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# NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MLB, USA BASEBALL ANNOUNCE NEW FORMAT FOR APPALACHIAN LEAGUE Appy League to Become First Collegiate Summer League in Prospect Development Pipeline (PDP) for Rising College Freshmen and Sophomores**

### **Plan Retains High-Level Baseball in the Region for the Long-Term Under Appalachian League Banner, Adds New Opportunities**

Major League Baseball and USA Baseball jointly announced today a new format for the Appalachian League, which will feature the nation's top rising college freshmen and sophomores in wood-bat play each summer. The new format affirms MLB's commitment to the region, maintains the existing branding of the league, and assures that the Appalachian League will continue to host high-caliber baseball and future Major Leaguers for years to come.

The Appalachian League will become a part of the Prospect Development Pipeline ("PDP"), the collaborative effort between MLB and USA Baseball that establishes a player development pathway for amateur baseball players in the United States, and will be an integral part of the identification and development process for the USA Baseball Collegiate National Team and other future national teams. Appalachian League participants will receive extensive visibility to MLB Club scouts through both in-person observation and state-of-the-art scouting technology. Players will receive instruction from former MLB players and educational programming designed to prepare them for careers as professional athletes. Plans include a 54-game regular season and an annual All-Star Game. MLB and USA Baseball will provide support for the league's staffing, player participation, and administrative functions. The parties are in communication with the NCAA to ensure athlete eligibility requirements are met.



To herald the start of this exciting new format, each of the 10 teams in the Appalachian League have decided to undertake a process for changing their names and logos to incorporate symbols and images important to their respective local communities, to be adopted before the 2021 season. MLB and USA Baseball have already begun the process of identifying and inviting the top 320 players to participate in the 2021 Appalachian League.

Morgan Sword, MLB's Executive Vice President, Baseball Economics & Operations, said: "We are thrilled to partner with USA Baseball and the Appalachian League communities to create a one-of-a-kind summer league that will attract the nation's top collegiate players and allow local fans to see top prospects and future big-league stars in their hometowns. This announcement continues MLB's commitment to preserving and growing baseball in communities around the United States. The road to the big leagues now runs through Appalachia."

Mike Gaski, President of USA Baseball, said: "USA Baseball is excited for this unique opportunity to enhance the offerings within the Prospect Development Pipeline through the creation of a premier summer collegiate baseball league. Our commitment to the continued development of amateur athletes is paramount to our mission as the national governing body for the sport in the United States and it is an honor to align ourselves with a historic baseball brand such as the Appalachian League, as well as our partners in Major League Baseball. We look forward to welcoming elite-level college athletes to the Appalachian League and identifying players who will hope to one day play for Team USA."

Dan Moushon, the President of the Appalachian League, said: "The communities of the Appalachian League have supported baseball since our founding in 1911. We are grateful to MLB and USA Baseball for bringing this exciting opportunity to our fans and look forward to welcoming players, coaches, MLB scouts, and fans into our cities next summer."

The league will be guided by a Steering Committee composed of leaders from collegiate and professional baseball:

- **CHRIS ALLEN** – PRESIDENT & COO – BOYD SPORTS
- **ASHLEY BRATCHER** – SENIOR DIRECTOR – BASEBALL OPERATIONS, USA BASEBALL
- **ERIC CAMPBELL** – GENERAL MANAGER – NATIONAL TEAMS, USA BASEBALL
- **TIM CORBIN** – HEAD BASEBALL COACH, VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
- **JOHN D'ANGELO** – VICE PRESIDENT – AMATEUR & MEDICAL, MLB
- **DAN HARTLEB** – HEAD BASEBALL COACH, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
- **GIL KIM** – DIRECTOR OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT, TORONTO BLUE JAYS
- **BRYAN MINNITI** – ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER, PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES
- **DAN MOUSHON** – PRESIDENT, APPALACHIAN LEAGUE
- **JALEN PHILLIPS** – COORDINATOR – DRAFT OPERATIONS, MLB
- **STEVE SANDERS** – ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER, PITTSBURGH PIRATES
- **JOHN SAVAGE** – HEAD BASEBALL COACH, UCLA
- **BILL SCHMIDT** – VICE PRESIDENT – SCOUTING, COLORADO ROCKIES
- **EDWIN THOMPSON** – HEAD BASEBALL COACH, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

