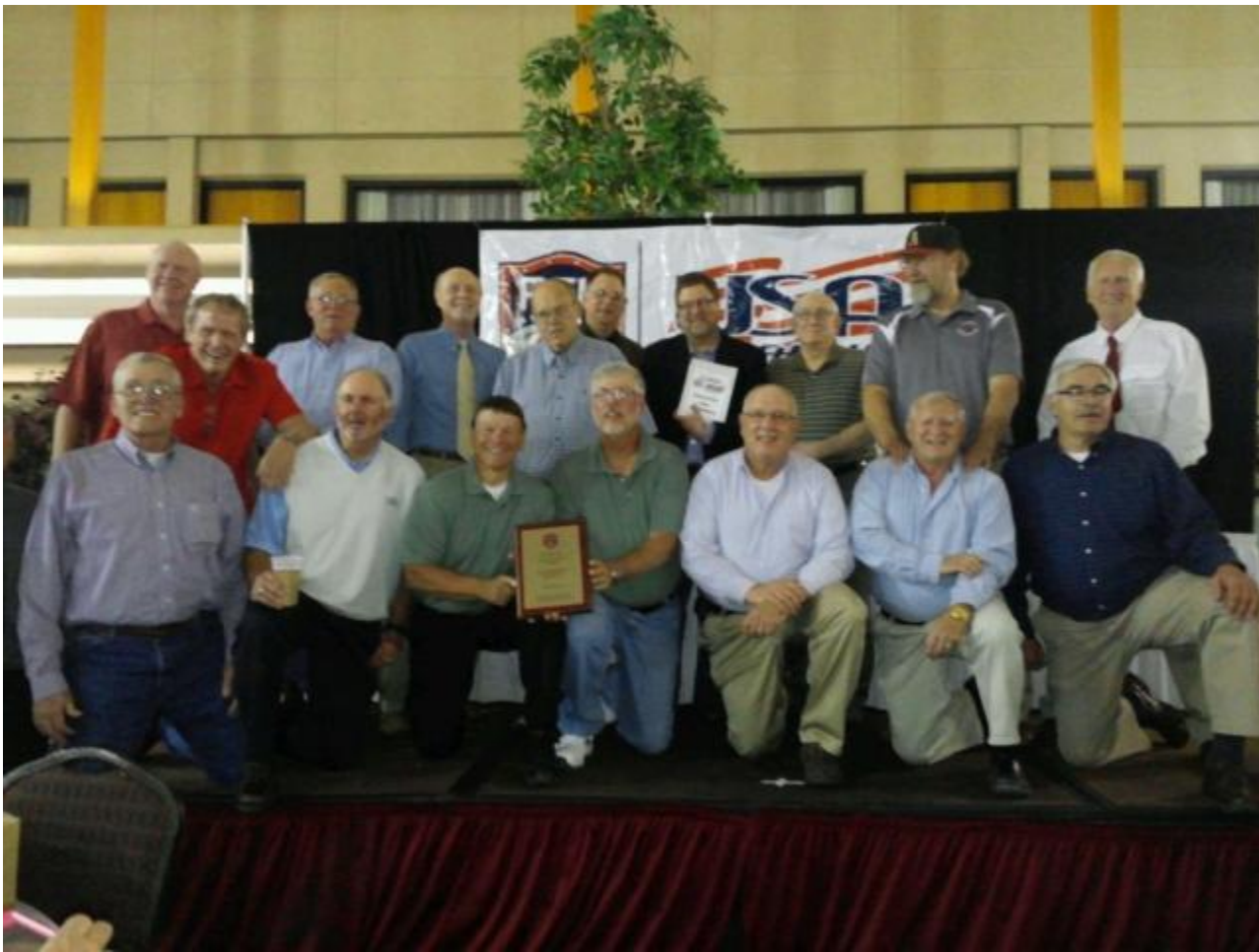


# The Alton Bucks are remembered as one-of-a-kind team in Hall of Fame induction

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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The Alton Bucks, a highly successful softball team in the 1970s, has been on a tour of recognition at city council, county board and most of all, an Illinois Amateur Softball Association inductee into its Hall of Fame.

Recently, several members of the Bucks were reunited to receive the Hall of Fame status in Illinois. It was a great time for the former team members to reunite and spend a night together again.

Mike Drake was one of the leaders of putting the team back together for the Hall of Fame induction. He was moved and honored at entering the softball Hall of Fame.

“Many of us played baseball in high school together and after high school many of us weren’t playing college baseball and wanted to stay involved together, so we played fast pitch and slow pitch softball. Half of the team were good friends already. I was a pitcher and catcher.”

The Bucks got together in the beginning in 1971. Drake was only 18 years old at the time the Bucks started and was the youngest player on the team.

“We had a fast outfield and played good defense and could run the bases,” Drake said. “The next thing we knew we were beating these other established teams. Our manager was Dan Beiser and he was quite a motivator.”

The Dummies in Carrollton were a popular team back in that era and eventually The Bucks challenged the Dummies.

Steve Angelo, was also a member of the team. He has been a long-time assistant coach on the Marquette baseball squad. He said the Hall of Fame induction was “quite an honor.”

“It was especially great going in with that group of guys,” he said. “I hope other teams realize we are not bragging on ourselves. There were a lot of good teams back then. The group of guys we played with were all friends before this started in grade school and high school and remained friends after we played softball together. We were a family.”

Drake said the members of the Bucks were convinced at some point they could play with and beat any opponent.

“We were young enough and didn’t know any better,” he said. “We wanted to play the best teams we could play. If you play the best that is all you can ask for.”

At one point, the Bucks reeled off a 40-game win streak and one year had a 106-20 record and won several tournaments. The Bucks won a state title in 1985 and had some second-place finishes.

The Bucks took close to 20 players to the banquet and a large entourage of family and friends. Drake said the Bucks definitely had the biggest entourage present.

“It was a fantastic experience,” Drake said. “Many of us saw each other grow up with the Bucks. In 1975 the Bucks were struggling for a sponsor and Eddie Sholar came to the rescue to sponsor the team when no one else would.”

Eddie’s sponsorship meant an incredible amount to the team, Drake said, and the players have never forgotten him for what he did.

The induction ceremony was definitely a walk down memory lane for the Bucks and just another occasion for some good friends to reunite and spend a fabulous night together.

As Angelo said, the Bucks were not just a softball team, but almost like a family member to each other and the former players still treat each other that way, some four decades later.