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Final four set in Junior League World Series in Taylor

The 29th annual Junior League World Series is down to the final four.

Teams of 13- and 14-year-old baseball players from Puerto Rico and Aruba will play for the International championship at 5 p.m. Friday, August 21 at Taylor's Heritage Park.

Teams from Arizona and Indiana will follow at 8 p.m., with the winner earning the title USA champion.

Friday's two winners will play for the world championship at 5 p.m.

The Junior League World Series is the big brother of the Little League World Series for 12-year-olds in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Once players turn 13 and 14, they compete in the Junior League, whose World Series has been held in Taylor since its inception in 1981.

The four remaining teams will attempt to become the 29th world champion and have its sign placed with the others along the Avenue of Champions in Heritage Park.

The title game will be played before a live ESPNU audience. The game will then be replayed on ESPN2 at 11 p.m. Thursday, August 27.

"We've had a great week of baseball," said World Series Director Greg Bzura. "We've seen a number of high-scoring games and a number of very close games. All 10 teams started the week as champions, but there can be only one world champion."

The International Pool championship game will be a rematch of Wednesday night's stellar game between Yabucoa, the national champion of Puerto Rico, and Oranjestad, Aruba, the Latin America champions. That night, Puerto Rico won, 6-4. It was Aruba's only loss of the tournament and helped make Puerto Rico the only unbeaten international team.

Meanwhile, in the USA Pool, the all-stars from Scottsdale, Arizona, are on a run that's rarely seen in sports: a 22-game winning streak since post-season play began over a month ago. Four of those victories have come in the World Series against other regional champions, making the team from the Mountain View Little League the only undefeated team (4-0) in the USA Pool.

Team Arizona's opponent is the Central Regional champion from Middlebury, Indiana, one of three teams that finished 2-2 in the pool, but 1) won a tie-breaker based on the least defensive runs allowed and 2) has played Scottsdale as well as any team, falling 4-0 on Monday.

Heritage Park is located at 12111 Pardee Road between Goddard and Northline. Tickets are just \$5 per carload per day.

Friday's Schedule

5 p.m. International Championship Game: Yabucoa, Puerto Rico vs. Oranjestad, Aruba

8 p.m. USA Championship Game: Scottsdale, Arizona vs. Middlebury, Indiana.

Saturday's Schedule

Noon Home Run Derby

5 p.m. Junior League World Series Championship Game

Final Pool Standings

USA Pool

Scottsdale, Arizona (West Regional Champion) 4-0

Middlebury, Indiana (Central Regional Champion) 2-2

Jackson, New Jersey (East Regional Champion) 2-2

Albuquerque, New Mexico (Southwest Regional Champion) 2-2

Easley, South Carolina (Southeast Regional Champion) 0-4

International Pool

Yabucoa, Puerto Rico (National Champion) 4-0

Oranjestad, Aruba (Latin America Champion) 3-1

Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands (Asia-Pacific Champion) 2-2

Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy (Europe/Middle East/Africa Champion) 1-3

Coquitlam, British Columbia (Canadian National Champion) 0-4

Thursday's Results

Oranjestad, Aruba 23, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy 1

Yabucoa, Puerto Rico 11, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands 1

Scottsdale, Arizona 10, Jackson, New Jersey 8

Middlebury, Indiana 9, Easley, South Carolina 4

Thursday Game Summaries

Oranjestad, Aruba 23, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy 1

Aruba bounced back from its heartbreaking Wednesday night defeat the hands of Puerto Rico by routing the Italy, the champions of the Europe/Middle East/Africa Region, 23-1. Aruba swatted out 13 hits with two home runs: a grand slam by second baseman Ray-Patrick Didder and a three-run shot by starting

pitcher Shawn Duinker. Four Aruba pitchers allowed only three runners on three hits. They allowed no walks and struck out nine. Aruba ended pool play 3-1. Italy finished 1-3.

