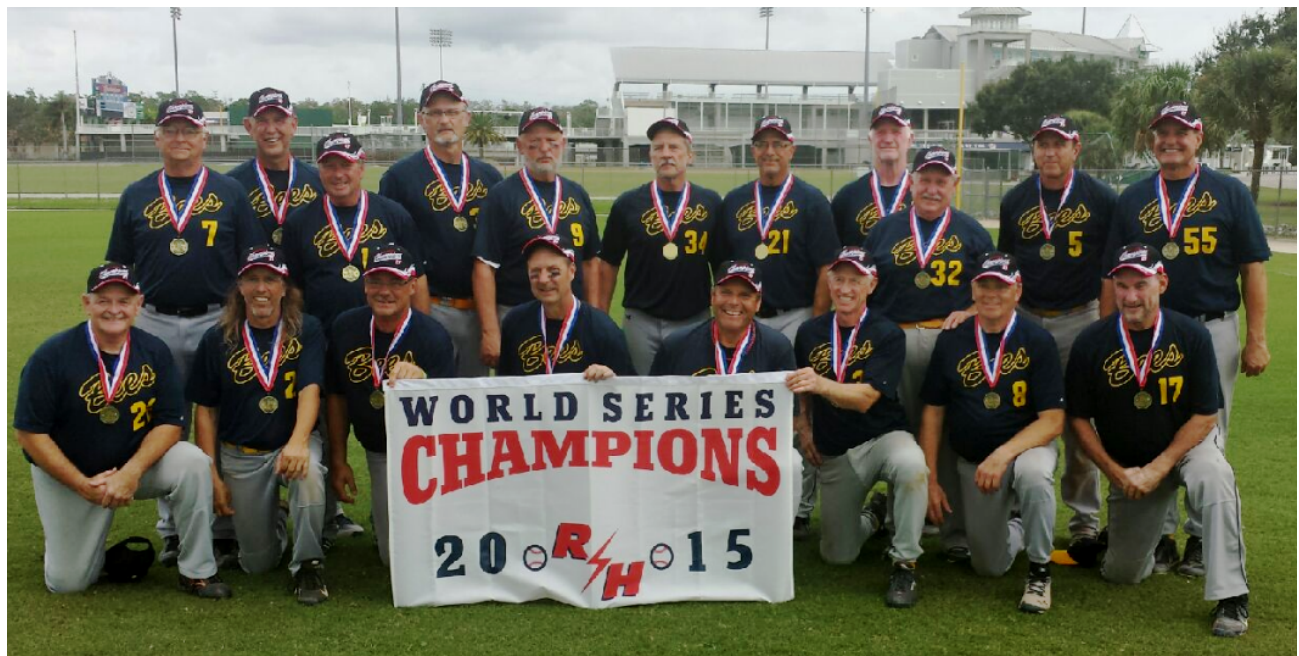
**TAKE A LOOK AT THE CHAMPIONS BELOW:** You will see a lot of commonality with Saints and Bees. **Frank Hanford**, Saints veteran pitcher from Red Wing, Minnesota and Fountain Hills, Arizona, is the field manager of the Bees organized by Marotta and enhanced by Frank's contacts. Playing on the Bees 60s and Saints 65s were catcher **Roger Johnson** of Alexandria, shortstop **Reece Doffing** of Hampton, Minnesota, and **Neil Sather** of St. Mathias, Minnesota. Also joining the Bees from our Saints 60s team were Backhaus; catcher **Bob Britz**, Shakopee, Minnesota; pitcher **Gary Schultz**, Oak Creek, Wisconsin; pitcher-outfielder **Sev Poser**, Pierz, Minnesota; outfielder **Ricky Held**, West Bend, Wisconsin. I would be remiss in omitting **Johnny Moore**, Lino Lakes, Minnesota and Ft. Myers and a charter member of our Saints 50s summer-fall team who plays all nine positions. Or, **Kiecker** who was a pitcher for our Saints team in the Memorial Day Goldy's Oldies tournament in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Bees first baseman **Terry Teske**, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, played on the 2014 Saints 65s team.



## The Saints



## The Bees



See you in late spring.