

## **Softball league grows thanks to Rays founder**

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Doyle Mann is the founder, manager and shortstop of the Devil Rays Wheelchair Softball team. We profiled Mann, 46, a year ago as his team prepared to host its first "Spring Training" tournament, staged in a pock-marked Tampa parking lot and won by a Chicago team sponsored by the Cubs.

Due to Mann's efforts, the National Wheelchair Softball Association has named him assistant commissioner. And with the help of wife Natalie, his club's second annual tourney concludes today at Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church in Tampa (see [devilrayswheelchairsoftball.com](http://devilrayswheelchairsoftball.com) for details).

### **How have things grown in the past year?**

We've had really good growth as far as the number of players coming out. We had 18 at one practice compared to nine or 10 last year, and that's phenomenal. We actually get to scrimmage against each other, which is huge because we want to get people out and participate.

What's your role as assistant commissioner?

I'm in charge of new team development across the country. I've been working with teams in Miami, Atlanta and Nashville right now. And I've had contact with several other cities, including Vancouver, Wash., Portland, Ore., San Diego and Houston. I think the whole sport will see a growth potential like it hasn't seen in some time. To think about how many people we can influence to become active is very rewarding.

### **Have you found a permanent playing field?**

We still don't have our own field. We're so thankful that Wesley Memorial United Methodist is allowing us to use their parking lot. But it'd be nice to have a field where we could have hitting practice whenever we needed or host tournaments and clinics and just call our own. We're working with Hillsborough County officials, and we've been in contact with (Tampa) mayor (Pam Iorio). And hopefully something may happen. We've also approached Disney's Wide World of Sports about hosting our 2007 tournament. That would be great.