

TAMKANG "HOME RUN" TRIUMPHED IN 2004 NATIONAL BEEP BASEBALL ASSOCIATION WORLD SERIES IN THE USA

"Tamkang Home Run", a baseball team whose core members come from Tamkang University's Center of Resources for the Blind, won the first place in the 2004 National Beep Baseball Association (NBBA) World Series held in the United States in early August. Beep baseball is a version of baseball adapted for the blind and visually impaired.

Mr. Chen Ji-tang, chief coach of Tamkang Home Run, described the high drama of the tournament. In the championship final, Tamkang Home Run encountered strong opponents, the Kansas All-Stars. The Americans started by a succession of fly balls, which were caught one after another by the THR's fielder Chiu Wen-sheng, whose precise judgment of location by hearing dashed the batting team's hopes. Stunned, the All-Stars coach began sending a string of substitutes to bat. "However, the formidable THR dominated the game from start to finish, beat the All-Stars by 15 to 7, and became champions of NBBA World Series."

The championship, held by the National Beep Baseball Association, attracted teams from the US and Canada. Home Run played three matches in the first round and four in the final round; they won the final four games to become the champions. However, Home Run had nearly missed the opportunity to participate due to a lack of financial resources. Partly by fundraising and partly by paying with their own money, the team members were finally able to fly to the US.

Mr. Chen Ji-tang said with satisfaction that, despite their blindness, the players were able to bat by listening to the beeps emitting from the

pecially designed white ball. Hearing the sound from the first base, the batter would throw the bat to the side and dash forward. It took a mere five seconds for a Home Run player to run the 33 meters from the home plate to the first base.

Mr. Chen has set his heart on popularizing beep baseball in Taiwan. He not only voluntarily trained the players but also asked his colleagues and good friends, the Taichung “Bull” beep baseball coach Mr. Lin Chun-yio and Mr. Liao Wei-ho, to be coaches-cum-pitchers. Together with coach-cum-observer Lin Min-liang, coach-cum-catcher Chou Shi-wei and ten visually impaired players—Chang Kuo-rei, Lai Jun-ji, Chiu Wen-sheng, Chen Yi-chin, Chen Jun-ming, Yu Tzi-cheng (TKU alumni), Chou Chi-chung (Providence University), Wang Chen-kuang (Aletheia University), Wang Chao-shi and Lai Chi-jie (two baseball enthusiasts), they went to the US for the World Series. When the ROC’ s national flag was raised and the national anthem played in the United States, the Home Run players remarked: “All our hard work was worth it.”

Team member Chang Kuo-rei said that those members who did not play in the matches provided support at the sideline. “It was not so much the number of home runs as our watertight defense, not allowing our opponents to score easily, that was the key to our victory,” he remarked.

Every Saturday and Sunday, the blind players practice under the Ta-han Bridge in Banchiao. They were once driven away from the track-and-field ground by Tamkang’ s baseball team. Since it is dangerous for the blind to practice in the same place as the sighted players, Chang Kuo-rei hoped that Tamkang authorities could designate a certain time for him and his teammates to practice: “We would be very happy if the sports field could be cleared for us to train for a few hours, even at night.”

