

World Series 2002

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Portland won the bid to play host to the World Series two years ago and has been preparing for the arrival of teams from most major cities from Rhode Island to San Diego ever since.

The efforts to coordinate the event have been massive. "I've started talking in my sleep," Roy Melani laughs, recounting the impression his partner does of him directing and delegating people in the middle of the night.

According to Melani, director of the Rose City Softball Association and Series 2002 Committee, a total of 125 teams are coming to Portland from across the nation. That means about 2,300 queer softball players, plus many friends and partners, will descend on Portland as early as Aug. 17.

Take a moment.

Think of all those gay people.

And in spite of the enormous pressure that's been put on Melani and the 13 other planning committee members for the past two years, the benefits will be immense.

"The city that gets the World Series gets quite an economic boost. When you think of all those people staying for one week—they have to eat, they fly in, they have cars, they have entertainment. They're looking at it being a week of vacation," Melani asserts.

Randy Wampler, the manager and left fielder for Boxxes Storm, has been to four World Series. "Each time I had a terrific time," he says. "The events and the games were equally fun. The atmosphere around the city can be very exciting. So many people from so many different places. You make friends from all

over the country, then get to see many of them in subsequent years."

Ana Gonzalez, shortstop for Mixed Fruit—the only local Women's Competitive team to go to the series—is also excited about the opportunity to see faraway friends. Hers are from Kansas City, Mo. But, of course, at this national level of play the social aspects for many players are certainly not as important as "kickin' some arse," as Gonzalez says.

Packer says that it's easy to get distracted by the social aspects of the World Series but that his team is very focused on the competition.

"There is a lot of meaning behind this World Series for us.

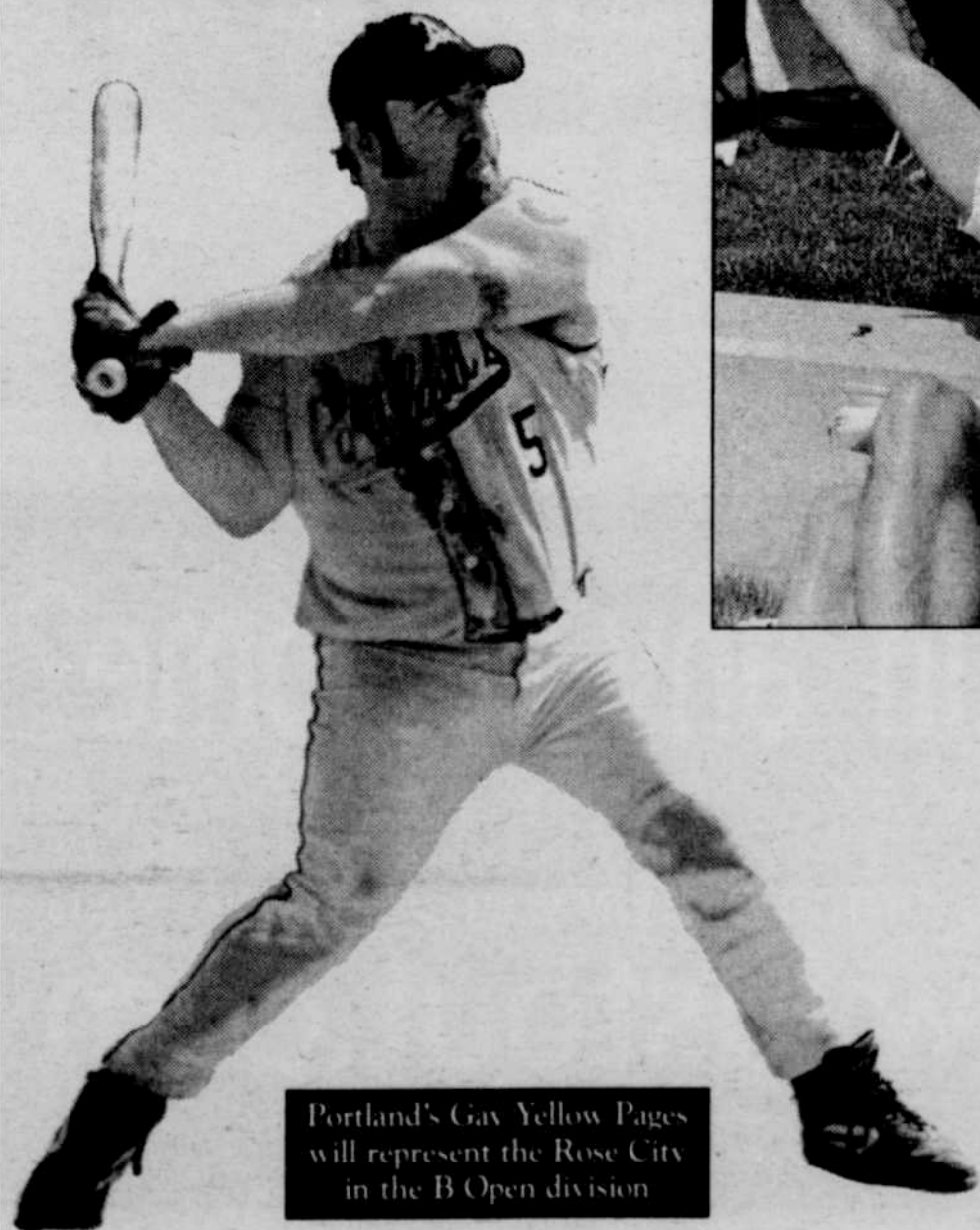
It's pressure to do well as the home team. But it's also a great opportunity to prove we can. It's also a chance for us to show that you can play the game well and have a great time doing so. We are a team that is about 'win at all costs,' especially when it comes to the dignity of your teammates."

