



## **NEWS**

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Independent League Brings Family Affordable Baseball to Corpus Christi Area**

## **Continental Baseball League Selects Nueces County For New Franchise for 2008 Season**

*Corpus Christi, Texas, January 23, 2008* – There’s a whole new brand of pro baseball coming to the area beginning next Memorial Day.

The Continental Baseball League ([www.CBLproball.com](http://www.CBLproball.com)) announced today it is adding Nueces County as a new franchise for the upcoming independent league season that begins Memorial Day weekend in May. Ron Baron, the league CEO and president, will head up a group of North Texas businessmen as owners of the Nueces County franchise (to be officially named at a later date) with a goal of bringing “family-affordable entertainment, with a focus on youth baseball” to Fairgrounds Field.

The CBL will play a 72-game regular season schedule this coming season. It enters its second season with franchises in three other Texas cities—these include Texarkana (nickname to be announced soon), the Bay Area Toros of Texas City, TX, and the MetroPlex Blue Thunder, which played last season in Tarrant County in the Dallas-Fort Worth market. The CBL is headquartered in Addison, TX, and has former major league outfielder Jay Johnstone and Bob Ibach, a former Chicago Cubs executive, on its league staff.

Last season, the Tarrant County Blue Thunder, managed by former Texas Rangers player Curtis Wilkerson, won the inaugural Ferguson Jenkins CBL Championship, named after the Hall of Fame pitcher and former Texas Ranger Cy Young Award winner. Texarkana was recently added to the league in December, returning professional baseball to that market for the first time since 1954.

Baron indicated the league is presently exploring additional franchise opportunities in other Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma markets and hopes to add two more franchises, either for the 2008 season or by 2009.

Last year, Baron operated a traveling team in the league, the Texas Heat, which played in the four-team league and made the playoffs. That team will not return for the 2008 season.

Players for the Nueces County team will consist of a combination of free agents, former CBL players and several talented players from the Corpus Christi area. An announcement on team tryouts, as well as ticket plans and front office personnel, will be made in future weeks.

Baron is very supportive of bringing a community, fan-friendly product to Nueces County for the coming season, one that will feature 36 home games during a season that goes through mid-August, followed by league playoffs. “One of the reasons I got involved with the CBL was to bring affordable baseball to families, with an emphasis on creating a fun time at the ballpark for youngsters of all ages,” noted Baron. “Ticket prices at the major league level have climbed dramatically, whereas it costs more than \$300 sometimes for a family of four to attend a game.

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## Page 2—Continental Baseball League To Operate A New Franchise In Nueces County in 2008

“As part of our plans for the coming season here in the Corpus Christi area, we will hold post-game, on-field clinics for kids, giving them a chance to meet their heroes face-to-face and at the same time learn first-hand about the skills it takes to play the game. What great memories this will create for them! We also want to do other things that will recognize both youth and family, such as having the first 200 youngsters in attendance go on the field before the game to join in with the singing of the national anthem, right along side of the players.

“I also want to reach out to honor local ‘Hometown Heroes,’ folks such as teachers, police officers, fire fighters and members of the local military, all of whom make a difference in the community.”

Oscar Ortiz, Nueces County Commissioner, also is delighted to have the CBL join his community. Ortiz said, “We’re excited to become a part of the Continental Baseball League. We are looking forward to growing together as our fairgrounds grows in popularity and usage. It’s a perfect fit.”

Kelvin Moore, General Manager of Global Spectrum, responsible for Fairgrounds operations stated, “The CBL will bring a level of excitement and creativity that will produce high quality baseball events, and they will be a great partner in producing other non-baseball events year round. We look forward to working with them in enhancing the overall fairgrounds experience.”

Part of the attraction of CBL is its cost-effective pricing. Tickets are priced between \$6--\$8, and most concession items cost well below those same items found at major league ballparks. “I want youngsters to come out and enjoy a hot dog, a soft drink, ice cream and fries and not drain their mom or dad’s wallets,” noted Baron. “The idea is to get families to come back to the park again and again and enjoy baseball and a fun night out.”

Bob Ibach, one of the league’s owners and director of baseball operations/communications, noted the caliber of play during the CBL’s first season was one of the highlights. “We were pleased by not only the caliber of play, but the competitiveness between each of the teams,” said Ibach, a former front office member of the Chicago Cubs for nine seasons under general manager Dallas Green during the 1980s. “We had a number of big league scouts come out to watch our games and they were very impressed by the talent on the field.”

Pitcher Matt Sartor of the Lewisville Lizards was signed by the Los Angeles Dodgers, the first CBL player to jump to the next level, and Ibach said “there will be a lot more to follow as folks become more aware of the talent in our league.” Ibach’s son, Kevin, is the Midwest Area scout for the Florida Marlins after spending seven years with the Baltimore Orioles organization.

The CBL plans to expand strategically during the next few seasons, noted Ibach, with a long-range goal of having 8 to 12 franchises. “We’re in the final stages of discussions with other communities in Texas and neighboring states,” said Ibach. “We want growth, but we want to bring on franchises that will be successful and become an important part of the community for many years. We are in this for the long run, and want to be sure we bring on groups that fit the blueprint for league success.”

For more information on the **Continental Baseball League**, visit the league’s website at [www.CBLproball.com](http://www.CBLproball.com)

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