

# SOFTBALL NEW ZEALAND ANNUAL AWARDS 2017/18

## SNZ COMMUNITY, OFFICIAL, PLAYER & COACH AWARDS FOR 2017-2018

### **Administrator of the Year - Steve Leppien Waikato**

The Waikato Softball Association has benefited from Steve Leppien's passion, commitment and knowledge. As Chairperson Steve has committed a vast amount of volunteer time to leading the strategic direction of the association, liaising with Council staff, completing funding applications and building a partnership with the Counties Manukau Association to develop a joint men's competition.

Steve is a great connector of people and has an amazing vision for the successful growth of Softball across the Waikato region. Steve has also been the driving force behind several new initiatives that the association implemented over the past season including organising coaching workshops, designing new WKSA merchandise, an inaugural end of season prize giving function for junior reps and senior teams, upgrade of the skin diamond infrastructure and the setup of a working group to focus on increasing senior playing numbers.

Steve is recognised as having integrity, and for his dedication, strong leadership and excellent business acumen, which have all contributed to ensuring the viability and sustainability of softball in the Waikato region.

### **Volunteer of the Year - Debbie Hitakahiwai, Auckland**

Debbie has been a valued member of Waitakere Bears Softball Club for the last 15+ years. She is currently the board treasurer, runs the canteen and manages the U15 Girls Team.

Debbie has been instrumental in organising teams to travel to Australia to experience international softball and has made an enormous contribution to the inaugural Waitakere Bears Elite Softball Academy by creating a sound strategic plan, preparing budgets and securing and vetting key coaching leaders.

Debbie this year was awarded the clubs Most Valuable Club Member and the Eric Kohlhase Award for Auckland Softball Association Club Volunteer of the Year.

Debbie Hitakahiwai is a very deserving winner of the SNZ Volunteer Awards for 2018

### **Domestic Coach of the Year - Steve Deans, Hutt Valley**

Steve Deans was the Head Coach of the successful Hutt Valley Men's team who won the NFC national title in North Harbour earlier this year.

This was a hard-earned victory as the team were affected by injuries and barely made it through the round robin games. The belief he installed in this team to overcome adversity, injuries and perform at the highest level was inspirational and motivational. The HV Men's NFC Team was also team finalist in both the 2018 Hutt Valley Sports Awards and the Sport Wellington Awards.

Steve contributes to the Hutt Valley Green to Gold Development Programme and was the recipient of the 2018 Hutt Valley Softball Coach of the Year award.

Steve Deans is a very deserving winner of the SNZ Domestic Coach of the Year for 2018

### **Personality of the Year - Scott Robertson, Hutt Valley**

Scotty Robertson is a man who stands head and shoulders above everyone in a literal sense. At six foot five his height is as tall as his personality and his booming voice can be heard in all corners of the ball park.

Scotty is friendly, jovial and fun to be around and relates to people of all ages. He is authoritative and knowledgeable on the game and popular with everyone.

Scotty holds many roles in softball. He serves on the Hutt Valley Softball Board, he is the President of the Hutt Valley Junior Association and President of the HV Marist Softball Club.

While he is the assistant coach for the Saints U19 Women's Team and head coach of the Sacred Heart College and Hutt Valley U15 Girls Representative Teams, it is the little ones that Scotty is most loved by. In his role as Junior President, he makes an effort to watch Saturday morning softball and it is here that all the littlies gravitate to him to give a high five or get a hug.

Scotty and his whanau live and breathe softball. If Scotty isn't coaching, managing or administering softball he is there to support his partner Giselle and daughter Bailey.

Scotty Robertson is a very deserving winner of SNZ Personality of the Year Award for 2018

### **Scorer of the Year - Carolyn McQueen, North Harbour**

Carolyn McQueen is a Level 7 Chief Scorer for the North Harbour Softball Association.

She is an active promoter of scoring for North Harbour, Auckland and the wider region and facilitates regular scorer's clinics, encouraging all scorers to attend national tournaments and is always available to answer any questions to do with scoring, statistics and rule interpretations.

Carolyn was this year's North Harbour U17, U19 & U23 Men's representative team scorer.

Her New Zealand Softball roles included being the NZ U23 Men's team scorer in Australia and helping to coordinate scorers for the Oregon Ducks Series in North Harbour.

Carolyn McQueen is a very deserving winner of the SNZ Scorer of the Year Award for 2018

### **Umpire of the Year - Wiremu Tamaki, Wellington**

Wiremu Tamaki in his role as NZ Umpire in Chief, has had a very busy schedule.

