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Philippines qualifies for Junior League World Series

Start spreading the word: Team Philippines is headed back to Taylor for the 2008 Junior League World Series.

The 13- and 14-year-old boys from the International Little League Association of Manila won the Asia-Pacific regional championship for the second straight year and will compete for the world championship in August at Heritage Park.

In 2007, the Philippines' first year in the World Series, the team went farther than any other Asia-Pacific team, finishing runner-up to world champion Pearl City, Hawaii.

Just as significant, the Filipino all-stars drew hundreds of fans from the Downriver area and beyond for every one of their games, thanks mainly to a massive word-of-mouth and e-mail campaign.

According to Roly Disini, father of Carlo Disini, one of the 13 boys on last year's team in Taylor, four members of the 2007 squad remain on this year's Junior League all-star team: Charles Catangui, Miko Habana, Leandro Banzon and S.J. San Juan. Abet Catangui, father of Charles, has succeeded Catherine Tanco-Ong as manager.

Seven players from the 2007 junior team have moved on, but are not forgotten. They are members of the Philippines senior team that qualified to play in the Senior League World Series in Bangor, Maine.

Tanco-Ong's son, Mark, is one of the players on that team. Tanco-Ong, only the second female to manage a team in the JLWS, said she will join that team in Maine after a brief layover in Taylor on August 10.

The junior Philippines team is scheduled to play four round-robin games in the five-team International Pool on August 11, 12, 13 and 14. Other teams in the pool will be the regional champions of Latin American and Europe/Middle East/Africa (EMEA), plus the national champions of Mexico and Canada.

The Latin America regional tournament was scheduled to conclude July 12 in Yauco, Puerto Rico. The EMEA tourney is scheduled for July 12-20 in Kutno, Poland. The Canadian national tournament will take place August 1-8 in Coquitlam, British Columbia.

The national champions of Mexico, which should be determined this week, receive an automatic berth this year. Due to the popularity of youth baseball in Mexico and Puerto Rico, the two countries receive automatic entry to the JLWS every other year. The odd team out can qualify for the series by winning the Latin America tournament.

The USA Pool of the World Series includes the champions of the USA Central, East, South, Southwest and West regions. USA regional play begins July 29 in Fort Wayne, Indiana; Freehold Township, New Jersey; Cartersville, Georgia; Midland, Texas; and Alisa Viejo, California.

Team Philippines – the first team to qualify for the 28th annual Junior League World Series – went undefeated in the Asia-Pacific tournament at the Francisco M. Palacios Baseball Field in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Saipan. In pool play, the Filipino all-stars beat Guam (7-6), Hong Kong (4-3), Indonesia (7-6) and Saipan (15-5).

In the regional championship game, Philippines rallied from a two-run deficit by scoring three times in the sixth inning to beat Saipan a second time, 7-6. Habana singled home Catangui with the winning run.

Opening ceremonies of the Junior League World Series will take place August 9 on World Series Field in Heritage Park. Games will be played August 10-16 with the world championship contest set for 5 p.m. August 16. The championship game is taped for future broadcast by ESPN.

Periodic updates will be posted on www.cityoftaylor.com/worldseries.



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