

Jersey Boy to Lake Placid

By Ed Engler

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Don Cunningham enjoys the good times of senior softball and "the friendship of players from all walks of life." Quite a statement for a guy whose own life was nearly cut short in infancy.

A native of the mean streets of Paterson, New Jersey, Don's maternity ward suffered an epidemic that killed 20 of the the 25 babies in the hospital. At three days old, an IV tube inserted in his brain kept him alive. He was administered the Last Rites (Extreme Unction) by a Roman Catholic priest.

After surviving that ordeal, Don never got to play sports in his youth. Instead, he went to work at age eleven selling fruits and vegetables to help support his family. Don enlisted in the army and served in the 82nd Airborne, making 21 jumps on active duty. He then spent 30 years in the building trades with his own Cunningham Roofing and Siding. He sold the company and started wintering in Lake Placid in 1998. A friend took him to the Lake Placid league and to his own surprise, discovered he had athletic ability. "Don was a project, but the raw talent was obvious," reminisced his first manager.

In Monday action, Jersey Don's skills were on full display as he knocked out four hits, including a grand slam homer, for his 863 Bar & Grill team. However, it was not enough as Seminole Tire squeezed out a 15-14 win. Dick Cook (double), Mo Pier, and Chet Johnson added three hits each. For The 'Noles, Dan Rasmussen had four hits, Jeff Stanley collected three, and Paul Marcellus added a double and triple.

Central Security defeated Lake Placid Marine 14-6. Duane Wilson slugged two homers and Manager Elston Hedges also went deep for The Securitymen. Owner Dana Hurlbut added four hits. Bob Roth homered for The Mariners, and Bill Todd added three hits.

Conley Insurance toppled Miller Air 10-7. Ellis Howard (triple), Ron Kilburn (double), Will Ramsey, and Jack Smith (double) formed The Three Hit Club for Conley. Mike Kratt tallied three hits for The Airmen.

On Wednesday, Conley Insurance (10-2) took sole possession of first place with a 17-9 comeback victory over Lake Placid Marine (3-9). The Insurers scored eleven runs with two out in the last inning to pull off the win. Ron Kilburn doubled and homered, Larry Oser recorded four hits, and JR Garver and Ellis Howard added three apiece. Winning pitcher Charlie Quinn aided his own cause with two doubles. For The Mariners, Bill Todd and Bob Roth had three hits. Manager Paul Stephenson added two doubles.

Seminole Tire (5-7) upset Central Security (9-3) 23-14, knocking The Securitymen into second place, one game behind Conley. Dan Rasmussen (double) tallied six hits and was supported by Jeff Stanley (double), Larry Laux (home run), and Pat Lowe with four hits each.

In a defensive struggle, 863 Bar & Grill (6-6) beat Miller Air (3-9) 7-5. Jersey Don Cunningham, Cliff Bluml, and Bill Martin had three hits apiece. Mike Kratt had three hits and two superb outfield catches for Miller, whose tight infield defense led by Norm Grubbs and Paul Brand turned four double plays.

For further league information, please visit www.lpsoftball.com.