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Aruba joins Mexico and Florida in the final four of the Junior League World Series in Taylor

TAYLOR, MICHIGAN -- Baseball teams from Aruba, Mexico and Florida have earned spots in the final four of the Junior League World Series. The fourth member of the elite group will be determined after four more great games today at Taylor's Heritage Park.

Thursday is the final day of round-robin pool play for all-star teams of 13- and 14-year-old ballplayers from around the world.

Here is today's schedule:

11 AM – San Nicolas de Los Garza, Nuevo Leon (Mexico national champion) vs. Lazio, Italy (Europe/Middle East/Africa champion)

2 PM – Tainan City, Chinese Taipei (Asia-Pacific champion) vs. Calgary, Alberta (Canada national champion)

5 PM – Corpus Christi, Texas (USA Southwest champion) vs. North Canton, Ohio (USA Central champion)

8 PM – Franklin Square, New York (USA East champion) vs. Rockledge, Florida (USA Southeast champion)

The Latin America champions from Oranjestad, Aruba, and the USA West champions from Manhattan Beach, California, completed pool play yesterday and have today off.

Before playing in the World Series championship games at 11 a.m. Saturday, teams must win either the International or USA championship. The top two teams in the International Pool – Mexico (3-0) and Aruba (3-1) play at 5 p.m. Friday. The top two teams in the USA Pool – including Florida (3-0) – will play at 8 p.m. Friday.

The 5 and 8 p.m. games on Thursday will determine Florida's opponent on Friday. Texas is 2-1, while Ohio and New York are 1-2.

Thursday and Friday games can be viewed live on streaming video with play by play on the Internet site www.justin.tv/jlws2012. Saturday's world title game will be carried live on ESPN2.

World Series Field is located at Heritage Park, 12111 Pardee Road. Admission is a modest \$5 per carload per day or \$10 for the entire week. Both fees include parking.

The Junior League World Series started in Taylor in 1981 and has been here ever since. Founder Greg Bzura has remained tournament director every year since.

Taylor's World Series is the "older brother" of the storied Little League World Series for 12-year-olds held annually in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

From Junior League All-Stars to the Major League

A number of current or past professional baseball players played for teams in the Junior League World Series before making it as stars in the big leagues. They include Gary Sheffield, Eric Bedard, Brett Myers, brothers Jose and Javier Valentin, Erubiel Durazo, Chad Hermansen, Derek Bell, Delino DeShields, Shannon Withem, Adam Loewen and Chris Brock. Sheffield and Bell were teammates on the Belmont Heights junior team from Tampa, Florida, that won the Junior League world championship in 1982. Some future major leaguers may be on the rosters in 2012.

Other future stars to play in Taylor have included Chris Dingman and Steve Reinprecht, Junior League teammates in 1989 with Edmonton, Alberta, who went on to play in the National Hockey League. Matt Cassel (Northridge, California, 1995) is a quarterback for the Kansas City Chiefs. Mark "Bo" Pelini, a member of the 1981 champions from Boardman, Ohio, went on to play safety for Ohio State University's football team and is now head football coach at the University of Nebraska.

Here are recaps of Wednesday's games:

Trailing 6-5 after five innings, Oranjestad, Aruba scored three runs in the sixth inning and four in the seventh to wrap up a 12-6 win over Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Edmar Tromp continued his torrid hitting pace by going 3-for-5, scoring three runs and knocking in three. Teammates Gillian Wernet and Endry Brito had two hits apiece. Wernet and Anthony Lacle each knocked in a pair of runs. Both teams had 11 hits as Canada (0-3) showed its capability. Jared Kennedy, Joshus Weins and Derek Owen each went 2-for-4 and teammate Taylor Roberge had a solo home run.

Corpus Christi, Texas, scored seven runs in the fourth inning and three more in the seventh to break open a scoreless game and defeat Franklin Square, New York, 10-0. The USA Southwest champs from Texas improved to 2-1, while New York fell to 1-2. If Texas defeats Ohio on Thursday, the Southwest champs will play Rockledge, Florida (3-0) in the USA title game on Friday. Leading 7-0, Texas wrapped up the game in the sixth, when Joshua Baltierra hit a solo home run and Nathan Rabe hit a two-run shot two batters later. At that point, the game was halted by the mercy rule. The homer was the second of the game for Rabe, who knocked in four runs. Teammate Christopher Nuncio also hit a two-run homer. Nuncio and Baltierra scattered five hits – two by New York's Julio Lizardo Jr. – and shared the shutout.

Manhattan Beach, California, broke into the win column with an 8-3 victory over North Canton, Ohio. Both teams are 1-2 in the USA Pool. The USA Central champs from Ohio scored first, but the USA West champs scored in each of the last five innings to secure the win. Trevor Franklin went 3-for-4 and teammate Zachary Chan had two of the winners' 10 hits. William Proctor knocked in two runs. Benjamin Kiesling had two of Ohio's seven hits and knocked in two of the three runs. Franklin was the winning pitcher, throwing the first six innings.

Tainan City, Chinese Taipei, showed the fire power that earned the team the Asia-Pacific regional title by defeating European champion Lazio, Italy, 18-3. Chinese Taipei scored five runs in the first inning and never trailed. The game was halted after the fifth inning by the 10-run mercy rule. The winners had 15 hits – three by Chuang Huan Chun and two each by Tsai Min Hsiu, Huang Tzu Jung, Wei Chieh and Tsai Kuan Wen. Chun, Hsiu, Jung and Chieh scored three runs apiece. Jung and Chieh also knocked in three runs each. Pitcher Jung threw a three-hitter. Only one of Italy's three runs was earned. The win was the first for Chinese Taipei, but was not enough to get the Asia-Pacific champions into the International title game. Chinese Taipei and Italy are both 1-2 entering Thursday, the last day of pool play.

Here are the pool play standings through Wednesday's games:

USA Pool

Florida 3-0
Texas 2-1
New York 1-2
Ohio 1-2
California 1-3

International Pool

Mexico 3-0
Aruba 3-1
Chinese Taipei 1-2
Italy 1-2
Canada 0-3

Friday's Schedule

5 PM – International Championship Game
8 PM – USA Championship Game

Saturday's Schedule

11 AM – World Championship Game: International Champ vs. USA Champ

There are several ways to follow the games of the Junior League World Series:

- Through Friday, the games are broadcast live on the Internet on streaming video with play by play at www.justin.tv/jlws2012.
- Statistics can be found at <http://juniorlbws2012.bbstats.pointstreak.com>.
- The World Series website is www.cityoftaylor.com/worldseries. The site features the complete schedule, results, team rosters and profiles and a history of the series.
- The World Series Facebook page, which has more than 2,000 fans, is www.facebook.com/juniorleagueworldseries.

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