

Play Ball! Hamptons Collegiate Baseball Is Back

BY KELLY LAFFEY

Just under 100 miles away from Montauk, the Boston Red Sox are knee-deep in their season at Fenway Park, fighting to defend their 2013 World Series title, playing under the glitz of the big league lights and the blank stare of the menacing Green Monster, the 37' 2" high wall in left field. Take a four-hour jaunt southwest and you'll encounter the Montauk Monster, a fence in left center field, just beyond the baseball diamond at the Montauk School. Under its careful watch, the Montauk Mustangs will make their inaugural entrance into the Hamptons Collegiate Baseball League (HCBL) on Sunday June 1, when they play the Westhampton Aviators on Opening Day.

The stakes will be a bit lower in Montauk than Boston—taunts and jeers and high ticket prices completely absent. The Montauk Monster will be smaller, but its symbolism will be no less significant. At the center of both Monsters' existence is celebrating baseball as America's favorite pastime. Hamptons Collegiate Baseball's mission is to provide free, family-friendly entertainment and youth baseball clinics to everyone on the East End.

"Our core is to [allow] families to come down and enjoy a day at the game and not have it impact the wallet," says Brett Mauser, President of HCBL. "[We're] moving onward and upward," he continues, referring to the expansion into Montauk and the success the league, which was officially sanctioned by Major League Baseball prior to the 2013 season, has found. "It means a lot that we've gained a lot of traction on the East End," he says.

The Montauk Mustangs will become the seventh team in the league when they make their debut. As announced earlier in the offseason, the Center Moriches Battlecats, who played in the league the past two seasons, will no longer be participating.

"We're excited to have Montauk on board," says Mauser. "[The hamlet] embodies the summer atmosphere." The team name is a salute to the hamlet's grammar school teams, as the Mustangs will be using the Montauk School's fields. The Mustangs join the North Fork Ospreys, Riverhead Tomcats, Sag Harbor Whalers, Shelter Island Bucks, Southampton Breakers and Westhampton Aviators, as they compete for the HCBL title. Also on tap is the All-Star Game, which is slated for July 12 at the Ospreys' home in Peconic, Cochran Park.

HCBL has gone through a number of changes in anticipation of the 2014 season. The Riverhead Tomcats, who have played the past five seasons at the Riverhead High School, will be moving to Veterans Memorial Park at the Enterprise Park at Calverton (EPCAL) complex. And the Sag Harbor Whalers, who hosted a weeklong baseball clinic last summer, will now host two clinics due to increased demand (June 30–July 3 and July 14–July 18).

Over the winter, HCBL officially became a member of the National Alliance of Collegiate Summer Baseball (NACSB), joining 10 other nonprofit leagues nationwide. "We're happy to be alongside some of the strongest summer leagues across the country," says Mauser. Pooling top talent from collegiate baseball players throughout the country, Hamptons



Baseball began in 2008, fielding one team in the Atlantic Collegiate Baseball League. It soon

expanded into its own division with seven teams, before becoming its own league last year.

As in years past, HCBL will partner with The Miracle League of Long Island, which provides opportunities for people with disabilities to experience baseball. "[HCBL players have] come back and really taken something out of that experience," says Mauser. "They get to see these kids who are in it for the love of the game. They're happy to be a part of the joy they have." 

Courtesy: HCBL

For the full 2014 Hamptons Collegiate Baseball League schedule, to to DansPapers.com.



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