

BRITISH BASEBALL FEDERATION



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Great Britain invited to participate in 16-Team Qualifying Round for the 2013 World Baseball Classic

World Baseball Classic, Inc (WBCI) today announced that the **Great Britain Baseball Team** has been invited to participate in a new Qualifying Round for the 2013 **World Baseball Classic**.

The World Baseball Classic, held for the first time in 2006, is baseball's equivalent of the football World Cup. Major League players combine with Minor League and amateur players to compete for their countries in a tournament held every four years in locations around the world.



Now Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association are expanding the field for the World Baseball Classic from 16 to 28 teams by inviting 12 new countries -- including Great Britain -- to compete in a Qualifying Round in 2012 along with four countries that participated in the 2009 World Baseball Classic but did not win a game.

The Qualifying Round, which will take place in the latter part of 2012, will divide those 16 teams into four pools of four teams each, playing a six-game format. The four group winners from the Qualifying Round will join the 12 teams with automatic places for the 2013 World Baseball

Classic: Australia, China, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Puerto Rico, the United States and Venezuela.

The composition of the four qualifying pools will be determined once the Qualifying Round venues are selected and will be based on geographical location, competitive balance and regional rivalries.

INVITATION

"We are pleased to extend an invitation to Great Britain to participate in the Qualifying Round of the World Baseball Classic," said Major League Baseball Commissioner Allan H. (Bud) Selig.

"The skill level and passion for the game in Britain is growing and we know their participation will be a wonderful addition to the tournament."

"It is an honour to recognize Great Britain's standing among baseball-playing nations with this invitation to compete on a global stage," said Major League Baseball Players Association Executive Director Michael Weiner. "We're confident that Britain's participation in the World Baseball Classic Qualifying Round will help increase national and worldwide interest in this great sport."

REACTIONS

For Great Britain, the invitation to compete in the World Baseball Classic Qualifying Round is a massive boost for a national team programme that has achieved significant results in recent years despite receiving no external funding from the British government. The GB Baseball Team won the Silver Medal in the 2007 European Championships, its highest-ever finish in European competition, and is currently ranked 21st in the World after competing with distinction in the 2009 International Baseball Federation World Cup.

Baseball has been growing rapidly in Britain over the past few years, and there are currently 50 adult teams competing in nine divisions in British Baseball Federation leagues.

Federation President Mark Salter said: "This is, perhaps, the best thing ever to happen in British baseball, both in terms of our national teams and the overall Federation. No doubt the World Baseball Classic will enhance the profile of baseball in Great Britain."

"The prestige of the World Baseball Classic and the publicity this should engender will be terrific for our sport," said Jason Greenberg, General Manager of Team GB. "We are proud to be a part of the competition, and grateful to Major League Baseball and the MLB Players Association for this opportunity. Of course, the difficult work begins now, as we have just over a year to prepare our roster for the toughest competition ever faced by a British baseball team. We intend to show the world that baseball is very much a UK sport, too."

CRITERIA

WBCI determined the 12 new teams for the Qualifying Round on criteria established to make the World Baseball Classic the most competitive international baseball event in the world. Some of the key factors involved in team evaluation and selection included strength of native player base, number of professional players, International Baseball Federation rankings, viability of domestic baseball programmes, the impact on baseball development in the countries selected and diverse global representation.

The winners from each qualifying pool will advance to the 2013 World Baseball Classic tournament, scheduled for March 2013.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

About World Baseball Classic, Inc.

World Baseball Classic, Inc. is a company created at the direction of Major League Baseball (MLB) and the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) to operate the World Baseball Classic tournament. The tournament, which is sanctioned by the International Baseball Federation (IBAF), is supported by MLB, the MLBPA, Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB), the Korea Baseball Organization (KBO), their respective player associations and other leagues and players from around the world.

About the Steering Committee

The World Baseball Classic Steering Committee consists of 12 members representing professional baseball leagues, club owners, players, the International Baseball Federation, international baseball federations and other international organisations affiliated with the game of baseball (for a complete list of members see below). The Steering Committee provides ongoing guidance regarding the development of the premier international baseball tournament, the World Baseball Classic. The focus of the Committee is to ensure that the tournament continues to maximise its potential to develop the game of baseball worldwide.

Steering Committee Members

Major League Baseball (2)

Tim Brosnan
Rob Manfred

MLB Players Association (2)

Michael Weiner
Timothy Slavin

International Baseball Federation (2)

Riccardo Fraccari
Israel Roldan

Nippon Professional Baseball (1)

Kunio Shimoda

Korean Baseball Organization (1)

Sang II Lee

Korean Professional Baseball Players Association (1)

Sean Kwon

Japan Professional Baseball Players Association (1)

Toru Matsubara

Members-at-large (3)

Shunsuke Kanda, Yomiuri Shimbun
Roland Betts
Pedro Cabrera Isidron, Cuba Federation

About the World Baseball Classic

The World Baseball Classic is the premier international baseball tournament, sanctioned by the International Baseball Federation, and features the best players in the world competing for their home countries and territories. More than 1.5 million fans from all over the world have attended the tournament games, held in March 2006 and 2009. Team Japan is the reigning World Baseball Classic Champion, taking home both the inaugural and 2009 titles. The upcoming World Baseball Classic will be played in March 2013 and will again feature the greatest baseball-playing nations in the world. The tournament will be held every four years thereafter.



About the British Baseball Federation

The British Baseball Federation (BBF) is the national governing body of baseball within the United Kingdom, founded in 1987. BBF is a federated member of both the Confederation of European Baseball and the International Baseball Federation. BBF is the joint owner (with the British Softball Federation) of BaseballSoftballUK (BSUK), the national development agency for both baseball and softball in the Britain. The voting members of BBF are the affiliated baseball clubs, life members and the umpires, scorers and coaches associations. The BBF holds an annual general meeting each spring at which the voting members elect an executive board of officials to oversee the body and the sport.



About Great Britain Baseball

The BBF oversees the Great Britain Baseball programme, which includes the British National Team for European and world competition. Team GB has recently competed at the European Championships (2007, 2010) and the IBAF Baseball World Cup (2009), and currently holds a ranking of 21st in the world. Should baseball be reinstated as an Olympic Sport, the BBF would send their National Team to represent Britain in the games. There are also national teams at the youth level. The GB Juniors (U-19) and GB Cadets (U-16) also compete in European and world competition.



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