

The countdown to the World Series in Taylor is under way

Six more teams will emerge this week as the final qualifiers for the Junior League World Series of baseball.

The 28th annual World Series – which pits the best teams of 13- and 14-year-old players from around the world – gets under way Sunday, August 10, at Heritage Park in Taylor.

Opening ceremonies, which are free and open to the public, are set for 8 p.m. Saturday, August 9.

To date, four teams from the International Pool have qualified for the 2008 World Series:

- Manila, Philippines, the returning Asia-Pacific regional champion, which was runner-up a year ago to world champ Pearl City, Hawaii.
- Willemstad, Curacao, of the Netherland Antilles, which won the Latin American regional championship for the first time in the Junior Division.
- London, England, a team of Americans, which became a first-time winner of the region that includes Europe, the Middle East and Africa.
- Boca Del Rio, Veracruz, the national champions of Mexico. This is the 20th anniversary of Mexico's World Series victory in 1988.

There are five regional tournaments under way this week across the United States and one in Canada:

- The USA Southwestern regional champion is scheduled to be determined Tuesday, August 5, in Midland, Texas. Teams from Texas have represented the Southwest in the World Series the last five years.
- The USA West regional championship game also is scheduled for Tuesday, August 5, in Aliso Viejo, California. Last year's world champion from Pearl City, Hawaii, came from the West region and the same league has been in Taylor the last four years, but Hilo has succeeded Pearl City as the Hawaii state champion.
- The Southern regional champion is scheduled to be crowned at 11 a.m. Wednesday, August 6, in Cartersville, Georgia. Eight state champions are in the running. Current Detroit Tiger Gary Sheffield was a member of the Tampa, Florida, team that won the South region and then the JLWS in 1982.
- Nine more state champs, plus a host team, are battling to win the USA East region in Freehold Township, New Jersey. The tournament is scheduled to be decided at 11 a.m. Thursday, August 8.
- Nine state champions – including Midland, Michigan – and a tournament host team are in the running to become USA Central regional champions in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The championship game is set for 6:30 p.m. Thursday, August 7.
- Two teams from British Columbia and one from Alberta are the early leaders in the Canadian national tournament taking place in Coquitlam, B.C. The title game is scheduled for Thursday, August 7. The winner will complete the five-team International Pool.

All 10 teams are scheduled to arrive prior to the colorful opening ceremonies, which are set for 8 p.m. Saturday, August 9. Players and coaches will march in the Parade of Champions, waving the flag from their state or country as national anthems are played. Dignitaries will welcome the visitors to Taylor. Following a traditional ceremonial first pitch to start the series, fireworks will be presented, compliments of the City of Taylor.

World Series Director Greg Bzura said the public is invited to join in the opening ceremonies to welcome the teams to the city of Taylor, the Downriver area and Michigan.

Games get under way at noon Sunday, August 10. Four games will be played each day, August 10-14 with the five teams in each pool playing a round-robin-style schedule.

On Friday, August 15, the International championship game is scheduled for 5 p.m., followed by the USA championship game at 8 p.m. The world championship will be decided at 5 p.m. Saturday, August 16. The title game will be shown 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.

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

Heritage Park is located at 12111 Pardee Road between Goddard and Northline roads. The park is one mile east of Telegraph Road.

For up-to-date news on the World Series, visit the World Series Web site at www.cityoftaylor.com/worldseries.