

## Heart of champions – Bay News 9

Saturday, May 7, 2005



This weekend, the city of Tampa hosted the state's first wheelchair softball tournament.

The Tampa Bay Devil Rays Wheelchair Softball Team played against teams from Chicago and Columbus, Ohio.

"We want to win, we want to play hard and we want to have a good time," Doyle Mann of the Devil Rays Wheelchair Softball Team said.

**The Tampa Bay Devil Rays Wheelchair Softball Team is the only wheelchair softball team in the state.**

He said he's been a baseball fan since he was 8 years old. He's never been able to play the standard game because of a birth defect, but several years ago he got a chance to sit in with a wheelchair team in Columbus.

"I said we have to do this here and I called in all my friends and all my favors," Mann said.

With a little help from the Tampa Bay Devil Rays' "Rays of Hope Foundation," the team was born.

The team is the only wheelchair softball team in the state.

"It's kind of like still being able to be competitive, just in a different way," Karen Martin of the Devil Rays Wheelchair Softball Team said.

The game is played on a hard surface, using a 16-inch softball and the team is coed.

"I feel great being accepted by the guys because I'm not as good as they are," Martin said. "That's my goal, to get better. Still, they cheer us on just like we're one of them."

Last year, the team took third place in its division at the national tournament, despite being less than one year old.