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MLB ANNOUNCES NEW “MLB DRAFT LEAGUE” First-of-Its-Kind MLB Draft League to Launch in Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and New Jersey

Plan Retains High-Level Baseball in These Communities for the Long-Term

Major League Baseball, Prep Baseball Report (PBR), and five founding members today announced the formation of the MLB Draft League, which will become the first league in the country focused on top prospects who are eligible to be drafted by MLB Clubs that summer. With the 2021 MLB Draft moved back to July and being held as part of All-Star Week, draft-eligible players will have a unique opportunity to showcase their abilities and gain exposure to MLB Clubs and fans next summer. The new format affirms MLB’s commitment to the region and assures that communities of Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and New Jersey will continue to host high-caliber baseball and future Major Leaguers for years to come.

The founding members of the MLB Draft League will be the Mahoning Valley Scrappers, the State College Spikes, the Trenton Thunder, the West Virginia Black Bears, and the Williamsport Crosscutters. The League is in advanced discussions with a sixth team and hopes to announce in the coming weeks. Plans include a 68-game regular season with an annual All-Star Break centered around the MLB Draft. MLB Draft League participants will receive unprecedented visibility to MLB Club scouts through both in-person observation and state-of-the-art scouting technology, and educational programming designed to prepare them for careers as professional athletes. PBR will provide support for the league’s staffing, player and coach recruitment, on-field operations, and administrative functions. PBR will also use their media and technology platforms to promote the league and its players throughout the season.



Today’s announcement follows the late September announcement of the Appalachian League’s evolution into the premier college wood bat league for the nation’s top rising freshmen and sophomores and is part of MLB’s broader efforts to modernize player development while preserving baseball in the local communities in which it is currently played. More announcements, including additional members of the MLB Draft League, other MLB-sponsored leagues as well as licensed affiliates, will follow in the coming weeks.

Kerrick Jackson will serve as President of the MLB Draft League. Prior to joining PBR, Jackson served as the head coach at Southern University, where he led a nine-win team to the NCAA Tournament in three years. For three years, Jackson was the Midwest Area Scouting Supervisor for the Washington Nationals,

overseeing Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, Iowa, Nebraska and the Dakotas. Jackson served as the recruiting coordinator at the University of Missouri for five years (2010-2015) and has held assistant roles at Nicholls State University, Fairfield University, Emporia State University and Coffeyville Community College. He has coached in the Cape Cod League and New England Collegiate Baseball League.

Morgan Sword, MLB's Executive Vice President, Baseball Economics & Operations, said: "We are thrilled to partner with Prep Baseball Report and the founding members of the MLB Draft League to create a one-of-a-kind league that will attract the nation's top players who are eligible for each year's MLB Draft 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."

Sean Duncan, President of Prep Baseball Report, said: "We are honored to work with these ownership groups and Major League Baseball to assure the future of impactful, high-level baseball to the region and continue the legacy of deep community involvement from all of these teams. With more than 150 scouts and operations personnel coast-to-coast at the high school, collegiate and junior college levels, we take great pride in our ability to identify the nation's top amateur draft prospects, which will ultimately make the MLB Draft League the preeminent league for draft-eligible players."

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WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT THE NEW MLB DRAFT LEAGUE

