



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Vice President Pat O'Conner's Opening Session Speech

NASHVILLE---As we turn our attention to the new year and a new chapter in Minor League Baseball history, I think it is important to take a quick glance back...a retrospective of sorts...to put our future in proper perspective.

Those of you who were around....I ask you to think back to the early 1990s. Fresh off of a battle over a Professional Baseball Agreement, Minor League Baseball stumbled into the decade fractured, wounded and searching for a direction in baseball's new order of business. Thanks in large part to the vision of its leadership and the fortitude of its owners, Minor League Baseball gathered itself under a new constitution...a corporate model...and set on an unprecedented run of prosperity, profitability and respectability.

Not everyone was happy with the changes, but the results speak for themselves....

- Attendance records nearly every year with an all-time record 42.8-million fans attending 2007 games.
- 106 new stadiums since 1990....with 3 more scheduled to open in 2008
- A two-fold increase in net income between 1994 and 2006
- Gross income and cash flow increases of 130% in the same period with gross revenue expected to approach \$600million in 2007
- Ticket sales in excess of \$168-million in 2006 and closer to \$175-million projected for 2007.
- We are currently in the middle of the longest PBA ever signed with Major League Baseball and the collective bargaining agreement with our umpires gives us labor peace through the 2011 season.

The benefit of this brief retrospective is to call attention to how this was all possible. Owners and executives with the energy and assets to make it happen were allowed to operate in an environment conducive to such dramatic growth and prosperity. Under this corporate model the talents of our people have thrived, excelled and astonished those watching Minor League Baseball from the outside.

We should never forget where we came from, learn from past mistakes, build on what we have accomplished and thank those people and partners that made this journey with us. Respecting our partners at Major League Baseball and the founding fathers of the modern Minor League Baseball is a responsibility we all share.

Today our foundation is solid. Minor League Baseball is well positioned to do even more in the future if we continue to work together. As we look to the future we need to develop a comprehensive plan to deal with digital assets. We must come to agreement on the most equitable way to capitalize on this opportunity. And we will do this.

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President Dwight David Eisenhower once said, "You do not lead by hitting people over the head. That's assault, not leadership."

Working with the Board of Trustees, Council of League Presidents and member clubs, we will find a solution together and develop a successful internet program for all of Minor League Baseball.

Respecting the past, we will not rest on our laurels. We will continue to vigorously pursue marketing opportunities at the league, classification and national levels while we look to capitalize on our popularity, affordability and appeal on Madison Avenue.

We will continue to build, renovate and maintain our facilities to the benefit of our communities, fans and major league partners. We will never again find ourselves in a position like the late-1980s when it comes to facilities.

We will develop comprehensive programs to address burning needs in areas such as liability insurance, workers' compensation and even take a long look at the way we obtain medical coverage for our employees.

We will harness the collective genius and buying power of this body to maximize our reach and the benefit of that reach in as many areas as possible. We will develop programs to train, educate and diversify our workforce. We will meet our social obligations and continue to be solid citizens in the communities we call home.

And we will continue to be good partners. Partners with Major League Baseball, our umpires, our sponsors, our host communities and most of all we will be good partners with our fans.

We will not be without difficult times in the coming years.

Albert Einstein once said, "*in the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity.*"

We will work cooperatively to pull opportunity from our most difficult times. We are an impressive group. Flawed as we are and as battered as we once were, we have withstood the test of time and survived, even thrived in spite of ourselves. Let us go from here seeking opportunity – committed to the goal of making Minor League Baseball even better tomorrow.

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