



Base hit: Katrina Belcher, shown here swinging the bat during a recent Major Metro Women's Softball Conference game, joined Southfield-based Close Encounters in the mid-1980s. Close Encounters is coming off one of its best seasons ever.

Major Metro delivers hit for women's softball

BY CHRIS MAYER
STAFF WRITER

On this night Jack Grubb and John Powell line-up on different sides of the diamond, managers of opposing teams. But together they've helped cultivate women's slowpitch softball in Michigan.

Grubb, of Walled Lake, and Powell, a Southfield resident, are central figures in Michigan's United States Slowpitch Softball Association women's program and the ultra-competitive USSSA Major Metro Women's Softball Conference.

Their credentials are impressive: Grubb is the longtime USSSA state women's director, president of the Major Metro Conference, manager of original Major Metro member Michigan Cougars and a USSSA Michigan Hall of Fame inductee (director

Encounters swept a doubleheader from Grubb's Cougars last Thursday. It meant two more wins for the two-time defending Major Metro champions, coming off one of their best seasons ever.

The tradition continues

It's funny how athletic squads devise team names. Close Encounters evolved in 1980, and the team name came from the popular movie, Powell said. "Star Wars and Close Encounters of the Third Kind were two of the big movies of that time, and I can remember we were inside a sporting goods store looking for uniforms and trying to think of a team name. Those two movie titles came up and one of the players chose Close Encounters."

'Last year was probably the most rewarding season of all. That team was consistent, came to play every day and was very successful in tournament play.'

John Powell
—Close Encounters manager

In its 17th official season, Close Encounters is recognized as one of the oldest and successful existing softball clubs in the tri-county area.

"We're just like one big family," said Katrina Belcher, who came on board in 1993 and has played every field position except catcher. "Other teams are always gunning to beat Close Encounters, but we've earned that tradition."

Indeed, Powell's close-knit teams have always excelled on the diamond — particularly the previous three seasons.

Close Encounters posts a 58-28 record and places in the top 10 in nine tournaments in 1994.

The 1996 season results in a 49-22 mark. The team secures Major Metro and state championships, a third-place finish at the USSSA Great Lakes Women's B Divisional Tournament, and for second consecutive year a No. 2 ranking in the Class-B 20 National USSSA women's division.

In 1998, the powerhouse Lady Encounters capture the coveted No. 1 national ranking in Class B and place second with a 7-2 record at the 24-team Divisional Tournament in Shippensburg, Pa. The history-making season also includes 64-12 overall and 24-1 Major Metro records.

"Last year was probably the most rewarding season of all," said Powell, who played baseball at Morehouse College in Atlanta and presently works for Comerica Bank. "That team was consistent, came to play every day and was very successful in tournament play. I was exceed-

ingly proud of my players for the commitment they made to me and to Close Encounters."

Because they finished atop the national rankings in 1996, Close Encounters began play this season at the Class A level to abide by USSSA rules. The team stood 4-2 in the Major Metro as of Thursday's games, and all signs point to "another rewarding campaign."

Powell is especially looking forward to the Aug. 2-8 Michigan National Invitational Tournament at Liberty Park in Sterling Heights. Other pertinent events include the women's state tournament Aug. 16-17 in Dearborn and the Class A National Tournament Aug. 29-Sept. 1 in Kalamazoo.

"We're off to a slow start," Powell said. "Bad weather has canceled some games and we haven't had our whole team together on a consistent basis, but we know we're capable of playing well. It's a noticeable difference against Class A teams, but I'm confident we'll do well. The Michigan N.I.T. should have some tremendous teams and will give us a good indication where we stand."

The 1997 Close Encounters roster features: Belcher; Heather Arioli; A.J. Ayers; Karen Baird; Chris Bicknell; Yvonne Davis; Theresa Gibson (a 1993 USSSA Michigan Hall of Fame inductee); Colleen Kmiecik; Teri Lepard; Kelly Lino; Vicki Lucas; Kim Maher and Wanda Peruski. Powell is also flanked by top-notch assistant coaches Rick Bicknell and Keith Edwards.