He facilitated the introduction of the Strategic Plan and used the formation of committees within his ranks to achieve outstanding results. Part of the Strategic plan was its Vision of allowing the Softball Community to experience quality umpiring and the enjoyment it creates.

He oversaw the completion of the Pathways framework, the introduction of a new and focussed assessment plan for all umpires targeting increased levels and expectations, the secondment of staff to assist with the re-writing of the rulebook in its new format and the continued involvement with exchange programmes in

Canada, USA and Australia to provide opportunities for umpires to gain excellence in umpiring internationally.

With all this responsibility Wiremu has still found time to get out there umpiring in all grades on weekends, controlling Junior to Adult softballers on the field and leading the way by example.

As NZ Chief Umpire, he has set up the Matau Trophy, was the TCU at the Oregon Ducks series, the Czech Republic series and the Women's Open.

From the time Wiremu took over leading the Umpiring Programme, he has worked tirelessly to present a united group focussed on delivering World's best Practices and aligning perfectly with our stated Mission: "To lead and deliver quality and professional umpiring providing enjoyment and support to all those involved."

His nomination is fully supported by all those on the National Umpiring Staff.

Wiremu Tamaki is a very deserving winner of the SNZ Umpire of the Year Award for 2018

### **National Coach of the Year - Thomas Makea**

(This award is being made outside the eligibility criteria due to Mark Sorenson's world championship win being recognised in the same year at the 2017 annual awards)

Thomas Makea is a world-class athlete who has turned his hand to coaching.

He has coached the Junior Black Sox since 2013 to the present day.

The team have attended 3 world championships within this time and medalled all three times.

Congratulations are extended to Thomas Makea with his podium finish in Prince Albert in July this year.

The 2017-2018 Player of the Year Awards are determined by national coaches and will appear in the following year's annual report.

### **Women's Emerging Player of the Year - Mereana Makea, Wellington**

Mereana Makea continues to achieve in softball whilst rising through the ranks to senior level.

Playing for the Florida South-western State College in the NJCAA Conference, Makea hit .447 with a team best 50 RBI's as a sophomore.

She played in the Junior White Sox Team in the WBSC World Champs in Florida last July and returned to play for the White Sox in the December Oregon Ducks Series held in North Harbour & Hastings.

Makea first debuted for the White Sox in 2016

### **Male Emerging Player of the Year - Jackson Watt, Canterbury**

Jackson Watt is a versatile all-rounder who has made great strides in the past year.

He was in the Canterbury U23 team that won the inaugural national title; he secured a Black Sox trial in February earlier this year, was named the Canterbury Softball Player of the Year for 2018 and is currently making his debut for the Black Sox in Prague

### **Women's Pitcher of the Year - Courtney Gettins, USA**

Courtney Gettins moved from the NJCAA Florida South-western Junior College to the Crimson Tide Alabama NCAA Div 1 Team.

She cemented a starting position in many games for Bama where the team made their 20th consecutive appearance at the NCAA College World Champs. Alabama are ranked 14th out of all NCAA Div 1 Teams.

Courtney returned home to play in the White Sox Team in the Oregon Ducks Series played in North Harbour and her home town Hastings

### **Male Pitcher of the year - Nik Hayes, Hutt Valley**

There is no better performance or feeling than being on the mound securing a gold medal for the Black Sox at the WBSC Men's World Championship game in Whitehorse last year.

Nik Hayes was strong in heart, strength and desire to pull off the game and hold the Australian team down with fast and accurate pitching.

Nik also competed in the Czech Republic Series and was the winning pitcher for the Hutt Valley Men's National Fastpitch Team

### **Women's Player of the Year - Lara Andrews Hutt Valley**

Lara Andrews has had an outstanding season.

She was the catalyst for the Hutt Valley Women's NFC Team that won the national title and was rewarded by being named tournament Most Valuable Player.

Her club team Te Aroha won the Open Women's Club Championships with Lara collecting the Top Batter and Most Valuable Player Awards.

In July last year Lara played in a series in Chiba, Japan and more recently against the Oregon Ducks in North Harbour. Lara was a finalist in the 2018 Hutt Valley Sports Awards.

Lara has been in the NZ White Sox Team since 2009 and has attended 5 Open Women's World Championship events including the recent WBSC World Championship Tournament in Chiba, Japan.

Lara is an outstanding athlete who is the only New Zealand player to play in the US Women's Pro-League.

### **Male Player of the Year - Joel Evans, Hutt Valley**

Joel has had an outstanding year.