**Watch more on the impact of the new Appalachian League here:**

<https://www.mlb.com/video/appalachian-league-explanatory?t=most-popular>

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## WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT THE NEW APPALACHIAN LEAGUE

- **UNITED STATES SENATOR MARK WARNER OF VIRGINIA** said: "For years, Minor League Baseball teams have provided affordable family entertainment for Virginians and fostered players who became Big League stars. This new Appalachian League format will continue that tradition, ensuring that high-level baseball will continue being played in our state for the long-term. I look forward to seeing the next generation of big league stars, and cultivating the next generation of baseball fans, right here in Virginia."
- **UNITED STATES SENATOR JOE MANCHIN OF WEST VIRGINIA** said: "After months of conversations with Major League Baseball, USA Baseball, and the Appalachian League, I am pleased by this agreement to bring the Appalachian League into the Prospect Development Pipeline. This collaboration will directly benefit our two Appalachian League teams in Bluefield and Princeton, which provide many West Virginians with entertainment and family time and foster a love of the American pastime. Through this new arrangement, our communities will host the premier baseball players in the country, giving West Virginians a chance to see baseball's future stars before they reach the big leagues. I am committed to ensuring the future of all of West Virginia's minor league teams, and I will work with everyone involved to ensure these teams receive the support they need to succeed during this transition and look forward to seeing top talent play in the Mountain State for many years to come."
- **UNITED STATES SENATOR TIM KAINE OF VIRGINIA** said: "I am delighted that MLB and the Appalachian League have come to this agreement. I've called for baseball to remain in communities like Bluefield, Danville, Pulaski, and Bristol — this format will do just that with high-quality competition on the field for these communities to enjoy for years to come."
- **UNITED STATES SENATOR SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO OF WEST VIRGINIA** said: "Though we have missed baseball this summer on the diamonds across West Virginia, Major League Baseball and USA Baseball are ensuring future summer nights in Princeton and Bluefield will be spent watching our National Pastime. It will be a thrill to watch the nation's premier college players chase their dreams of the Majors while keeping the rich baseball traditions alive for these two communities."
- **WEST VIRGINIA GOVERNOR JIM JUSTICE** said: "I'm thrilled beyond belief that two of West Virginia's fantastic baseball teams – the Bluefield Blue Jays and the Princeton Rays – will be charter members of the groundbreaking Appalachian League. I've had many conversations with MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred as we work together to preserve the tradition of baseball in these communities as well as in Charleston and Morgantown, and I know he truly appreciates how important these teams are to the thousands of West Virginians who enjoy great baseball. They are crucial parts of our local economies and communities, bringing in all kinds of jobs. And when it comes to tourism, they are absolute home runs."

"It's going to be an absolute treat to see some of the very best college baseball players in the country perfect their skills right in our backyard. These ballclubs in Bluefield and Princeton are two of West Virginia's finest gems and I can't wait for this exciting new chapter to get started."

- **UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN PHIL ROE, M.D., OF TENNESSEE** said: "This agreement between the Appalachian League and Major League Baseball sounds like good news for our community. We have a long, rich history of baseball in Northeast Tennessee, and I am glad that tradition will continue."
- **UNITED STATES CONGRESSWOMAN CAROL MILLER OF WEST VIRGINIA** said: "I applaud Major League Baseball and USA Baseball for joining together to create the new Appalachian League. This exciting decision will bring top-tier baseball talent into our communities and create new economic investment opportunities in West Virginia and rural areas across our region. Our baseball teams are the spirit of our small towns, and I am excited to attend a game in the newly formatted Appalachian League."
- **UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN DENVER RIGGLEMAN OF VIRGINIA** said: "The Danville Braves have been an integral part of the Danville community and I am pleased to see them enter this new chapter. I am happy that baseball will remain in Danville with the creation of this new league."