The Major Metro Women's Softball Conference, the second largest competitive league in the United States Slowpitch Softball Association women's program, kicked off its 15th season in May.

Conference games take place Thursday evenings at Southfield City in Detroit (located off 8 Mile just east of Woodward) and feature two of the league's original squads — Southfield-based Close Encounters and Walled Lake-based Michigan Cougars. The season runs through mid-August.

Close Encounters, the two-time defending Major Metro champion, is coming off a majestic 1996 season, when Coach John Powell's team rose to the top of the USSSA Women's Class B rankings, which involve a point system based on overall league and tournament performances.

Below are the 33 teams that make up the Metro Major Conference for 1997. Cities in parentheses represent where teams' home fields are located. Standings and results in the Recreation Center.

Team Phoenix (Rochester)
Hot Chocolate (Detroit)
Incognito (Detroit)
Easton/Final Cut (Windsor, Ont.)
Strictly Business (Detroit)
Close Encounters (Southfield)
Team Milano (Sterling Heights)
Ladies in the Mix (Beverly Hills)
Red Dogs (Inkster)
Golden Stars (Detroit)
Michigan Cougars (Walled Lake)
Wreckers (Farmington)
Brew Crew (Warren)

Razmig Boghikian, of Southfield, scored a hole in one at Glen Oaks in Farmington Hills May 20. Boghikian used an 8-iron to ace the 140-yard 16th hole.

WMGA
Faulkwood Shores was the latest stop on the Women's Metropolitan Golf Association circuit. Nancy Coyne, of Farmington Hills, and Judy Kovalik, of Bloomfield Hills, were among the top finishers in Wednesday's championship

flight.
Championship Flight
Low Gross — Janina Jacobs (St. Clair Shores), 41-42-83; Second — Nancy Coyne (Farmington Hills), 41-43-84; Low Net — Judy Kovalik (Bloomfield Hills), 90-16-74.

1st Flight
Low Gross — Sara Orwick (Royal Oak), 49-44-93 and Celeste Rooney (Royal Oak), 48-45-93; Second — Shirley Easterbrooks (Milford), 49-49-98, Diane Murphy (Metamora), 50-49-98 and Judi Stutzman (Huntington Woods), 48-50-98; Low

Pontiac resident Maggy Zidar and Bloomfield Hills resident Donna Olson placed fifth and sixth, respectively, during Tuesday's ITT Automotive Detroit Grand Prix women's 6K Run on Belle Isle.

Race results follow below.

TENNIS RESULTS	
1. April Pym, 27, (Windsor, Ontario)	19-19
6. Maggy Zidar, 47, (Pontiac)	20-52
8. Donna Olson, 47, (Bloomfield Hills)	21-63
10. Pura Thomas, 52, (Farmington)	21-45
13. Anne Thomas, 55, (Walled Lake)	21-55
20. Julie Burrows, 55, (Troy)	22-30
23. Marlene McWilliams, 54, (Rochester)	22-20
26. Lori Barker, 43, (West Bloomfield)	23-40
32. Bonita Hanson, 46, (West Bloomfield)	24-20
42. Angela Benavides, 27, (Lathrup Village)	25-59
45. Amy Edwards, 31, (Rochester)	25-54
56. Anne Wright, 30, (Troy)	26-03
57. Linda Fenchel, 49, (Bloomfield Hills)	26-03
58. Amy Pym, 27, (Walled Lake)	26-08
62. Julie Burrows, 55, (Troy)	26-22
67. Dawn Thomas, 28, (Rochester)	26-48
73. Kathleen Marshall, 58, (West Bloomfield)	27-08
81. Elizabeth Thomas, 49, (Farmington)	27-31
85. Lori Barker, 43, (Farmington)	28-21
96. Rika Jaki, 22, (Farmington)	28-30

RECREATION Center

Net — Ruth Kaal (Grosse Pointe Woods), 59-21-78.

