

POST'S
GUIDE
to the
PAN AM
GAMES



SOFTBALL

GUIDE TO THE GAMES

BY ERIKA GILBERT, NATIONAL POST

Venue

President's Choice Ajax Pan Am
Ballpark

Venue acronym

AJX

Landmark status

Low

The existing Ajax Sportsplex was modified for the Games; four “pinwheel” fields will host the ballgames. It is located at Audley Road and Taunton Road, which is hard to get to from downtown but should at least be mildly amusing to Star Wars fans.

Other events at venue

Baseball

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Transit options

The designated transit stop for the ballpark is the Ajax Go Station (take the Lakeshore East Go Train). There will be a Durham Region Transit shuttle to the ballpark from there. If that sounds like too much work, there is parking available about 300 metres from the entrance for \$10 (cash only) for the driving crowd. There is also a bicycle valet if you are coming from elsewhere in Ajax, or wish to try to compensate for all the sitting you'll be doing during the game with a lengthy bicycle trek.

For exact directions, try:

Triplinx.ca

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Schedule

Men

July 12-16 Round-robin games

July 17 Semifinals

July 18 Bronze- and gold-medal games

Women

July 19-23 Round-robin games

July 24 Semifinals

July 25 Bronze-medal game

July 26 Gold-medal game

[See the full competition schedule at the Pan Am website](#)

How it works

It's the same idea as baseball, but shorter (seven innings) and with a larger ball and smaller diamond and field. The major difference is pitching: softball pitchers must throw underhanded. As in

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baseball, pitchers throw different types of pitches — fastball, curveball, etc. — that vary in speed and movement. Although pitching in softball is slower, the shorter distance to the plate means a batter facing an elite female softball pitcher throwing 70-plus mph will have less time to react to the pitch than a baseball player facing a major-league fastball. Elite male softball pitchers can throw in the 80s.

Teams competing

Women

Brazil, Canada, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, U.S.

Men

Argentina, Canada, Dominican Republic, Mexico, U.S., Venezuela

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Canada's team

Men

Ryan Boland, Goulds, N.L.; Sean Cleary, Harbour Main, N.L.; Jeff Ellsworth, St. Lawrence, P.E.I.; Brad Ezekiel, Harbour Main, N.L.; Ian Fehrman, Townsend, Ont.; Jason Hill, St. John's; Brandon Horn, Waterloo, Ont.; Paul Koert, Stouffville, Ont.; Derek Mayson, North Vancouver; Steve Mullaley, Freshwater, N.L.; Mathieu Roy, St-Gervais, Que.; Jason Sanford, Durham, N.S.; Kevin Schellenberg, Squamish, B.C.; Andy Skelton, Scarborough, Ont.; Ryan Wolfe, Melbourne, Ont.

Women

Jenna Caira, Toronto; Jocelyn Cater, Delta, B.C.; Larissa Franklin, Maple Ridge, B.C.;

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Sara Groenewegen, Surrey, B.C.;
Megan Gurski, Dalmeny, Sask.;
Victoria Hayward, Toronto;
Sara Hopwood, Richmond, B.C.;
Karissa Hovinga, Edmonton;
Joey Lye, Toronto; Erika Polidori,
Brantford, Ont.; Kaleigh Rafter,
Guelph, Ont.; Jenn Salling, Port
Coquitlam, B.C.; Megan Timpf,
Port Dover, Ont.; Natalie Wide-
man, Mississauga, Ont.; Jen Yee,
North Delta, B.C.

Tournament format

A round-robin schedule is followed by two semifinals for the top four teams. The semifinal winners move on to the gold-medal game while the losers play for bronze.

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Results from 2011 Pan Ams

Women

1. U.S.; 2. Canada; 3. Cuba

Men

No men's tournament

Why it's worth watching

Softball has been out of the Olympics since 2008 and won't be back until 2022 at the earliest, so this is one of the few chances to watch an elite competition. And this slightly different bat-and-ball sport could be a nice change of pace for baseball fans. Softball: baseball's dance remix. Plus, it'll give your rec softball team something to aspire to.

Competition outlook

Women

The gold is likely to go to one of

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the Americas' two northernmost countries. The U.S. has won every Pan Am Games tournament but one; Canada won in 1983, and has taken home the lion's share of the silver. Recent U.S. successes include a gold medal at the World Cup of Softball X Invitational this month (Puerto Rico and Canada were third and fourth, respectively) and a second-place finish in the ISF XIV Women's World Championship last summer (Canada was fourth).

Men

If you like to root, root, root for the home team, this is the tournament for you: Canada won gold at every Pan Am Games from the event's debut in 1979 until the sport was dropped in 2003,

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and this year's team is fresh off a win at the Men's World Softball Championship earlier this month. The U.S. has been the runner-up at every previous Pan Am Games.