

Sports

Fireballs turn rare triple play vs. Stewart Home School

BY ANN CARTER
CORRESPONDENT

The Grant County Fireballs B team is all smiles after capturing the championship bracket.

The sounds of cracking bats, cheering fans and softballs snapping into leather gloves filled the air last weekend as the Battle in the Bluegrass Special Olympics Softball Tournament returned to Owen County.

Hosted by the Grant County Special Olympics team, the annual event marked a milestone for tournament organizer Billy Brown, who celebrated his 15th year leading the inclusive tournament.

“The commitment from friends, family, and the community to come together for this annual event is amazing to say the least.” Brown went on to say, “It takes a village to pull an event like this together. It is truly a blessing to be able to work with these athletes, coaches, and volunteers.”

The outpouring of support throughout the day highlighted the strong bonds within the Special Olympics community, a community united by a shared love of athletics and a commitment to inclusion.

For volunteer umpire Robb Chaney, the tournament is something he looks forward to each year.

“The pure excitement



Patrice Tucker, Jase Smith and Amanda Bass play the field for Grant County Fireballs.



Shortstop Darius Houston, who snagged a fly ball to begin a rare triple play by the Grant County Fireballs during their game against Stewart Home School.

from the teams, coaches and fans just melts your heart seeing them play,” Chaney said.

One of the most memorable moments of the day came during play in the 2A bracket, when the Grant County Fireballs turned a rare triple play against Stewart Home School.

Darius Houston started the chain reaction by catching a fly ball at shortstop for the first out before throwing to Phoenix Smith at second to double off a runner. Smith then tagged another runner attempting to advance to complete the triple play.

Field umpire Kevin Welch described the play

as extraordinary, “I had never seen a triple play live before and I’m not sure I’ll have the opportunity to see another. I wish we would have had instant replay so we could all watch it over and over again.”

Welch went on to say, “These athletes are incredible and it was an honor to watch them do what they do best!”

As the tournament concluded, the lasting memories were not only the great plays on the field but also the smiles, high-fives and friendships that made the Battle in the Bluegrass another successful example of the Special Olympics spirit.



Robb Chaney, Jude Canchola, Gabby Welch and Kevin Welch serve as volunteer umpires during the tournament.

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