2nd Flight
Low Gross — Rose Devine (Fraser), 46-47-93; Second — Phyllis Oromanski (Rochester Hills), 51-47-98; Low Net — Louise Baldino (Warren), 100-25-75 and Jo Pashek (Madison Heights), 100-25-75.

2nd Flight
Low Gross — Mary Kranich (Farmington Hills), 53-51-102; Second — Jo Chuan (Warren), 66-47-103; Low Net — Esther Ridas (Port Huron), 111-34-77.

OUTINGS
The inaugural "Hole For Hope" golf fund-raiser and silent auction to benefit the Hope Network, S.E. is set for Wednesday, June 25 at Shumard Country Club in West Bloomfield.

Event proceeds will assist in the development of specialized residential programs for individuals with disabilities and chronic mental illness throughout Oakland and Macomb counties.

Hope Network, S.E. currently oversees 10 residential programs in those two areas.

Cost is \$160 per person and golfers will enjoy 18 holes of golf with a cart, lunch, dinner and a

raffle. Participants also receive the opportunity to bid on exclusive golf items, recreational packages and autographed Pistons memorabilia at a cocktail party and silent auction.

For sponsorship information or to register a foursome, call Heather Tiffany at (248) 334-3454.

The 17th annual March of Dimes Celebrity Golf Classic will take place Tuesday, Sept. 16 at Indianwood Golf & Country Club in Lake Orion.

A \$400 entry fee entitles players to a round of golf on Indianwood's Old or New Course, a golf cart and use of the locker room, brunch, lunch and a dinner buffet.

Corporate fiveomes are available for \$2000. Proceeds help the March of Dimes reduce infant mortality and birth defects through research, community services, advocacy and education.

Jacobson's is sponsoring this event, which attracts sports figures spanning several eras, prominent local dignitaries, and various corporate leaders.

Call Patti Radzik of the March of the Dimes Southeast Michigan Chapter at (248) 423-3200 for more information.

