

Pepitone

Former pro takes softball seriously

United Press International
NEW HAVEN, Conn. — At first glance, it appears the inmates are running the asylum in the American Professional Slo-Pitch Softball League.

Joe Pepitone, who in 11 years with the New York Yankees led the team in home runs, fielding and breaking curfew, has been named player-manager of the Trenton, N.J., Statesmen of the ASPL.

Previously, the only thing Pepitone managed to do was give grey hairs to his managers during a wild 15-year career with the Yankees, Astros, Cubs and Braves. Pepitone, 38, is taking the new job seriously, however.

"When I was 24 years old with the Yankees and I stayed out all night, I didn't realize it was hurting the team," he said this week. "Now I know what's right and wrong. I've gone through it all and seen the

good and the bad. So with my experiences, I think I can help the players on the team.

"I've managed restaurants, I've managed lounges, what's so different about a ball team? You got to have the horses if you're going to win, just like in anything else."

One advantage manager Pepitone will have is player Pepitone in the lineup.

In his first season of softball, he batted .489 with 14 homers and was the league's all-star first baseman.

"I enjoyed every minute of it last year," he says. "I retired from baseball so many times, I didn't enjoy the game like I used to and I didn't know if I was going to enjoy softball. But when I hit my first home run, it felt just like the first homer I hit in professional ball and I had that feeling all season long."

Pepitone says hitting a softball is easier said than done.

"It's hard to hit a softball. I don't want to name drop, but Norm Cash, as good a ballplayer as he was, just can't hit a softball. The only adjustment I made was to run up on every pitch and make every pitch a strike. It's hard to wait on the ball coming down," he says.

Pepitone says he would "rather watch a softball game than a baseball game."

"I really think this league can catch on. I'm making pretty good money and there's a lot of good money in it. Plus you only play weekends. I wish we only played baseball on weekends. Then it would have been more fun than business."

Pepitone still looks like he could play first base for the Yankees, but says his career ended at just the right time.

"There's no way that I could ever play for George Steinbrenner. I would have got paid about \$14 every two weeks after they took out all the money for fines. He's strictly business and he makes it tough to enjoy the game. You can't play tight, you have to enjoy it."

He ended his career before the free agent sweepstakes made many ballplayers instant millionaires, but thinks they deserve every penny.

"I think players like Reggie

Jackson deserve what they're getting. People come to see Reggie no matter what he's doing. In New York, when the press puts a guy down, they're just putting money in his pocket. New Yorkers dig distortion."

"I think they come to see problems instead of good, talented players. That's their idea of entertainment. I think getting into trouble prolonged my career in New York five extra years," Pepitone says.

Indians scalp Rangers

United Press International
CLEVELAND — Gary Alexander drove in four runs, including a three-run homer, to spark Cleveland to a 6-4 victory over Texas Wednesday and snap a 13-game Indians losing streak to the Rangers.

After spotting the Rangers a 3-0 lead, the Indians pushed across three runs in the third inning and Alexander belted his first home run of the season off reliever Sparky Lyle in the seventh after Texas added a single run in the top of the inning.

The Rangers tallied once in the first when Bill Sample walked, took third on Al Oliver's single and scored on a groundout by Buddy Bell. Oliver ran his consecutive hitting streak to nine games, added a run-scoring triple in the third inning and scored on Bell's infield out.

A sacrifice fly by Bobby Bonds, a bases loaded walk to Alexander and an infield hit by Duane Kuiper tied it for the Indians in the third before a sacrifice fly by Bump Wills scored

Bert Campaneris for the Texas go-ahead run in the seventh.

George Medich took the loss while Sid Monge took over for rookie starter Eric Wilkens and pitched the final three innings.

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Ags ride at SHSU

The Texas A&M rodeo club will participate in the Sam Houston State University rodeo in Huntsville beginning today and running through Saturday.

Last week, at the Stephen F. Austin rodeo in Nacogdoches, the Aggies finished as follows:

Team roping, Clayton Zwerschke and Joe Dutton, third and John Tarlton and Jake Hersman, fourth; calf roping, Hardy Stewardson, second and Mark Ivey, sixth; breakaway, Glenda Rainey, sixth; goat tying, Dorothy Sybert, fifth.

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