All Portland teams will have their minds on competition in this World Series, as they're hoping to cash in on the home field advantage. Melani thinks most of them have the talent and the momentum to take home trophies.

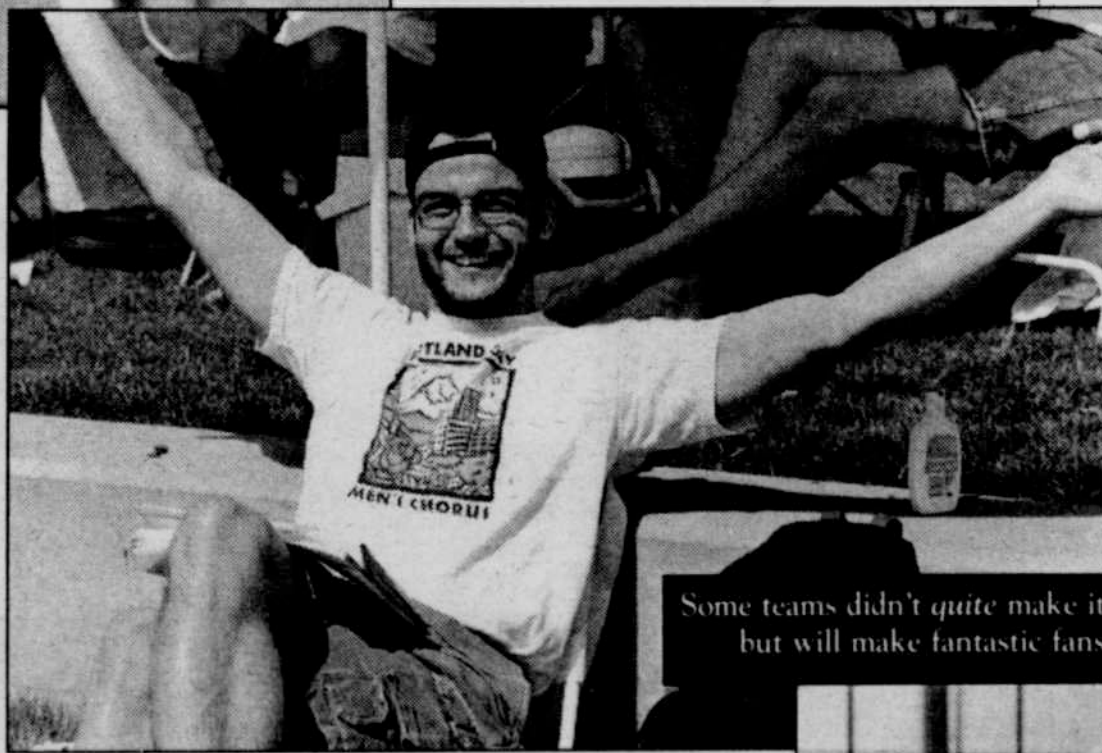
"There is an unwritten rule that home field advantage does do something," he states, although in the past 25 years only three host



Team Betty is pretty pleased to be headed to World Series 2002



Portland's Gay Yellow Pages will represent the Rose City in the B Open division



Some teams didn't quite make it to the series but will make fantastic fans anyway



cities have ever taken home first-place trophies. "I would love to add Portland to that list."

Packer says one of the hardest aspects of any World Series tournament is playing on strange turf and how disconcerting and distracting it can be to a team's rhythm. Hopefully that will be an advantage for all the Portland teams.

However, luck will only get you so far.

In order to prepare for the series, Portland's Gay Yellow Pages and the Boxxes Storm are at least two teams that have continued practicing, scrimmaging and playing in tournaments to keep their conditioning consistent.

"It is a long week of potentially many games. We have to make sure we are conditioned to play every day for as long as it takes, not just weekends like we are used to," Packer explains.

Portland's Gay Yellow Pages, according to Packer, has even come up with a secret weapon it is ready to pull out just for the World Series.

But Gonzalez has taken a more mystical approach to preparation. She's "visualizing cohesion while brushing my teeth...oh, and highlighting my hair."

You know it's a big deal when people are making up secret weapons, talking in their sleep and highlighting their hair.

See you at the ballpark. ☑

All games in the WORLD SERIES are played at Delta Park's William V. Owens Complex, 10737 N. Union Court, and Hillsboro's Gordon Faber Recreational Complex, 4450 N.W. 229th Ave. Visit www.portlandgaysoftball.com after Aug. 19 for a schedule of games.

MELISSA SAYLER is an aspiring carpenter who struck out often and was traumatized by her friend's older sister in the bleachers during her seventh-grade attempt to play softball.