

US CONTINUES TO ROLL WITH WIN OVER CHINA

Aug. 17, 2004, 10:35 a.m. (ET)

Athens, GREECE – A perfect 4-0 in Olympic competition, the USA Softball Olympic team continued to roll along in round-robin play with a 4-0 victory over 1996 silver medalist China. A one-hit performance from two-time Olympic gold medalist Lori Harrigan (Las Vegas, NV) led the U.S. to the victory in her first start in these Olympic Games. Harrigan, a south paw that works as a security supervisor at the Bellagio Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, totaled eight strikeouts while allowing only a bunt single to the lead-off batter in the first inning.

The U.S. pitching staff has yet to allow a run in the 2004 Olympic Games and has given up just six total hits in the first four games. Outscoring opponents 24-0, the win marks the 14th shutout victory for Team U.S. in Olympic history and moves its current win streak to 74-0.

“I definitely felt better today than I did against Italy,” Harrigan said. “I was really loose and could move the ball a lot more. The heat actually helped me stay warm and in the game.”

The U.S. bats provided Harrigan with an early lead jumping ahead 2-0 after the first inning. A lead-off fielding error by Chinese shortstop Qiang Wei, allowed table setter Natasha Watley (Irvine, CA) to reach first. Watley, who is hitting a scorching .462 with an on base percentage of .533, looked as if she would be left stranded after two consecutive outs but Chinese pitcher Lixia Zhang kept the U.S. offensive attack alive with back-to-back walks to load the bases. Lovieanne Jung (Fountain Valley, CA), who has shown patience at the plate the entire tournament, waited for her pitch and drove a two RBI base hit to left center to put two runs on the board. The first inning has been extremely productive for Team USA scoring in three of the four games so far.

The left-handed bat of two-time Olympian Leah O'Brien-Amico (Chino Hills, CA) added a security run in the bottom half of the second with a stand-up double to left field that scored Watley, who reached on walk and stole second. Amico's double was the ninth extra base hit for the U.S. in the Games.

Catcher Jenny Topping (Whittier, CA), making her first ever Olympic start, provided the U.S. with its 10th extra base hit of the Games when she belted a triple the right field to kick start the U.S. in the third. Topping, who is 3-for-3 so far in these Olympics, was left stranded after consecutive strikeouts.

Silent through the first three games, power hitter Crystl Bustos (Canyon Country, CA) finally connected in the bottom of the fifth driving a solo home run to left field for her second hit of the tournament.

The U.S. threatened to bust the game open in the bottom of the sixth inning with no outs and two runners on thanks to another Topping base hit. A pitching change from the Chinese put right-hander Wei Lu in the circle who managed to work out of the jam. Harrigan and crew held the Chinese scoreless in the seventh to secure its fourth victory before heading into Wednesday's match-up against northern foe Canada. Set for battle

at 5 p.m., Canada, who is coming off a solid eight-inning 1-0 win over Japan, is currently 1-3 in competition.

About ASA

The Amateur Softball Association, founded in 1933, is the National Governing Body of softball in the United States and a member of the United States Olympic Committee. The ASA has become one of the nation's largest sports organizations and now sanctions competition in every state through a network of 91 local associations. The ASA has grown from a few hundred teams in the early days to over 240,000 teams today, representing a membership of more than three million. For more information on the ASA, visit www.asasoftball.com.

About USA Softball

USA Softball is the brand created, operated and owned by the ASA that links the USA Men's, Women's, Junior Boys' and Junior Girls' National Team programs together. USA Softball is responsible for training, equipping and promoting these four National Teams to compete in international and domestic competitions. The USA Softball Women's National Team is one of the only two women's sports involved in the Olympic movement to capture back-to-back gold medals at the Olympic Games since 1996. The U.S. women have also won seven World Championship titles including the last five consecutive.

###