

## Week of Monday, September 16, 2024

On Monday, September 16th, the Henderson County Older Sluggers traveled to Tiger, Georgia to face the Rabun County Older Relics in a battle between the two top teams in the Clayton 68+ League. The Older Sluggers were coached by Stan Steinberg and sponsored by **Hunter Automotive Group** for these games. Holding a three-game lead in the loss column and with only four games remaining in the regular season Henderson County needed to win only one game to secure the regular season championship and the top seed in the October tournament. After three innings of play, things looked good for the Older Sluggers as they held an 11-8 lead. However, back-to-back scoreless innings by the Sluggers found them on the losing side of the scoreboard. When Henderson County came to bat in the bottom of the seventh, they trailed by eight runs. Although the Sluggers were able to push across four runs, they could get no closer and Rabun County closed out a 23-19 win to narrow the loss column margin to two games. David Keith took the loss on the mound. The Sluggers had a team batting average of 0.583 for the game and were led at the plate by Rick Sweeney who had a perfect 4-4 day. Other contributors with good days offensively were Jerry Austin (4-5 with two doubles and a triple), Jim Zitney (4-5), Scott Searle (3-4 with a double, triple, and a walk), and David Keith (3-4).

Henderson County came out of the gate fast in game two and put up five-run innings in each of the first three frames to take a 15-7 lead into the fourth. At that point, the Sluggers' bats went cold and could only produce three runs over the next three innings. Rabun County scored six runs and narrowed the margin to 18-13 during the same period. Henderson County scored four in the top of the seventh to extend their lead and shut out the Relics in the bottom of the inning to seal the 22-13 victory. David Keith was the winning pitcher. The Sluggers upped their team batting average to 0.674 in the second game. Henderson County was led at the plate with perfect outings from Jim Zitney (5-5) and Gene Reiser (3-3 with a double, triple, and a walk). Five other players were nearly perfect: Jerry Austin (4-5 with three doubles), Mark Hammer (4-5 with all of his hits being doubles), David Keith (3-4 with a home run), Stan Steinberg (2-3 with a walk), and Tim Epley (2-3 with two sacrifice flies). Scott Searle also contributed a home run. With the win in game two Henderson County clinched the regular season title in the 68+ Clayton League. This is the fourth year of existence for the 68+ League and Henderson County has captured the regular season title every year.

Next week the league will have two teams in action and, in a true rarity for this season, both games will be at Jackson Park in Hendersonville. On Monday, September 23rd, the Older Sluggers will host Upstate SC for the final two regular season games in the Clayton 68+ League. On Wednesday, September 25th, the mixed 60+ Sluggers will welcome the Burnsville Bears to town to close their 2024 season.

The Henderson County Senior Softball League is always looking for new players age 50 and older (35 and older for ladies). Regular league games are normally played on Monday and Friday mornings at 9:30 on fields 8 and 9 at Jackson Park in Hendersonville. For additional information call 828-260-2130 or visit Henderson County Senior Softball at <https://hcssoftball.com>.