

WHITE SOX HONOUR LARA ANDREWS AND MEL GETTINS

The New Zealand White Sox have paid tributes to two stalwart players who have reached major milestones at the 2018 world championships in Japan.

Infielder Lara Andrews (Hutt Valley) and catcher Mel Gettins (Hawke's Bay) were honoured at a team dinner in Chiba on Wednesday night after notching up their 50th games for the White Sox at the tournament.

Lara, 29, made her 50th appearance against the Netherlands in Game Two last Saturday.

She has since extended her tally to 55, making her 11th equal on the list of most capped White Sox players.

Mel, also 29, brought up her 50th test cap when she came in as a pinch hitter in Tuesday's game against Mexico.

They have become the 19th and 20th players, respectively, to register 50 or more White Sox test appearances against full international teams.

White Sox manager Lyn Lockhart says it is fitting that "Lara and Mel have achieved this honour together" at their fifth world championships.

Mel and Lara both made their White Sox debuts in 2009 after graduating from the Junior White Sox team that played in the 2007 under-19 world championships in Enschede, Holland.

Lyn says both players are important members of the White Sox senior leadership group and "live and breathe softball".

"Lara has been playing for a long period of time for New Zealand and had more than four years overseas, at college and then as the first New Zealander to play in the Pro League.

"She's a massive contributor to this team. She plays her heart out every time she wears the White Sox jersey.

"She's just a very passionate softball player and a great role model."

Away from the diamond, Lara is dedicated to helping develop the next generation by running coaching clinics for junior softball players.

"Softball is her life," Lyn Lockhart says.

"She's been playing exceedingly well here in Japan and has had the hottest bat on the team."

Mel, a left-handed catcher and hitter, has been a vital leader in the White Sox battery in recent campaigns, handling a number of pitchers, including her younger sister Courtney Gettins and longtime Hawke's Bay teammate Rita Hokianga.

"She spent four years at Iona College in the United States perfecting her craft and, like Lara, she's also a big part of our senior leadership team.

Lyn says Mel is the type of player who performs when most needed and brings the best out of people around her.

"Playing softball for New Zealand and playing for the White Sox is just her."

Mel has shown great dedication by commuting to play as a draft player for National Fastpitch Championship teams from her Hawke's Bay base. With no premier women's softball in the Bay, she hones her skills by playing with Rita Hokianga on the Flaxmere men's team.

Lyn says Mel has a good pitcher-catcher relationship with Courtney but can "pull no punches" when the situation requires.

Lyn says both Lara and Mel are held in high regard by their White Sox teammates.

"They won't actually receive their 50th test caps till after the tournament - it's normally done the following year at the National Fastpitch Championship tournament in New Zealand in front of their colleague and peers and the people who support them.

"But we wanted to recognise their achievement here at our team dinner because it's a fabulous milestone for both of them."

FOR THE RECORD

LARA ANDREWS (55 caps) is 11th-equal on the list of most capped White Sox softballers. She shares that spot with four-time world championships medallist Jane Earnshaw.

MEL GETTINS (50 caps) is currently 20th.

The list is led by Rhonda Hira (107), Lesley Monk (102), Kiri Shaw (82), Nardi Clark (75), Char Pouaka (63), Naomi Shaw (60), Gina Weber (59), Helen Townsend (59), Natalie Hazelwood (58), Sheree Cartwright (56), Lara Andrews (55), Jane Earnshaw (55), Zavana Aranga (52), Jackie Smith (52), Fiona Timu (51), Kim Dermott (51), Melisa Upu (51), Cindy Potae (51), Lisa Kersten (51), Mel Gettins (50).

SOFTBALL NEW ZEALAND acknowledges the work done by statistician Elaine Karsten in compiling the list of most capped White Sox players.