On the domestic front he led the Hutt Valley NFC Men's Team to first place often playing in the unfamiliar pitching role. The HV team broke an 18 year drought when securing the title and Joel was named the NFC Most Valuable Player. Joel's outstanding consistent form has helped his Dodgers club team secure many tournament wins during the season.

He was named supreme winner at the 2018 Hutt Valley Sports Awards and was a runner up in the Sport Wellington Awards.

Joel played in the 2018 February Series in North Harbour against the Czech Republic Team but it was in Whitehorse at the WBSC Men's World Championships in July 2017 where Joel shall forever be remembered for slamming a grand slam home run against the Aussies to secure a Black Sox 7th World Championship Title.

### **SOFTBALL NZ SOFTBALLER OF THE YEAR**

As selected from the finalists in the Community, Officials, Player & Coach Awards

#### **Softball of the Year – Joel Evans, Hutt Valley**

### **SOFTBALL NZ DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS**

#### **Distinguished Service Award - Ronnie Gurney, North Harbour**

Ronnie has been involved in Softball in the North Harbour Softball Association since 1986.

She started at the RNZN (Navy) Softball Club in various roles over 10 years including Secretary, Team Manager, Senior Delegate, Club Scorer and Gear Steward. In 1996 she moved to the Northcote Softball Club to be Team Scorer for the Premier Men's side and in 2004 was elected Club Secretary, a position she held for 3 years. In 2007 Ronnie moved to Hibiscus Coast Softball Club, continuing to score games for many of the club teams and again was Club Secretary between 2010 until 2018.

For North Harbour Softball Assn, Ronnie was on the Executive Committee between 1988 to 1996 and in various other roles over the years including Administration Officer, Fixtures Officer, Slow Pitch Convener, 25th Jubilee Committee, Gear Steward, Rep Co-ordinator, RPST Secretary and Secondary Schools Convener.

She has also assisted in numerous NHSA hosted softball tournaments over the years as Organiser, Secretary, Rep Team Scorer, Team Liaison Officer and Volunteer.

Ronnie has been a member of the North Harbour Scorer's Assn since 1995 and served as Secretary and NHSA Chief Scorer between 2004 - 2006.

She is also a member of the New Zealand Softball Scorer's Association from 1994 to present. Over that time, she has worked as Chief Scorer, Statistician, Official and Scorer and was the SNZ Chief Statistician between 2007 and 2013.

Ronnie has been awarded a Civic Award from North Shore City Council in 2002 for voluntary services to the community and a NHSA Service Award in 2005 for services to North Harbour Softball.

Ronnie is a very deserving recipient of a SNZ Distinguished Service Award.

#### **Distinguished Service Award - Garry Davidson, Hutt Valley**

Garry's service to softball in the Hutt Valley has been over many decades.

Garry started playing softball in the early 1960's. Shortly after this time he joined the Hutt Valley Marist Clubs Committee and soon after took over the treasurer's position, a role he still holds to this very day 50+ years later.

Gary has filled every possible governance and administrative role at junior and senior club for Marist and similarly for the Hutt Valley Softball Association. In the Hutt Valley Association he has served on the Board, been President, Treasurer and SNZ delegate. He holds a Distinguished Service Award and Life Membership for Hutt Valley Softball.

He has held similar roles on the HV Junior Softball Assc and the Central Region Committee.

Gary has also been a successful coach winning national titles with the Marist Club Women's Team and the Hutt Valley Women's Team.

It doesn't stop there. For many years Garry was seen whizzing around Fraser Park on a quad bike tending to diamond preparation for Saturday games and tournaments.

Garry's Davidson's dedication and commitment to Hutt Valley Softball is legendary and he is a very deserving recipient of a SNZ Distinguished Service Award

#### **Distinguished Service Award - Craig Waterhouse, Hawke's Bay**

Craig Waterhouse has been involved with softball as a player and administrator for a number of years in both the Manawatu and Hawkes Bay Regions,

Craig was able to make use of his financial acumen and managerial skills to assist in developing and strengthening a wide range of initiatives in both regions.

Craig served on the board of Softball Manawatu for several years, both as financial director and chairman and initiated systems and operational changes that are still in place to this day. He also established a new club – the Blue Sox.

In Hawkes Bay Craig has held a number of important roles. As Financial and Governance advisor, Club Chairman, Tournament organiser for both local and SNZ events, Representative Manager and Coach.

An enduring legacy of his organisational ability is arguably one of the most recognised tournaments on the New Zealand Softball Calendar. The annual tournament Fun in the Sun, originally known as the Stuart Hape Memorial Tournament, was established by Craig 33 years ago and is still organised and run by him today.

