



### **Paul 'Reggie' Burnett**

Paul 'Reggie' Burnett is used to hearing cheers on the baseball field. He has been an all-star and batting champ and has played for state and world titles. This summer, Paul's diamond career hits it big with his induction into the Iowa Men's Fastpitch Softball Hall of Fame.

Paul's ball playing career began in his hometown of Vicksburg, Mississippi. At nine, he made the Playground Summer League team in Alpine Heights playing with and against high-school-age players. The next year, he made the all-star team. He played baseball for 14 years, was drafted by the New York Yankees at age 17 and had a successful career at Southern University.

Like a scene from a corny movie, Paul's fastpitch playing career began after he was called down from the bleachers as he watched the action at the Gates Park Monday Night League in Westgate, Iowa. "Roger Neebel and Hall of Fame Coach Jim Ciesielski approached me to fill in at shortstop for their team," Paul recalled. "After playing a few games in that league, the Denver Merchants approached me to play for them in the Northeast Iowa League."

Unlike its slowpitch cousin that favors brute force, massive home runs and enough runs to give scorekeepers night sweats, a fastpitch softball game is intense and low scoring. The game puts a premium on pitching

with the world's best underhand deliveries coming from Australia. Australian pitchers come to America during their off-season to dominate leagues and freeze batters with an assortment of darting, drifting and rising fastballs. With the pitcher only 50 feet from the plate, fastpitch softball batters have little time to react to the 80 to 90 mile-per-hour blur whipping toward them. Batters rely on reflex and bat speed to make contact. Sometimes it's all you can do to save yourself. Paul's career stats include a concussion he suffered after a wild pitch slammed into his protective batting helmet.

As Paul's ability grew, so did his legend. After hitting a tape measure home run during a tournament, Paul stood at the plate to admire the shot. The move reminded Paul's teammates of Yankee great Reggie Jackson. "Oscar Wooldrick called me 'Reggie,' and from that day forward the nickname has stuck," Paul said. Playing against the Bloomington Hearts, Decatur Pride, and Bloomington Beer Nuts, Reggie traveled North America with a variety of teams.

In 1985, Paul joined a team sponsored by Waterloo Turf Control. He batted in the key third slot in the powerful lineup. The Waterloo team qualified for the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) Regionals in Omaha, won back-to-back ISC Regional Championships in Walcott, Iowa and earned trips to the ISC World Tournament in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada in 1987 and Decatur, Ill. in 1988. "In Decatur, we played the former ASA National Champions in front of a standing-room-only crowd. Nobody gave us a chance to win," Paul said. With the help of his game-winning run batted in, Paul's team won the game 2 to 1. "It was the most satisfying victory of any kind that I have had in any sport in my career," Paul said.

Paul went on to play in ASA State Tournaments from 1986 through 1992 and participated in ASA National Tournaments from 1989 through 1994. He was selected to the All-American team while playing for the Des Moines Metros in 1991 at the National Tournament in Midland, Michigan and he played in every ISC World Tournament from 1987 to 1992. He left the game with impressive career statistics. In 1992, Paul hit a remarkable .568 to take the Illinois Travel League's batting title and later that year he drove in 75 percent of his team's runs in the ISC World

Tournament in Salt Lake City, Utah. In 1996 he played one last tournament as a favor to a friend. Paul launched a home run in his last official at bat.

Paul will don his Yankee hat and drive up to Iowa this weekend. His induction into the Hall of Fame will be Saturday, July 29, on the main diamond of the Kirkwood Softball Complex in Cedar Rapids between games of the Iowa State Fastpitch Tournament.

### **Paul "Reggie" Burnett's Team and Career Highlights**

(batting average listed in parenthesis)

1980 Gates Park Monday Night League, Denver Merchants

1981 Denver Merchants (.350)

1982 Alibi Tavern - Denver, Iowa (.355)

1983 Alibi Tavern - Denver, Iowa (.375)

1985 Turf Control - Waterloo, Iowa (.378)

1986 Turf Control - Waterloo, Iowa (.338); ASA Regionals - Omaha, Neb.

1987 Universal Financial - Waterloo, Iowa (.363); ISC State Champions, Walcott, Iowa; ISC World Tournament, Saskatoon Saskatchewan, Canada

1988 Universal Financial - Waterloo, Iowa; ISC State Champions, Walcott, IA; ISC World Tournament, Decatur, Ill. and finished 15th

1989 Kent Feeds - Waterloo, Iowa (.342); ASA Nationals, Midland, Mich.; Bloomington, Ill. Hearts, ISC World Tournament, Kimberly, Wis.- finished 5th

1990 Kent Feeds - Waterloo, Iowa Iowa/Illinois Travel League Champions; ISC World Tournament, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada - finished 13th; Des Moines Metros, ASA Nationals, Mankato, Minn.

1991 Kent Feeds - Waterloo, Iowa (.362); Des Moines Metros, ASA Regional MVP Grand Island, Neb. ASA All-American, ASA Nationals, Midland, Mich.; Bosch Rausch - Cedar Rapids, Iowa ISC World Tournament, Sioux City, Iowa

1992 Kent Feeds - Waterloo, Iowa (.500); Illinois Travel League Batting

Title (.568); ASA Nationals, Sacramento, Calif; The Pride - Decatur Ill.,  
ISC World Tournament, Salt Lake City, Utah (drove in 75% of the runs  
scored)

1993 The Farm - Madison, Wis.; Hosted the ISC World Tournament,  
Kimberly, Wis. finished 7th; ASA Nationals, Decatur, Ill. finished 11th

1994 Fred's - Atlanta, Ga.; Blue-Gray Classic, Montgomery, Ala.; ASA  
Nationals - Palm Springs, Calif.