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London, England, all-stars coming to Taylor for World Series

The reach of the Junior League World Series in Taylor keeps getting longer.

The London, England, all-stars have qualified as one of the best teams of 13- and 14-year-old baseball teams from around the world. They will represent Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) during the 28th annual World Series, set for August 10-16 at Heritage Park.

England defeated Friuli, Venezia Giulia, Italy, 3-2, to win the nine-nation EMEA Regional Tournament on Saturday in Kutno, Poland.

The England national champions went undefeated in the tourney, besting teams from Bulgaria (15-0), Lithuania (17-1) and Germany (2-1) in round-robin play and then eliminated Moldova (11-6) in the semifinals. The team from Germany was a group of mostly American players whose parents are stationed at the Ramstein Air Force Base.

To make it to the finals, Italy also went unbeaten, defeating Moldova (9-8), Belarus (15-4), Poland (10-0) and The Netherlands (11-10) in pool play and then edging Netherlands again in the semifinals (9-8).

Saturday's EMEA championship game followed a 9-0 consolation win by Moldova over Netherlands.

England will succeed last year's EMEA representative from Kirovograd, Ukraine, which went winless in 2007 in Taylor and did not send a team to the regional in Poland this year.

The team from London becomes the second team in a week to qualify for the first time for the Junior League World Series. Last week, a team from Willemstad, Curacao, in the Northern Antilles won the Latin America Regional Tournament played in Yauco, Puerto Rico.

England and Curacao join Manila, Philippines, in the International Pool of the JLWS. They will be joined by the national champions of Canada and Mexico.

Five teams from regions across the United States will make up the USA pool.

The Mexican champions will be announced this week. The other tournaments begin later this month and in early August.

While Philippines did well in its first-ever trip to Taylor – finishing runner-up to world champion Pearl City, Hawaii, in 2007 – Curacao and England will become the 19th and 20th international nations, respectively, to play in the Junior League World Series. Italy also was seeking its first trip to Taylor.

Through last year's World Series, teams have come from 27 different states in the United States, four Canadian provinces, plus Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Guam, Indonesia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Panama, the Philippines, Poland, Puerto Rico, Russia, Saipan, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine, Venezuela and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Umpires – who volunteer and are selected to work the series – have come from 32 states, plus Aruba, Belgium, Canada, Curacao, Germany, Guam, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Puerto Rico, Romania and Venezuela.

About the Junior League World Series: Colorful opening ceremonies are scheduled for the evening of August 9. The festivities, which are open to the public, include a parade of champions, guest speakers, the ceremonial first pitch and fireworks.

Four games are scheduled each day, August 10-14. The International and USA championship games are scheduled for 5 and 8 p.m., respectively on Friday, August 15.

The world championship game is set for 5 p.m. Saturday, August 16. The game airs live on ESPNU and is taped for future broadcast on ESPN2.

The ticket price to the JLWS is a modest \$5 per day per car – or \$10 for the entire series. Both fees include parking.

For more information on the World Series, visit www.cityoftaylor.com/worldseries.

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