- **CURT ALEXANDER, MAYOR OF LONGTIME APPALACHIAN LEAGUE VENUE ELIZABETHTON, TENNESSEE**, said: "We are extremely excited about the opportunity to partner directly with Major League Baseball and USA Baseball. The City of Elizabethton is a baseball community, one that has supported this wonderful game for more than 45 years. Our baseball tradition runs deep in Elizabethton. We have a long history of championships and a big roster of former E-Twins players that have made it to the big leagues. Major League Baseball is providing us with another opportunity to enjoy a pipeline of great baseball players that have that same chance to make it big in the Majors. It's an exciting time and we welcome this partnership with Major League Baseball and USA Baseball."
- **JEFF DISIBBIO, PRESIDENT/CEO OF THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF THE TWO VIRGINIAS**, said: "In Appalachia, America's favorite pastime is built on the dreams of the children playing catch in the backyard, using a limb from the closest tree for a bat. Thanks to the new Appalachian League format, local kids will continue to see the future stars in person, build relationships with them, and fall in love with a game trying to live out the hope that they can become one of their heroes one day. Thank you to the local organizers and teams who worked to save our league; without them these dreams could have been lost."
- **RANDALL C. EADS, CITY MANAGER OF LONGTIME APPALACHIAN LEAGUE VENUE BRISTOL, VIRGINIA**, said: "Minor League Baseball has a storied history in Bristol, and we are proud and excited that we are going to both preserve and improve America's Pastime here in our community. In 1969, the Bristol Tigers debuted as Bristol's minor league team. Over the years, the minor league teams have been affiliated with the Detroit Tigers, Chicago White Sox and the Pittsburgh Pirates. Lou Whitaker and Alan Trammell are just two noteworthy Major League stars that began their careers here in Bristol. I look forward to seeing tomorrow's Major League stars playing in Bristol soon!"
- **DAVID GRAHAM, THE MAYOR OF LONGTIME APPALACHIAN LEAGUE VENUE PRINCETON, WEST VIRGINIA**, said: "The City of Princeton and our many local baseball fans eagerly look forward to the return of Appalachian League Baseball to our community. Minor League Baseball has been enjoyed locally for the past 30 plus years and we have a wonderful facility in which to host it. The new structure of the League, plus the opportunity to name our own team will absolutely create enhanced interest and community support. We appreciate the efforts of Major League Baseball, the Appalachian League and our local team representatives in this endeavor."
- **SCOTT HUMMEL, PH.D., PRESIDENT OF TUSCULUM UNIVERSITY IN LONGTIME APPALACHIAN LEAGUE VENUE GREENEVILLE, TENNESSEE**, said: "While we still have a lot to work out, Tusculum University is excited the about the possibility of bringing an MLB presence and USA Baseball to Greeneville. This could be a win-win-win for baseball, Greeneville, and Tusculum University. The summer collegiate league in our beautiful stadium will make for some magical nights of baseball in Greeneville."
- **RON MARTIN, THE MAYOR OF LONGTIME APPALACHIAN LEAGUE VENUE BLUEFIELD, WEST VIRGINIA**, said: "The City of Bluefield is extremely excited about the prospect of a wooden-bat collegiate baseball league coming to Bluefield and other Appalachian League cities. This will continue the long tradition of excellent baseball being played at Bowen Field. This summer of COVID-19 has shown us what a summer without baseball in Bluefield is like. We are all anxious to see the players take the field at Bowen in 2021."
- **JAMIE NULL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MERCER COUNTY CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU**, said: "The Mercer County Convention and Visitors Bureau is proud and excited to promote and support the new Appalachian League format. We believe that this league will create a sports tourism destination in Mercer County. The CVB will be able to market Mercer County as a place to watch new talent and rally around a new hometown league. We believe that this new league will bring tourism dollars to the area as fans, visitors, scouts and families will travel to Mercer County - all in the name of baseball. We look forward to working with both the Princeton and Bluefield Baseball clubs on this endeavor to continue America's favorite pastime right here in Mercer County, West Virginia."
- **DANE RIDEOUT, CITY MANAGER OF LONGTIME APPALACHIAN LEAGUE VENUE BLUEFIELD, WEST VIRGINIA**, said: "When the baseball club briefed us on the prospect of a wooden-bat league, I was blown away. This will be extremely high-level ball, featuring the best college players with an excellent chance of making it to the majors. We've missed baseball this summer, and we are so glad that baseball will be returning to our city. We encourage our citizens to show up at Bowen Field next year and support the new league."

