

Sydney, Australia - Softball teams from eleven countries around the world are putting their final preparations in place before heading to Sydney for the seventh World Masters Games, which start on October 10, further exhibiting the global appeal of softball to a wide range of age groups.

Almost 2,500 male and female elite, competitive, and recreational standard softball players ages 35+ and 45+ will take part in the competition – the second largest event at this year's Games. As well as the host nation Australia, teams are coming from Austria, Botswana, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and USA.

BackSoftball Athlete Ambassador Danielle Stewart, a 2008 Olympic softball bronze medalist from the 2009 World Masters Games host country, said, "I'm delighted that such a prestigious softball competition will be taking place in Sydney and I am sure there will be huge crowds to support the event."

Softball is popular with all generations because it's simple to learn and inexpensive to play and is immensely popular in Australia. The fact that so many people are traveling here to compete says a great deal for the progress the sport has made in recent years."

Shane O'Leary, Chief Executive Officer of the Sydney 2009 World Masters Games Organizing Committee said, "Softball is one of the largest sport competitions on the World Masters Games program and we are pleased with the large numbers of softballers who have registered for the Games.

"With over 200 teams competing in the Sydney 2009 World Masters Games it will arguably be the largest softball competition ever held in Australia, if not the world."

Open to people of all abilities and most ages, the World Masters Games are the world's largest multi-sport event, with organizers expecting 29,000 athletes from more than 100 countries competing in 28 sports at more than 70 venues throughout Sydney.

The World Masters Games, which have been held every four years since they began in Toronto, Canada in 1985, are open to people of all abilities rather than just elite athletes, with the emphasis on participation.

The World Masters Games official website is <http://www.2009worldmasters.com> .

Softball was first featured in the Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996 and last year's competition in Beijing was very successful with a total attendance close to 180,000 and a continuation of the sport's excellent record of no positive doping tests at any of the four Summer Olympics that the sport has been a part of.

A final decision on which sports will be added to the current roster of 26 at the 2016 Summer Olympic Games will be made at the 121st IOC Session in Copenhagen in October this year.