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Countdown continues to the Junior League World Series in Taylor

Baseball games are under way at five sites in the United States and one in Canada to determine the final six participants in the Junior League World Series in Taylor.

The 29th annual World Series begins August 16 at Heritage Park. Opening ceremonies, the colorful parade of champions and fireworks are set for August 15.

Already qualified among the 10 teams of 13- and 14-year-old players are four international champions:

- Saipan of the Northern Mariana Island, champion of the Asia-Pacific Region.
- Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy, champion of the Europe/Middle East/Africa (EMEA) Region.
- Oranjestad, Aruba, champion of the Latin America Region.
- Yabucoa, the national champion of Puerto Rico.

The fifth international team will be the national champion of Canada. Tournament play begins August 6 in Langley, British Columbia – a hot bed of youth baseball in Canada.

The other five teams will be regional champions from across the United States.

The Western Regional Tournament got under way Tuesday in Aliso Viejo, California. The 12-team region includes last year's Junior League World Series runner-up from Hilo, Hawaii, plus the state champions of Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, Alaska, Montana, Washington, Arizona and Utah.

Due to the size of organized baseball in California, there are north and south champions of the Golden State, plus the tournament host team from Laguna Niguel, California.

The Southwestern Regional Tournament begins August 7 in Midland Texas. The nine-team event features three teams from Texas (West, East and host), plus the state champions from Oklahoma, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, New Mexico and Colorado.

The other three USA regional tournaments begin August 8.

Eleven teams will compete to become Central Regional champions at Fort Wayne, Indiana. They include two teams from Indiana (state champ and host), plus the best teams from Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, Missouri, Iowa, Kentucky and Nebraska.

The 10-team Eastern Regional will be played at Freehold, New Jersey. The event will include the state champs of Maine, New Jersey, Maryland, New York, Delaware, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania and Connecticut, plus the host team.

The Southern Regional has been renamed the Southeast Regional. Playing for the title in Cartersville, Georgia, will be the state champs of Georgia, North Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee and South Carolina.

Once teams arrive in Taylor, they'll be divided into two regions, International and USA, for pool play. Over the first five days of the tournament, the teams compete in round-robin games.

On the sixth day, Friday, August 21, the two teams in each pool play for the International and USA championships.

The winners will play for the world title at 5 p.m. August 22. The championship game will be televised by the ESPN family network and rebroadcast at a later date.

Admission is free to opening ceremonies. Admission on game days is just \$5 per carload per day or \$10 for the entire week.

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

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