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World Series opening ceremonies are Saturday; games start Sunday

For the 29th straight year, baseball fans will welcome the best teams of 13- and 14-year-old players from around the world to Taylor's Heritage Park for the Junior League World Series.

Opening ceremonies are scheduled for 8:30 p.m. on Saturday, August 15. Events will include the parade of champions, speeches from dignitaries, a ceremonial first pitch involving representatives from all 10 teams, and fireworks. Opening ceremonies are free to attend.

Games get under way at noon on Sunday, August 16. Four games will be held that day and on each of the next four days.

The opening round consists of pool play in which the five American teams compete in round-robin format against one another, while the five international teams do the same in a separate group.

The top two teams in the International Pool play for the International championship at 5 p.m. Friday, August 21. The top two teams in the other pool play for the USA championship at 8 p.m.

The two final teams play for the world championship at 5 p.m. Saturday, August 22.

Admission is \$5 per carload per day or \$10 for the entire week. Both fees include parking.

The Junior League World Series is considered the "big brother" of the Little League World Series held annually in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. The Little League series attracts the best teams of 11- and 12-year-old players.

Taylor has hosted the Junior League World Series since its inception in 1981. At that time, the teams were limited to 13-year-olds. Once the division expanded to include 14-year-olds, it opened up the tournament to every nation that has Junior League baseball.

"We're looking forward to great competition, beautiful weather and excellent crowds," said Greg Bzura, the founder and director of the World Series since it began. "All of the teams coming to Taylor are already champions. There will be some countries represented in the World Series for the first time ever. Some teams that historically do very well in the series will return. It will be another outstanding week of baseball."

Which teams will be here?

Five international teams and five American teams have qualified. All arrive as champions.

Teams in the International Pool will include:

- Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy, champion of the Europe/Middle East/Africa (EMEA) Region. An eight-team tournament was held in Kutno, Poland. Italy, which will make its first-ever appearance in Taylor, defeated a U.S. Air Force team based in Stuttgart, Germany, in the finals, 6-5.
- Oranjestad, Aruba, champion of the Latin America Region. In its Taylor debut, Aruba will attempt to succeed last year's Latin America representative from Willemstad, Curacao, in the Netherlands Antilles as the world champion of Junior League baseball. Aruba emerged from a nine-nation tournament in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. In the finale, Aruba defeated the Mexican national champs from Mexicala, 9-8.
- Saipan of the Northern Mariana Islands, champion of the Asia-Pacific Region. Team Saipan won a five-nation tournament held in Jakarta, Indonesia, defeating Guam in the finals, 10-9. Saipan played in Taylor five straight years, from 2001 to 2005.
- Yabucoa, the national champion of Puerto Rico. Teams from Yabucoa have played in Taylor six times. One resulted in a world championship in 1990. This will mark the 21st appearance in the JLWS by a Puerto Rican national champion.
- Coquitlam, British Columbia, the national champion of Canada. The six-team tournament concluded Wednesday night in Langley, British Columbia, as Coquitlam stunned Medicine Hat, Alberta, 4-3. It will be Coquitlam's second appearance in a row and third overall; the first year was 1999.

Teams in the USA Pool will include:

- Scottsdale, Arizona, the champion of the USA Western Regional Tournament. The Arizona state champions defeated last year's World Series runner-up, Hilo, Hawaii, 3-0, to end a 12-team tournament in Aliso Viejo, California. No team from Arizona has played in Taylor since 1992, when Tucson represented the West.
- Albuquerque, New Mexico, the USA Southwestern Regional champion. Albuquerque will become the first team from New Mexico to play in Taylor after defeating Texas West state champion Corpus Christi, 22-4. The game ended an eight-team tournament in Midland, Texas.
- Easley, South Carolina, the USA Southeast Regional champion. In an all-Carolina final, Easley defeated Mount Airy, North Carolina, 6-4. It's the second time in three years that the South Carolina state champion will play in Taylor. The Southeast Region, formerly known as the South Region in the Junior League, featured eight state champs.
- Middlebury, Indiana, the USA Central Regional champion. The Indiana state champion emerged from an 11-team tournament in Fort Wayne, Indiana. In the finals on Thursday, Middlebury defeated the Iowa state champs from Urbandale, 10-3. This will be the 12th time a team from Indiana plays in the JLWS, but the first time for Middlebury. The Michigan state champion, Midland, played in the Central Regional, going 2-2 in pool play.
- Jackson, New Jersey, the USA Eastern Regional champion. The 10-team tournament came down to an all-New Jersey final between state champion Jackson and host team Freehold Township, with Jackson winning on Thursday, 6-1. Jackson went 5-0, with other wins coming over the state champs of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland and Pennsylvania. This is the 10th time a New Jersey team will play in Taylor, but the first time for Jackson.