- **UNITED STATES SENATOR SHERROD BROWN OF OHIO** said: "So many of us have fought hard to protect the Mahoning Valley Scrappers because the team represents so much of what makes the Valley great — grit, determination and the ability to overcome adversity no matter the odds. I'm glad that MLB listened. The formation of the MLB Draft League is good news for baseball and for fans in the Valley, who will get to continue to see high-level prospects in their own backyard and rally around the Scrappers again soon."
- **UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN TIM RYAN OF OHIO** said: "After many months of calls, letters, legislation, and tough discussions with Major League Baseball to ensure the Scrappers stay in the Mahoning Valley, I'm proud to say that this announcement will not only protect the Scrappers but add value to our community and local baseball fans. By showcasing the best draft-eligible talent in our nation, the Scrappers are poised to continue providing our community amazing entertainment for many years to come."
- **UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN FRED KELLER OF PENNSYLVANIA** said: "I'm grateful to Major League Baseball for its continued partnership with the Crosscutters, Spikes, and every other team that will participate in the MLB Draft League. Baseball brings so many people together, and the formation of the MLB Draft League is a promising indication that America's favorite pastime will be played at a high level in these communities for years to come."
- **UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN GLENN "GT" THOMPSON OF PENNSYLVANIA** said: "The Spikes are a staple of the Centre Region, fueling the economy, supporting local causes, and providing affordable family entertainment. I am happy to learn about the agreement with MLB and will be grateful for baseball continuing in State College."
- **OHIO GOVERNOR MIKE DEWINE** said: "I am thrilled that future Major Leaguers will continue to play in the Mahoning Valley for years to come. MLB's long-commitment to high-quality baseball in the Mahoning Valley is a testament to what the Scrappers have built, from their management to their facilities, and, most of all, the historic support of fans in the Youngstown-Warren area."
- **PETER B. FREUND, PRESIDENT & PRINCIPAL OWNER OF THE WILLIAMSPORT CROSSCUTTERS**, said: "We are ecstatic to have Williamsport continue to be a gateway to the Majors in the all-new MLB Draft League and cannot wait for another season of Crosscutters baseball."
- **CHUCK GREENBERG, CHAIRMAN AND MANAGING PARTNER OF THE STATE COLLEGE SPIKES**, said: "This is a new day for the State College Spikes, and a bright one that we are really excited about. The Major League Baseball Draft League is an innovative concept in player development, and we are honored to have been asked to be one of its founding members. We look forward to bringing the nation's top draft-eligible players to Medlar Field at Lubrano Park this summer, and we look forward to partnering with MLB and PBR to create an environment in which the very best collegiate players can engage in intense competition for the attention of all MLB clubs during draft season. With the support of our fans, the MLB Draft League will be the premier place to see these future major league stars testing themselves against one another as they take their first step towards Major League Baseball."

- **PATRICIA LEWIS, MAYOR OF GRANVILLE**, said: "The Town of Granville is excited to hear that the West Virginia Black Bears will be playing at Monongalia County Ball Park this spring. We have had a wonderful relationship with the Black Bears and they are an important part of the Granville community. The fans will be looking forward to them returning for the '21 baseball season."
- **STEVE MIENTKIEWICZ, MAYOR, CITY OF NILES**, said: "This is exciting news that will benefit the Niles community for years to come. The idea of pro-caliber baseball at an affordable price is a true asset to our families in not only Niles, but the Mahoning Valley as a whole."
- **DEREK SLAUGHTER, MAYOR, CITY OF WILLIAMSPORT**, said: "We are excited to hear about MLB's commitment to the Crosscutters and to Williamsport and are looking forward to baseball's return here."
- **JAKE CORMAN, INTERIM PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE SENATE**, said: "The State College Spikes have been a pillar of the community as a place to enjoy affordable, family-friendly entertainment and recreation since day one. The Spikes have created a positive impact on our local economy while also forging deep connections in our community as a gathering place for fans across the region. The formation of the Major League Baseball Draft League will enable the Spikes to continue serving as a great community partner on and off the field while providing the best environment for baseball's future stars to grow and develop as they start their journey to the big leagues. My family and I look forward to enjoying many more Spikes games at Medlar Field at Lubrano Park."
- **KERRY BENNINGHOFF, PENNSYLVANIA STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES MAJORITY LEADER**, said: "The State College Spikes are an integral part of the Centre County community and have served as a premier proving ground for many Major League Baseball players. I applaud Major League Baseball for adapting to these unprecedented times and utilizing outside-the-box thinking to ensure young baseball players can receive the development they need to become tomorrow's stars while keeping baseball in State College. I look forward to seeing baseball played at Medlar Field at Lubrano Park in State College this year and for years to come."
- **STATE REP. GARTH EVERETT, PENNSYLVANIA STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**, said: "We've had a proud tradition of professional baseball in Williamsport dating back to the late 1800's. It is great to hear that this tradition will continue with the MLB Draft League. I will be excited to watch draft-eligible players show off their talents and then get to see them in the MLB in a few years."
- **STATE REP. JEFF WHEELAND, PENNSYLVANIA STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**, said: "This is great news not only for the Crosscutters but for Williamsport and Central Pennsylvania together! As we just experienced this past year, a summer without local baseball just doesn't seem like summer. Congratulations to all and I look forward to the umpire saying 'Play Ball!'"
- **STATE SENATOR GENE YAW, PENNSYLVANIA STATE SENATE**, said: "This is really great news for the Crosscutters organization as well as north central Pennsylvania. The possibility of not having a professional baseball team in Williamsport, the home of Little League Baseball, was a major concern. Now, the MLB Draft League presents an opportunity to grow the game, while safeguarding the Cutters presence in our region. Let's play ball!"
- **TOM BLOOM, MONONGALIA COUNTY COMMISSIONER**, said: "On behalf of the Monongalia County Commission, we are thrilled to continue our relationship with the WV Black Bears and MLB. The West Virginia Black Bears have become an integral part of our community. We pride ourselves with a stadium that is considered first-class and that is how we feel about the Black Bears organization. This agreement clearly shows your support for our team, our community and minor league baseball. We appreciate your support of the future of minor league baseball and we are excited to be part of your vision."

