

Resume for Jim Sovereign

Cresco, IA

Most kids upon high school graduation are ready for a party or some type of celebration. Forty minutes after turning in his cap and gown, Jim Sovereign was on the bench, in uniform, ready to play the last three innings of a regular season league softball game. He played in that game that Sunday evening, but he didn't pitch. In 99.9% of the next 1,600-plus games, he pitched.

In 1959 in an intramural softball game, he learned to throw a riseball from an opposing pitcher. The riseball, if not his best pitch, was certainly the staple for the next 28 years. However, he also had a change-up that made grown men look like fools. Many times as the batter prepared for his fastball, which had been clocked at approximately 87 miles an hour, he would throw his 37-mile-an-hour change-up. The batter swinging for a fastball would try to hold back his bat only to release it and have the bat go flying into the infield.

In 1962 he pitched regularly in leagues in Winona, Minnesota; LaCrosse, Wisconsin; and Cresco, Iowa. Winona's diamonds had no lights, and games started at 6:00 p.m. LaCrosse and Cresco had lit fields, and games started at 8:00 p.m. His pitching record in 1962 was 79-19, by far the most games he pitched any one year.

Unlike most "big-name" teams, Cresco had only one pitcher. There were a few years that Denny Linderbaum and Dave Lundak also threw for the Cresco team, but both moved on to Minnesota in 1970. When they went to a weekend tournament, it was the norm that Jim would pitch five games, a few times six. These tournaments were in the cities of Prairie du Chein, La Crosse, Eau Claire, and Madison, Wisconsin. In Minnesota he played tournaments in Winona, Owatonna, Albert Lea, Austin, Rochester, and Ostrander. In Iowa he played in Mason City, Charles City, Nashua, Waterloo, Dubuque, Manchester, and Cresco. His brother Merle joked correctly that the team "rotated their catching staff".

He pitched 16 games in the Iowa Open State tournament, winning 11 games and losing 5. The losses were to Jerry Ralfs, Greg Bosch, Al Rausch (twice), and to a Sioux City team. In district, sub-state, and state tournaments (open and class A), his record was 97-14.

In total he pitched over 1,600 games in over 100 towns in a dozen states and 3 Canadian provinces.

Softball was largely a family affair for the Sovereigns. His older brother Lowell managed the team in the '60s and '70s. His younger brother Merle managed it in the late '70s and early '80s. While pitching in Cresco, Merle caught most of the games Jim pitched. In Winona the catcher was Bob Czaplewski. Bob's younger sister would come watch many of the games. In August of 1967 she became Mrs. Jim Sovereign. Their oldest daughter Paula attended the University of Northern Iowa on a softball scholarship. Brian, their youngest, continues to play fastpitch in Iowa and Minnesota.

Two pitchers, Denny Linderbaum and Al Rausch, began their softball careers playing other positions behind Jim with the Cresco Merchants. The same can be said for Dave Lundak and Carl Aegler who later both won Minnesota State Softball Championships. As an assistant girls' softball coach for Crestwood High School, he mentored pitchers Wanda Milbrath and Sarah O'Byrne. Wanda pitched her team to a second- place finish in the Iowa High School State Tournament. Sarah also helped her team qualify for the Iowa State Tournament. Sarah later pitched UNI to the NCAA National Tournament, losing to eventual Champion UCLA 2-0 and 4-0 (1990). She was also named "Player of the Decade" in U.N.I. Women's Sports in 1992. If you frequent the Cresco Fitness Center, you can still see him working with Crestwood's current pitcher Ashley Sickles. He also works with another junior high and elementary student.

Jim is currently a retired teacher working as a paraprofessional for the Howard-Winneshiek School District. He enjoys playing golf in the summer, watching high school sporting events, and attending his grandchildren's extra-curricular activities.

I respectfully submit Jim Sovereign for the Iowa Fastpitch Hall of Fame for the year 2007.

By Paula Galvin (Jim's daughter)

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Statistics for Jim Sovereign

Won 1,172

Lost 446

Winning Percentage: .724

11-5 in Iowa Open State Tournament (losses to Jerry Ralfs, Greg Bosch, twice to Al Rausch, Sioux City)

97-18 in all district, sub-state, and state tournaments combined.

Pitching Statistics By Year

4-1	1958	Cresco Farm Bureau
18-7	1959	Cresco Farm Bureau Winona E.B.'s
22-12	1960	Cresco Farm Bureau Winona E.B.'s
43-23	1961	Cresco Farm Bureau Winona Lang's
79-19	1962	Cresco Farm Bureau Winona Lang's LaCrosse Handy Builders
55-23	1963	Cresco Kratz Motors Winona Lang's Rochester
56-20	1964	Cresco Kratz Motors Winona Hamernik's
55-14	1965	Cresco Kratz Motors Winona Hamernik's
49-18	1966	Cresco Kratz Motors Winona Hamernik's
37-12	1967	Cresco Kratz Motors Winona Hamernik's
33-21	1968	Cresco Merchants Winona Sunshine
51-11	1969	Cresco Merchants Winona Sunshine
54-14	1970	Cresco Merchants Winona Sunshine
30-19	1971	Cresco Merchants
52-14	1972	Cresco Merchants

40-14	1973	Protivin
18-16	1974	Cresco Sovereign Grain Regina Carlings (Canada)
42-15	1975	Cresco Sovereign Grain
39-17	1976	Cresco Sovereign Grain
37-19	1977	Cresco Sovereign Grain
40-16	1978	Cresco Sovereign Grain
44-16	1979	Cresco Sovereign Grain
40-13	1980	Cresco Sovereign Grain
42-17	1981	Cresco Sovereign Grain
41-10	1982	Cresco Sovereign Grain
57-11	1983	Cresco Sovereign Grain
43-23	1984	Cresco Sovereign Grain
36-20	1985	Cresco Sovereign Grain
14-4	1986	Cray's Insurance (Chester)
2-2	1987	Cray's Insurance (Chester)

3-5 in all games since 1987