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## Teams arriving for World Series; opening ceremonies Saturday night

For the 28th straight year, the best teams of teen-age baseball players from around the world are arriving in Taylor for the Junior League World Series.

Ten teams – five from the United States, five from international locations – will compete for the world championship of the 13- and 14-year-old division of Little League baseball.

Opening ceremonies – including fireworks – are set for 8 p.m. Saturday, August 9, at World Series Field in Taylor's Heritage Park, 12111 Pardee Road.

Games are scheduled for Sunday, August 10, through Saturday, August 16. The first pitch is scheduled for noon Sunday. In the opener, the national champions of Canada from Coquitlam, British Columbia, take on the Latin America champions from Willemstad, Curacao, in the Netherlands Antilles.

Four games are scheduled Sunday through Thursday. The rest of Sunday's schedule features Hilo, Hawaii, vs. Alvin, Texas, 2:45 p.m.; London, England, vs. Boca Del Rio, Veracruz, Mexico, 5:30 p.m.; and Johnston, Iowa, vs. Mechanicsville, Virginia, 8:15 p.m.

The other two teams – Canton, Massachusetts, and the defending runners-up from Manila, Philippines – begin play on Monday.

The Junior League World Series is considered the older brother of the Little League World Series in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. In fact, some of the boys who played in Williamsport as 12-year-olds will play this year in Taylor as 13- or 14-year-olds.

The teams in Taylor are divided into two pools: USA and International. Teams play in a round-robin format the first five days of the World Series.

The top two teams in the International Pool play at 5 p.m. Friday, August 15. The two leaders in the USA Pool play at 8 p.m. Friday.

The two winners play for the world championship at 5 p.m. Saturday, August 16.

The championship game will be broadcast live on ESPNU and shown on tape delay by ESPN2. All games will be broadcast via streaming audio on the Internet at [www.cityoftaylor.com/listen](http://www.cityoftaylor.com/listen).

Game day tickets are \$5 per day per carload or \$10 for the entire week. Both fees include parking.

Greg Bzura, founder and director of the World Series, noted that every team that qualified for the worldwide tournament arrived in Taylor as a champion.

The American all-star players had to win district, state and then regional tournaments played across the United States. The regional tournaments concluded this past week. In the finals of the Central region in Fort Wayne Indiana, Iowa edged the Michigan state champions from Midland, 4-2.

All of the international teams are national champions. Curacao also had to win the 11-nation Latin America tournament played in Puerto Rico. England, which is a team of American players who live in London, bested eight other national champs from Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The Philippines all-stars won the Asia-Pacific regional tournament by defeating top players from Guam, Saipan, Hong Kong and Indonesia.

To date, 27 different USA states have been represented in the JLWS. Curacao and England – which will make their Taylor debuts this week – will bring to 20 the total of international nations to play in the World Series.

Umpires, who volunteer to call balls and strikes during the series, have come from 32 states and 12 international nations.

The 2008 series will be dedicated to the memory of Andy Gerick, the official statistician of the series since its inception. Gerick, considered the only person to see every pitch of the World Series, died in January.

Special recognition also will be made of the 20-year anniversary of the world championship won by Mexico in 1988.

Bzura noted that this is also the 20th anniversary of the year a fire set by arsonists destroyed the original press box and dugout building just 93 days prior to the 1988 series. In what is still considered a "World Series miracle," the community band together to build an even bigger and better facility. It was completed just days before the World Series began.

This year's teams and spectators will benefit from a new \$120,000 lighting system installed at World Series Field just weeks before the tournament. The state-of-the-art system uses half of the lights of the old system and yet makes the field brighter than ever.

Commemorative collectors coins will be sold during the series to help pay for the lights. They are among the many souvenirs available throughout series week.

"This year, with the new lights and the 20th anniversary of the new building, it feels like a rebirth," Bzura said. "And we'll be adding two new flags to recognize players representing countries visiting us for the first time. We're ready for another exciting year."

For more information on the tournament visit the World Series Web site: [www.cityoftaylor.com/worldseries](http://www.cityoftaylor.com/worldseries).

NOTEWORTHY: While the 13- and 14-year-olds play for the love of the game, some past Junior League World Series players have gone on to stardom in the professional ranks. Current Detroit Tiger Gary Sheffield and retired pro Derek Bell were teammates on the 1982 world championship team from Tampa, Florida.

Other present and former pro ballplayers that have competed in Taylor include Erik Bedard, Brett Myers, Jose and Javier Valentin, Erubial Durazo, Delino DeShields, Chad Hermansen, Shannon Withem and Adam Loewen.

Mark "Bo" Pelini, who played for the first world champions from Boardman, Ohio, in 1981, is head football coach at the University of Nebraska. Matt Cassel is a backup quarterback to Tom Brady for the New England Patriots of the National Football League. Pro hockey players that have been in the World Series include Chris Dingman and Steve Reinprecht.