- **GUY COVIELLO, FOUNDATION PRESIDENT, YOUNGSTOWN-WARREN REGIONAL CHAMBER**, said: "This is wonderful news for the community. Our analysis shows the Scrappers represent a \$4.2 million annual economic impact on the Valley. We're proud to have been part of a well-organized effort to prove to Major League Baseball that the Youngstown-Warren region provides an excellent market for their product."
- **JASON FINK, PRESIDENT & CEO, WILLIAMSPORT/LYCOMING CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**, said: "We are excited to see that developmental baseball will continue here in Williamsport. From 1869 when professional baseball started to today, the sport has continued to evolve. It's great to see that Williamsport will play a key role in this latest evolution of the sport. As a baseball fan personally, I look forward to seeing these prospects grow, develop and hopefully realize their dream of playing Major League Baseball. To me, there is no better place than the home and birthplace of Little League Baseball to foster this opportunity for these players."
- **E. GORDON GEE, PRESIDENT, WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY**, said: "West Virginia University and the West Virginia Black Bears are fortunate to share Monongalia County Ballpark, one of the premier venues of its kind in the country. The Major League Baseball Draft League will bolster that relationship by providing exciting new opportunities for our student-athletes to grow and develop as they aspire to the big leagues. I look forward to joining Mountaineer fans as we cheer on the future stars of baseball getting their start right here in Morgantown."
- **BRIAN M. HUGHES, MERCER COUNTY EXECUTIVE**, said: "For legions of Trenton Thunder fans, the development of a new league showcasing up and coming talent will be a real thrill. Major League Baseball's success is built on a thriving minor league system, and for 27 years Thunder supporters have visited our Capital City, warmly welcoming new players and proudly cheering others on to the big leagues. Mercer County has made wise investments into the ballpark – benefitting both the fans and players – and the new Trenton Thunder team will be developed in a first-class facility. This news is a win for everyone – The Thunder, Mercer County, the City of Trenton, and especially baseball fans, and we look forward to a great season."
- **SHANE LYONS, DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS AND ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT, WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY**, said: "The construction of Monongalia County Ballpark has to be one of the most successful projects for the Morgantown community in the last 10 years. The ballpark continues to provide dividends to our local economy as it was one of the driving forces in the decision to bring a Major League Baseball Draft League team to Morgantown. The future stars of baseball and even potential Hall of Famers will get their start in Morgantown and how great that will be for our community. It will be special for fans one day to see baseball professionals shine in the major leagues and be able to say they saw him play in Morgantown. The Mountaineers have a great relationship with the West Virginia Black Bears and Rich Baseball, and we look forward to continue working with them as they become one of the prestigious inaugural teams of this great new venture."
- **SCOTT L. METZGER, CHAIRMAN, LYCOMING COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**, said: "I am pleased to hear of the exciting news that baseball will remain in Williamsport with the new MLB Draft League. Williamsport's long baseball history has laid the foundation for many that entered the Major Leagues. We look forward to continuing that tradition of having America's pastime in our backyard."
- **MICHAEL PIPE, MARK HIGGINS, AND STEVE DERSHEM, CENTRE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**, said: "The Centre County Commissioners are pleased to hear the State College Spikes will be retaining Major League Baseball affiliation. Many thanks to all of the individuals and groups who supported the #SaveOurSpikes campaign. State College Spikes baseball is a Centre County gem. Not only is their family-friendly entertainment enjoyed and appreciated by tens of thousands of Central Pennsylvania residents, the Spikes organization contributes to our community as a longtime supporter of numerous local charities and fundraiser for many deserving causes. Terrific news!"