- **DEWEY RUSSELL, CITY COUNCIL MEMBER/PRESIDENT OF PRINCETON BASEBALL ASSOCIATION**, said: "Princeton baseball has been a summer destination for the majority of our population. This partnership with MLB, USA Baseball and the Appalachian League is something our community will fully embrace from the youngest to the oldest fan. We believe that this league will bring a new set of fans to Hunnicutt Field in anticipation of seeing the next MLB stars and well as following the player throughout his college career. Thank you to all of those involved for making this dream a reality."
- **BILL SGRINIA, DIRECTOR OF THE CITY OF DANVILLE (VA) PARKS AND RECREATION**, said: "Danville has had a long tradition as a baseball community and is extremely excited about keeping quality baseball in the city. We greatly enjoyed having the Danville Braves as part of our community and are sad to see them leave. However, we are appreciative of MLB and USA Baseball providing this opportunity for continued baseball in Danville. We look forward to a new team as part of the community."
- **PAT SHULL, THE MAYOR OF LONGTIME APPALACHIAN LEAGUE VENUE KINGSFORT, TENNESSEE**, said: "I am pleased that Kingsport will continue to host high quality, exciting baseball. Let's show our Kingsport spirit and get ready to welcome talented players from all over our nation. I'm ready for the first pitch now."
- **BILL SORAH, CITY MANAGER OF LONGTIME APPALACHIAN LEAGUE VENUE BRISTOL, TENNESSEE**, said: "The City of Bristol has enjoyed professional baseball for over 75 years. As a member of the Appalachian League, Bristol has long enjoyed wholesome family entertainment provided by young athletes seeking to fulfill their dream of playing professional baseball at its highest level. These athletes have promoted goodwill and served as role models for our youth. The value of their presence in our community cannot be overstated. It is with great enthusiasm to learn of MLB's proposal to create a new format for the Appalachian League that will bring collegiate baseball players to our region to further develop their skills. The opportunity to once again enjoy high-quality baseball played by aspiring young athletes is a reason for our region to celebrate."
- **CHARLIE STAHL, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER OF LONGTIME APPALACHIAN LEAGUE VENUE JOHNSON CITY, TENNESSEE**, said: "Learning that MLB, in affiliation with the Appalachian League, is committed to establishing a collegiate summer league keeps baseball alive and well in Johnson City and other Appalachian League communities for hopefully many years to come, continuing a tradition our citizens have enjoyed for over a century."
- **JONATHAN D. SWEET, PULASKI COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**, said: "Minor League Baseball has a storied history in the Town of Pulaski and we so are proud and excited that our community will be a big part of preserving and improving America's pastime. The new Appalachian League format ensures high-level baseball will continue being played right here in Calfee Park for a long time to come. I look forward to seeing the next generation of big league stars come through our town, and as a community of baseball fans, we are committed to supporting these players and our teams."
- **HARDIN WATKINS, CITY MANAGER OF LONGTIME APPALACHIAN LEAGUE VENUE BURLINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA**, said: "Minor League Baseball has an amazingly positive history in Burlington dating back to 1986. The City is proud and excited that we are going to both preserve and improve America's Pastime here in our community. The new Appalachian League format ensures high-level baseball will continue being played at Burlington Athletic Stadium for the delight of folks in our community for the long-term. We are looking forward to seeing the next generation of big league stars come through our city and cultivating the next generation of baseball fans right here in our backyard."
 

"The Burlington Royals have provided exciting, affordable entertainment for Burlington families for over thirty years and nurtured players who have gone on to impressive big league careers. This new format for the Appalachian League guarantees that fans right here in Burlington will continue to see future baseball stars, and that those players will get the support, kindness, and exposure they deserve on their path to the Majors. This is exciting for those players, for the Burlington Royals and for fans like me who can't wait to get back to the ballpark."
- **MICHAEL WATSON, TOWN MANAGER OF LONGTIME APPALACHIAN LEAGUE VENUE BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA**, said: "We are extremely excited to see baseball continue in our area. The support by MLB has been a blessing and will continue the baseball legacy that has been a part of the community for decades."
- **MIKE WEBB, CITY MANAGER OF LONGTIME APPALACHIAN LEAGUE VENUE PRINCETON, WEST VIRGINIA**, said: "Elite level baseball with a personal touch. Local team names and favorite players to watch as their careers progress to the MLB level. This is great for the City of Princeton and small-town America throughout the Appalachian League community and for Minor League Baseball!"