What's new this year?

This will be the first year that nearly every game of the Junior League World Series can be viewed live via the Internet, thanks to Little League International's

new relationship with webcasting partner Youth Sports Live.

For a subscription fee of \$14.95, anyone with an Internet connection can watch dozens of games from Taylor and other American cities hosting World Series.

To access Youth Sports Live, visit <http://www.youthsportslive.com/SummerTournament09/LittleLeague-Tournaments.aspx>.

The full schedule of games, including broadcast times for the ESPN family of networks, can be found at <http://www.littleleague.org/series/2009divisions/index.htm>.

As usual, the championship game of the Junior League World Series will be broadcast live on ESPNU and then rebroadcast at 11 p.m. Thursday, August 27, on ESPN2.

Also, this year there will be more of a carnival atmosphere as several large inflatable slides, rock climbing, "euro bunching," a spider climb and a Moonwalk will likely attract a crowd. Visit World Series Field for times and dates of operation.

Heritage Park is located at 12111 Pardee Road, between Goddard and Northline roads. The park is accessible from the Pardee entrance and a second entrance at Northline and Racho.

For more information, including the history of the tournament and the complete schedule, visit www.cityoftaylor.com/worldseries.

2009 Schedule

Saturday, August 15

Parade of Champions, Opening Ceremonies and Fireworks, 8:30 p.m.

Sunday, August 16

Easley, South Carolina (USA Southeast) vs. Albuquerque, New Mexico (Southwest), Noon

Yabucoa, Puerto Rico vs. Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada, 2:45 p.m.

Middlebury, Indiana (USA Central) vs. Jackson, New Jersey (USA East), 5:30 p.m.

Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy (EMEA) vs. Saipan, NMI (Asia-Pacific), 8:15 p.m.

Monday, August 17

Middlebury, Indiana (USA Central) vs. Scottsdale, Arizona (USA West), 11 a.m.

Oranjestad, Aruba (Latin America) vs. Saipan, NMI (Asia-Pacific), 2 p.m.

Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada vs. Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy (EMEA), 5 p.m.

Albuquerque, New Mexico (USA Southwest) vs. Jackson, New Jersey (USA East), 8 p.m.

Tuesday, August 18

Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy (EMEA) vs. Yabucoa, Puerto Rico, 11 a.m.

Albuquerque, New Mexico (USA Southwest) vs. Middlebury, Indiana (USA Central), 2 p.m.

Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada vs. Oranjestad, Aruba (Latin America), 5 p.m.

Scottsdale, Arizona (USA West) vs. Easley, South Carolina (USA Southeast), 8 p.m.

Wednesday, August 19

Saipan, NMI (Asia-Pacific) vs. Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada, 11 a.m.

Easley, South Carolina (USA Southeast) vs. Jackson, New Jersey (USA East), 2 p.m.

Albuquerque, New Mexico (USA Southwest) vs. Scottsdale, Arizona (USA West), 5 p.m.

Yabucoa, Puerto Rico vs. Oranjestad, Aruba (Latin America), 8 p.m.

Thursday, August 20

Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy (EMEA) vs. Oranjestad, Aruba (Latin America), 11 a.m.

Yabucoa, Puerto Rico vs. Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands (Asia-Pacific), 2 p.m.

Jackson, New Jersey (USA East) vs. Scottsdale, Arizona (USA West), 5 p.m.

Easley, South Carolina (USA Southeast) vs. Middlebury, Indiana (USA Central), 8 p.m.

Friday, August 21

International Championship, 5 p.m.

USA Championship, 8 p.m.

Saturday, August 22

Home Run Derby, TBA

World Championship Game, 5 p.m.

Note: EMEA = Europe/Middle East/Africa Region