- **FRITZ SMITH, PRESIDENT & CEO, THE HAPPY VALLEY ADVENTURE BUREAU**, said: "The State College Spikes' continued affiliation with Major League Baseball is welcome news for the community and all who supported the #SaveOurSpikes initiative. We haven't had too much to celebrate in 2020. The return of affordable, family friendly entertainment is something we can look forward to post-COVID-19 and is important to our economic recovery efforts.

"State College Spikes baseball is an asset for local residents, as well as for those visiting Happy Valley. We are thrilled by this announcement."

- **GEORGE SOWA, GREATER TRENTON CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**, said: "This is great news for the Thunder and proves the resiliency of the city of Trenton and Mercer County. The Thunder has a rich history as a winning franchise which provides family entertainment at an affordable price in a great location for baseball fans throughout the region. Trenton's rich industrial heritage proved Trenton Makes, the World Takes. This tradition continues with the creation of the MLB Draft League as The Thunder Makes, MLB Takes."
- **VERN SQUIER, PRESIDENT & CEO, CBICC**, said: "As our community continues to rebuild and restart its economic engine, the announcement of the State College Spikes' new deal with Major League Baseball is terrific news! This announcement will play an exemplary role in encouraging to look forward in their decisions about the future.

"Long considered America's favorite pastime, local fans will look forward to resuming rooting for the home team....a much needed recovery from current times."

- **DARLENE ST. GEORGE, ADMINISTRATOR, HOWLAND TOWNSHIP**, said: "The fact that Major League Baseball affiliation will maintain a presence here is great news for the Valley! Congratulations to the Scrappers for hitting a home run with this new deal. We have held season tickets from day one and look forward to many more enjoyable evenings at Eastwood Field."
- **JEFF HURLEY, TRENTON THUNDER GM/COO**, said: "We are thrilled to share with our fans and sponsor partners the exciting news that your Trenton Thunder will be a founding member of the new MLB Draft League for the 2021 season and continue to bring family fun to ARM & HAMMER Park. We are dedicated to delivering our Power of Fun brand to our fans as the Thunder Entertainment Experience they have enjoyed for the last 27 years, featuring the antics of our beloved mascot Boomer having a blast in the crowd. Fans will continue to enjoy our World Famous Bat Dogs retrieving bats, with Dash making his debut this summer. The new MLB Draft League will showcase the best prospects in baseball eligible for the MLB draft. Thunder fans will get to know these players as they begin their path as future stars of Major League Baseball."
- **JORDAN TAYLOR, VICE PRESIDENT OF HWS BASEBALL AND GENERAL MANAGER OF THE MAHONING VALLEY SCRAPPERS**, said: "We appreciate the opportunity to continue our affiliation with Major League Baseball in the brand-new MLB Draft League. This exciting new venture will allow Scrappers fans the opportunity to see the best current Major League Baseball draft prospects at Eastwood Field. The partnership will ensure our community will get the opportunity to watch the future stars of Major League Baseball for years to come."
- **SCOTT WALKER, STATE COLLEGE SPIKES GENERAL MANAGER**, said: "Thanks to the Major League Baseball Draft League, State College Spikes fans can see high-quality baseball while still experiencing the fun, affordable family entertainment they have come to know and love at a Spikes game. Our community's enthusiastic support during the #SaveOurSpikes campaign has given us this opportunity to once again show the entire baseball world that Happy Valley provides the ideal location for developing future major league stars. We are excited to step up to the plate for our 15th Season of Making Deer Friends in 2021, and we urge our friends and neighbors across Happy Valley to come together once again at Medlar Field at Lubrano Park. Together, we can make the Spikes and the MLB Draft League viable for many years to come."