Yabucoa, Puerto Rico 11, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands 1

Puerto Rico finished its march through the International Pool with a solid, no-nonsense victory over Saipan, 11-1. There was a two-hour rain delay first inning. Puerto Rico scored in lightning fashion with three runs before the storm and five after the sun reappeared. Christian Medina, Ramon Aponte and Kevin Santa all had two-RBI singles during the 11-batter inning. The real thunder came in the second inning when Kristian Brito launched a 345-foot moonshot to right field, making the score 9-0. From there, good pitching and timely defense kept both teams off the scoreboard until Saipan's Arthur Jebahn drew a walk in the fourth and Patrick Tenoro singled him home. The game ended in the sixth when Brito homered for the second time in the game and the fourth time in the World Series. Puerto Rico remained unbeaten at 4-0. Saipan finished pool play at 2-2 – which was a personal best for teams from the Northern Mariana Islands.

Scottsdale, Arizona 10, Jackson, New Jersey 8

Arizona, the only unbeaten team in the USA Pool, spotted New Jersey, a 6-0 lead before battling back for a 10-8 win on Thursday night. New Jersey fell to 2-2 and in a three-way tie with Indiana and New Mexico. Three singles, an error and five walks led to a 6-0 New Jersey lead in the first inning. Arizona got four in the second, including a home run by Cody Erickson, and took a 7-6 lead in the fourth, which featured doubles by Jimmy DiTroia, Erickson and Michael DeRegis. Arizona added two in the fifth on a two-run homer by DiTroia for a 9-6 lead. New Jersey added a run in the fifth. Both teams scored in the seventh. DiTroia, Erickson and Dylan Cozens had three hits apiece for the winners and combined for six runs and nine RBI. Garced went 3-for-4 and scored twice for New Jersey.

Middlebury, Indiana 9, Easley, South Carolina 4

USA Central Region champs Middlebury, Indiana, had two options: If they won the game vs. Easley, South Carolina, they got to play in the US championship. If they lost, they finished in fifth place in the USA Pool. Indiana scored two runs in the second, five in the third and solo runs in the fourth and seventh to topple South Carolina, 9-4, in the final pool game. Easley scored all of its runs in the fourth with the help of three hit batsmen, an error, an RBI fielder's choice by James Medlin and an RBI single by Austin Northcutt. Indiana relief pitcher Shannon Baker pitched 4 2/3 innings of one-hit ball with six strikeouts. Caleb Slayton was 2-for-3 with three runs scored and Judah Zickafoos had two RBI for the Middlebury nine. South Carolina's Tucker Burgess was 2-for-4. Because Indiana finished in a three-way tie with New Mexico and New Jersey, but advanced to the USA championship games on a tie-breaker that involves defensive runs allowed.

Notebook

Pool play has been in existence since 2001 and the USA West Region champion has played for the USA championship every year. In that time, four West champions have won the USA title and gone on to play for the world championship: Hawaii in 2001, 2007 and 2008 and California in 2003. Scottsdale is attempting to keep Arizona team's world title streak in tact. Tucson, Arizona, went 6-1 in the 1992 World Series and won the championship.

Johnston, Iowa, the Central Region champion of 2008, fell short against Hilo, Hawaii for the USA title a year ago. Boardman, Ohio, is the only Central team to win the world championship and that was in 1981, the first year of the World Series.

While the all-stars from Aruba are representing their country in Taylor for the first time, the boys from the Juan Bibiloni Little League in Yabucoa hope their league's seventh appearance in the JLWS is the charm to win their second Junior League world title. The first came in 1990...

Some of the players in this year's Junior League World Series may one day compete professionally. At least 10 players from past JLWS have gone on to stardom, including former Detroit Tiger Gary Sheffield, pitcher Brett Myers of the 2008 Major League World Series champion Philadelphia Phillies, Seattle pitcher Erik Bedard, Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Matt Cassel and University of Nebraska football Coach Bo Pelini...

Pat Hinojosa, owner of MWC Sports, is in his fifth year as the official photographer of the Junior League World Series. Hinojosa and his staff shoot still photos and video of sports and other special events. To view his photos, visit the web site www.mwcsportsinc.com. MWC also is at the field selling custom photo novelties.

Need more information?

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