At National Level Craig served 2 terms on the Board of Softball New Zealand and was highly regarded for his knowledge of finance and governance.

Craig Waterhouse is a very deserving recipient of a SNZ Distinguished Service Award

#### **SOFTBALL NZ HALL OF FAME**

#### **SNZ Hall of Fame Award - Rhys Casley, Hutt Valley**

Four-time ISC All World Team selection, NZ Club Champion, various provincial senior and junior championships, NZ Men's Player of the Year, and several MVP awards all provide testament to the outstanding playing achievements of Rhys Casley.

It is however his career in the NZ Black Sox, culminating in Rhys captaining the National side to a World Championship victory in 2013, that stands him as one of our true Softball greats.

A NZ debut in 2001/2 introduced this big hitting second baseman to the Black Sox. He was an outstanding fielder with huge range, coupled with the ability to also play in the outfield. Rhys was part of the team that won the Silver medal at the 2009 World's. At that tournament Rhys was in the top three of all batting averages at the ISF Championship confirming his status as one of the World's best players.

In 2010, Rhys became captain of the NZ Black Sox. He was a player that epitomised everything the Black Sox are about. Humble, respectful, tough, resilient, hardworking and above all he had Mana. Rhys led this team with absolute class and professionalism for the next four years, turning the disappointment of the silver medal in 2009 into a motivator to readdress the values and culture of this group. His ability to lead the change required off the field, led to a change on the diamond. This change was challenging but his leadership was without peer, Rhys transformed the group with a drive and determination that was simply outstanding.

As he battled injury, the 2013 World Series victory is affectionately remembered for the heroics of Rhys. Known as "captain courageous" with his three-run home run he is now part of softball's folk lore.

It is an absolute honour this evening to induct Rhys Casley into Softball NZs Hall of Fame.

### SOFTBALL NZ TEST CAP RECIPIENTS

Test caps are awarded when any senior Black or White Sox team plays a full international game.  
Caps are presented at 2 milestones; 100 caps or 50 caps  
(Plaques & Caps/Visors awarded)

All national players are recognised between 1996 and July 2018. Additionally two others have recently achieved this status whilst on tour with the Black Sox in Europe. They are Thomas and Ben Enoka who will be recognised at a future event.

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| Melanie Gettins<br>51 Tests | White Sox 2009 – current (9 years)<br>Attended a Junior World Championship and 5 World Championships<br>NB: 2 year cycle for WC  |
| Lara Andrews<br>58 Tests    | White Sox 2009 – current (9 years)<br>Attended a Junior World Championship and 5 World Championships<br>NB: 2 year cycle for WC  |
| Rhys Casley<br>68 Tests     | Black Sox 2002 – 2013 a playing career of 11 years<br>He captained the Black Sox in 2013 for a Gold Medal<br>Inducted into the SNZ Hall of Fame tonight  |
| Patrick Shannon<br>72 Tests | Black Sox 1995 – 2013 a playing career of 18 years<br>Won 3 Gold Medals<br>Is in the SNZ Hall of Fame  |
| Nardi Leonard<br>75 Tests   | White Sox 1983 – 1995 a playing career of 12 years<br>She captained the White Sox between 1992-1994<br>Attended 3 World Championships<br>Is in the SNZ Hall of Fame  |
| Mark Sorenson<br>94 Tests   | Black Sox 1984 – 2004 playing career of 18 years<br>Attended a Junior World Championship and 6 World Championships.<br>Captained the Jnr BS in 1985 and Black Sox from 1989 to 2000<br>Won a Jnr World Title and 4 Gold Medals |

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|                                  | <p>Is in the SNZ and ISF Hall of Fame and was awarded a MNZM Government Honour.</p>  |  |
| Jarrad Martin (100)<br>113 Tests | <p>Black Sox 1991 – 2013 a playing career of 22 years.<br/>He captained the Black Sox from 2001 to 2004<br/>Attended a Junior World Championship and 5 World Championships.<br/>Won a Jnr World Title and 4 Gold Medals<br/>Is in the SNZ and ISF Hall of Fame and was awarded a MNZM Government Honour.</p> |  |
| Thomas Makea (100)<br>121 Tests  | <p>Black Sox 1994 – 2014 playing career of 20 years<br/>Attended a Junior World Championship and 5 World Championships Won 3 Gold Medals</p>   |  |

### **SOFTBALL BASEBALL SOFTBALL CONFEDERATION AWARDS**

- WBSC International Player of the Year – Nathan Nukunuku
- WBSC International Coach of the Year – Mark Sorenson
- WBSC International Federation of the Year