

## Week of Monday, September 23, 2024

On Monday, September 23rd, the Henderson County Older Sluggers coached by Stan Steinberg and sponsored by **Carolina Blinds** welcomed the Upstate South Carolina squad to Jackson Park for a pair of Clayton 68+ League games. It was with a heavy heart that the Older Sluggers took the field having learned the day before of the passing of their friend and teammate Rick Sweeney. Rick passed away last Thursday three days after Henderson County had clinched the regular season title in the Clayton League. Perhaps it was fitting that this game was against Upstate as Rick had qualified with Upstate and planned to play with them in the 2025 National Senior Games in Des Moines, Iowa next August. Rick would have turned 72 years old on Tuesday, September 24th. He will be missed by all who knew him.

Henderson County put up five runs in the top of the first inning of game one and never trailed throughout the game as they rolled to an 18-7 flip-flop win over Upstate. The Older Sluggers had a team batting average of 0.683. Don Ward was the winning pitcher with relief help from David Keith over the last two innings. Four Henderson County players had perfect games at the plate: Don Ward (4-4 with two doubles), Mark Hammer (4-4 with three doubles), Roger Helm (3-3 with two doubles), and Gary Warren (3-3). Also contributing with near-perfect outings were Bob Drew (3-4), Scott Searle (3-4 with a double), Jerry Austin (2-3 with a double), Tim Epley (2-3 with a double), and Don Phipps (2-3).

Game two was very similar to the first game as Henderson County never trailed after an inning. The Older Sluggers carried a thirteen-run lead into the last inning when Upstate scored five runs in the top of the seventh to cut the margin to eight in the Older Sluggers 20-12 victory. Once again Don Ward was the winning pitcher with David Keith once more providing relief on the mound. The team batting average for Henderson County dipped slightly in game two to 0.667 but the Sluggers belted four home runs in game two. The Older Sluggers had six players reach perfection at the plate in game two: Scott Searle (3-3 with a triple and a home run), Mark Hammer (3-3 with a double and a home run), Jim Zitney (3-3), Roger Helm (3-3), Don Phipps (3-3 with a double), and Stan Steinberg (3-3 with a home run). Nearly perfect players included Bob Drew (2-3 with a home run and sacrifice fly), Don Ward (3-4), and Gary Warren (2-3). The two wins wrapped up the regular season for the Older Sluggers who finished in first place with a record of 32-4 in the Clayton 68+ League. Henderson County will be the top seed in the tournament and will finish up play on October 14th at the Parker Meadows Complex in Franklin, NC.

On Wednesday, September 25th, the mixed 60+ Sluggers welcomed the Burnsville Bears to Jackson Park to close out their season. Henderson County mixed 60+ Sluggers were sponsored by **The Pump House Fitness Center** and coached by Bud Bonnema for these games. I received no statistics for these games and there were no entries in Team Snap so I can only report the scores. In game one Henderson County played solid defense and did a double flip flop in picking up a 15-6 win over the Bears. Game two produced another victory by the mixed 60+ team as they defeated Burnsville 21-13. The mixed 60+ squad had a successful season ending with a record of 18-2.

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 go to Henderson County Senior Softball at <https://hcssoftball.com>.