

Jon Kegel, Moorhead, MN



Jon got into Fast Pitch when he was in high school and he saw an ad in the newspaper from the Fargo team looking for 18 and under players. He immediately responded and fell in love with the game which was a fun, quicker game (than baseball) back in 1983. The team didn't have a sponsor, so he volunteered the family's sign company, Kegel Sign Company, as a sponsor, and that is how it started. After Jon took over for his father, he sponsored every Fastpitch team that came into his office looking for help.

From youth teams to 23U, men's and women's teams, as long as it was Fastpitch, they got the support. Starting in 1984, they had both a men's team and an 18U team that started playing youth tournaments all over the Midwest area. Sponsoring and coaching teams has led Jon to many places throughout North America, from California to Washington to New York to Florida, with many Canadian provinces along the way. The first ISC involvement started in 1990 with the Gopher State Travel League and continued for five years before switching to Canada West.

Kegel's first ISC world tournament was in 1995 in Sioux City, Iowa. It was where he fell in love with the ISC. The Tournament was held at the most beautiful diamond he had ever seen. ISC personnel like Ken Hackmeister, Milt Stark, Tom Stasik, Wayne Fisher, and Bob Welby made him feel special. It started a string of nearly 30 world tournaments for the Kegel teams. Wayne Fisher's ISC 19 and under and 23 and under is where the Kegel teams had a lot of success in the 90s and 2000s, winning 23U tournaments in years 1994 to 1996, then coming back for 2001 and 2002.

Winning five championships was amazing. Jon was lucky enough to have a few outstanding pitchers, such as Bill Hillhouse, Richard Carney, Todd Bouman, Kelly Peters, and, of course, Darcy Byrne. Winning those five ISC Junior tournaments was one of the highlights of his career, and they usually came out of the losers bracket to do it. They could never seem to take the easy route to winning. These tournaments helped to put the Kegel name on the map and elevated the team to the next level.

Running tournaments has also been a love of his, and over the years, Kegel has sponsored several. He had enjoyed the Memorial Day tournament because it was the first tournament of the year, the one that brought the teams back together and started the summer fun. The Holm Classic was back in 1995 and 1996 when they were lucky to add Larry Miller Toyota, Page Break, Sioux City Soos, and a Happy

Chef team from Mankato to the tournament. Organizing local tournaments has always been a big part of his life, whether it was doing the draw, contacting the teams, or updating the bracket board.

He enjoyed all parts of the tournaments. However, bringing the ISC to Fargo in 2004 was probably one of Kegel's favorite highlights. Presenting the bid in Kitchener, Ontario, the last round of the host tournament voting rounds was a dream come true for him. They went on to transform the baseball stadium into a Fastpitch stadium just for the tournament. In 2004 they were able to televise the championship game statewide and in the Midwest region. It was like a dream come true, and was very exciting to be a part of bringing the ISC World to Fargo.

One of the things Jon enjoyed the most about the ISC World tournament is the downtime. There is plenty of time to watch games but also time to talk and meet people. Every ballpark has something special: an excellent playground for the families, shade to hang out under during games, or amazing pie. Jon has made many lifelong friends through softball, many of them at ISC Tournaments. tournament. His family, which includes his wife, Kristi, and their two daughters, Sophia, 16, and Gretta, 14, along with their dog, Arabella reside in Moorehead, MN.

Fast Pitch will always be a part of Jon's life. He now watches his daughter play and enjoys every moment. Catching up with former players at high school games and watching their kids play the One of Jon's favorite stories is regarding a tournament back in 2004. They were invited to Doc Simmons's Broken Bow tournament. The Kegel team was a fill-in team as Doc had one dropout. All the teams in the tournament were ranked ahead of them and all heading to the ISC World Tournament later that month in Fargo. Somehow, they made it into the quarterfinals by barely beating Pueblo by one run. It put them in the semi-finals against the number one ranked team in the world, the Broken Bow Travelers. Playing in front of a packed house, they kept the game close until the top of the 7th when the 2nd baseman, with two outs, hit a three-run homer to give Kegel the lead. You could've heard a pin drop at the ball field, and luckily, they were able to hold them off to move to the finals. From there on, luck stayed with them, and they knocked off the third-rank team, the Calgary Smokers, 8 to 1 to win the game that they love is coming full circle.

The days on the ball field will always be some of the best days of Jon's life. The stories will never grow old, the friendships pick up where they left off the year before, and the game is still as exciting as it was when he was 18.