88. Marybeth Kasse, 24, (Birmingham)	25-31	107. David Kraft, 26, (Beverly Hills)	21-24
101. Carol Chalk, 42, (Farmington Hills)	24-56	108. Bryan Crump, 33, (Auburn Hills)	21-37
105. C. Deaneberger, 24, (Walled Lake)	25-63	111. Dennis West, 31, (Bloomfield Hills)	22-12
120. Yvonne Kennedy, 58, (Bloomfield)	29-01	125. Eric Kennedy, 58, (Bloomfield)	22-25
122. Stephen Austin, 50, (Bloomfield Hills)	30-97	127. Tyke Trevino, 31, (Farmington Hills)	22-23
128. Jennifer Baff, 21, (Farmington Hills)	30-56	178. Marvin Stenerson, 62, (Rochester)	23-06
136. Laura Rolanda, 27, (Troy)	22-53	153. Michael Swisher, 34, (Farmington)	23-09
138. Stacy Glas, 25, (Farmington)	23-63	174. Leiland Darringer, 54, (Lathrup Village)	23-09
159. Melissa Beckwith, 25, (Farmington Hills)	24-24	135. Douglas Smith, 34, (Farmington)	23-10
140. Tami Daulton, 22, (West Bloomfield)	24-59	144. Thomas Page, 47, (Westfield)	23-56
152. Michelle Gaudin, 24, (Troy)	25-36	145. Mark Grant, 46, (West Bloomfield)	23-36
1. Will Bowdler, 23, (Hightstown)	15-26	146. Mike Carpenter, 34, (Farmington Hills)	23-40
2. David Chalk, 24, (Bloomfield Hills)	15-28	147. Corey Hanna, 21, (Troy)	23-43
17. Earl McWilliams, 45, (Rochester)	16-59	152. Jeff Tatum, 42, (Troy)	24-00
20. Brian Jakobs, 18, (Commerce Township)	17-22	154. David Talmadge, 39, (Bloomfield)	24-24
26. Mike Stone, 46, (Westfield)	17-23	161. Scott Carr, 29, (Bloomfield Hills)	24-28
27. Anne Thomas, 55, (Walled Lake)	17-25	169. Bob Beckwith, 29, (Farmington)	24-44
27. Anne Jakobs, 18, (Commerce Township)	17-29	151. John Davidson, 32, (Troy)	24-50
28. Richard Jakobs, 42, (Commerce Township)	17-35	179. Jeff Janusz, 42, (Troy)	25-27
30. Earl Thomas, 22, (Farmington)	17-41	192. Dennis Moore, 48, (Lathrup Village)	25-31
33. Dave Kasper, 50, (Rochester)	17-59	181. Michael Tisdale, 32, (Farmington Hills)	25-40
41. Dave Barrett, 51, (Troy)	18-21	196. Fred Vap, 33, (Farmington)	25-20
42. Chris Schlad, 21, (Troy)	18-29	199. John Walters, 27, (Farmington Hills)	25-17
56. Steve Rabaut, 22, (Commerce Township)	18-55	202. Clarence Willis, 46, (West Bloomfield)	25-29
64. Chris Carr, 38, (Southfield)	19-09	203. Michael Gaudin, 43, (Farmington)	25-26
67. Jeff Roman, 30, (Rochester)	19-31	214. Robert Liddy, 42, (Farmington)	27-27
84. Sean Miller, 20, (Troy)	19-41	229. Steven Bell, 47, (Farmington)	21-57
10. Douglas Zernick, 58, (Beverly Hills)	20-49	234. James Jaki, 43, (Bloomfield Hills)	30-29
80. Matt Warner, 24, (Birmingham)	20-28	241. Bob Zimmerman, 61, (Troy)	31-29
84. Dennis Gaudin, 40, (Farmington)	20-37	249. Evan Leisner, 22, (West Bloomfield)	34-31
85. Kevin Taylor, 35, (West Bloomfield)	20-54	5. Heidi Davidson, 41, (Beverly Hills)	14-10
92. Tom Hood, 50, (Farmington)	21-00	2. Junior Boyd, 34, (Troy)	20-41
97. Jeff Yeager, 41, (Rochester)	21-14		

presented by

The New Dodge

6th Annual

MEADOW BROOK HALL

LANDSCAPE & GARDEN SHOW

The Garden Collection at Meadow Brook Hall

JUNE 13-15

Meadow Brook Hall, Rochester (off Adams Rd., south of Walton Blvd.)
Fri. & Sat. 10 - 8 • Sun. 10 - 6 Adults: \$7 • Kids (6-12): \$3 • Kids under 6: FREE
FREE Parking • Cameras Welcome

FREE musical events featuring Alexander Zonjic and Friends and others.
Sponsored by WQRS, Mueller's Sunrise Nursery and Eaton Nursery

Beantle Babies Garden Treasure Hunt
Beantle Babies will be given away throughout the show

Children's Craft Center, Face Painting & Playscapes. Sponsored by Observer & Zentrite and Tandesk & Assoc.

Juried "Art in the Garden" for sale

"Durango and Silverton" Garden Railway with "G" gauge model trains

Garden Marketplace

English Country House Boutique

Garden art from internationally recognized Marshall Fredericks and Pewabic Pottery

Gardening Seminars throughout the show

Featured Speaker: Charles B. Thomas, water gardening expert, author & owner of Lilypons. Sponsored by Observer & Zentrite

Beautifully Landscaped Gardens and more!

For info: (248) 646-4992

Visit our web site: A Beautiful Landscape Starts Here... www.landscapergo.com