



For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE

December 8, 2008

Minor League Baseball President Pat O'Conner's Opening Session Speech

LAS VEGAS--I believe after 28 years in baseball, I have finally learned the big secret for our industry to remain successful. And that is, there is no big secret! Creating "déjà vu" moments where we have meticulously planned and charted our course; believing in our potential and working hard to ensure it; being prepared when the challenge gets here; that is our secret.

It is easy to laud our successes and feel good about our abilities and the prospects for our future. But we know better than that. We all know that within each of our past accomplishments, in every present success, there is an abundance of required preparation and planning.

We have experienced quite a ride in 2008. A summer filled with great plays, natural disasters and, yet, ultimately an all-time attendance record. We had one great year in 2008.

Catherine DeVrye said "Remember that the six most expensive words in business are: 'we've always done it that way.'"

Moving forward, we will not always do it the same way because we will be challenged like never before. Dealing with our environment will test our mettle and require us to plan and prepare for our future. Not only will our world change from within, but we are looking at societal and economic changes virtually unmatched in our lifetime.

The game of baseball will survive. But, it is as a business that our survival and sustainability is facing an enormous challenge. Along with our country, our industry must be prepared to meet the economic hardship and cultural renaissance that lies ahead. And it will be without trepidation that we will meet this challenge.

In many ways 2008 was the beginning of the new age of Minor League Baseball. We realigned leagues; bundled internet rights; broke in a new president; got well underway on our Durham laboratory project; located new office space in St. Pete made necessary by the Rays' plans for a new ball park; and collectively exceeded our previous best. As we conclude the first 12 months of this new age, we head into Year Two facing challenges and hurdles few imagined and fewer yet predicted. It is with these challenges before us that I announce today the agenda for the coming year.

Financial and economic stability will be our primary objective as we go through an off-season of uncertainty and a national economic condition with which we are not comfortable. We have considerable strength in our clubs, financial and human resources worthy of making a difference in troubled times. We will be prepared for 2009, ready for another powerful year of quality service to our communities and towns and PBA support for our Major League partners. It will not necessarily be easy, but we should expect the demand for our product to remain strong in 2009, as long as we continue our hard work. Our office will work with the leagues and clubs to monitor the economic times and proactively address needs where, and when, they crop up.

(MORE)

As we head into the new year, we will expand on the open communication forum created this year and vertically enhance our committee structure and governance processes. To effectively assist you, we must hear from those of you who have the direct day-to-day contact with our fans and business partners. It is our intent to develop committee networks within Minor League Baseball that will allow us to effectively collect and disseminate information up and down through our ranks.

There will be no "ivory tower" declarations from my office that have not been vetted by, and through, those same people. To effectively arm our members with the tools needed to compete, we must assure that our lines of communication are strong. And we will.

As we prepare for 2009, we will also undertake three new initiatives of social significance, cultural relevance and economic opportunities for all.

Minor League Baseball will undertake an environmental program, a "go green", a "team green" if you will, approach to business and operations. Through this initiative, our clubs will meet a pressing social need, while finding a good business-sense approach to doing business. This is a business opportunity each club will be able to tailor to their local needs and abilities.

Our second initiative for 2009 will be to engage the National Youth Baseball Organization in an effort to promote grass roots baseball in our cities and towns. National Youth Baseball represents in excess of 8-million young players from all over the United States. Through NYB and key supporting organizations, we will interact with the youth of America with instruction on the field, education in life skills and attendance in our ballparks. Our future lies with the youth of today. As players and fans, we will take a leadership role in developing the next generation for professional baseball.

Finally, Minor League Baseball will use the 2009 season as an opportunity to canvas our clubs and develop a comprehensive diversity initiative for recruiting, hiring and advancing minorities, as well as developing an open market program to entice minority-owned business participation in the commerce of Minor League Baseball. As a \$750-million enterprise, Minor League Baseball is worthy of national programs to secure the best prices, the best products and the best services through a comprehensive program. This is not a set-aside or a quota, but an invitation to participate, the commercial equivalent of rolling out the welcome mat to new potential providers of the goods and services we need. Minor League Baseball will now actively seek participation and relationships with equally worthy minority-owned businesses. A program like this is long overdue and makes perfect sense, as we meet our social responsibilities in the world.

Moreover, this makes good business sense and presents a tremendous business opportunity, not a problem. Hard times call for creative responses and all-encompassing thought. Diversity within Minor League Baseball not only addresses a social responsibility, it also provides additional solutions to the complex economic landscape we are likely to face.

We face a unique opportunity as a group. Go from here energized by this opportunity, not afraid of it. Embrace the changes we are likely to face and lead your team, your league and your community through the next 12 months as the pillar in the community each and every one of you are. And remember, there is no big secret. In fact, the biggest hindrance to progress is thinking we know all the answers. What we know is that you should enjoy the holidays with your friends and family and then we will all dedicate ourselves to another good year in 2009.

In the words of Whitney Young, Jr., "It is better to be prepared for an opportunity and not have one, than to have an opportunity and not be prepared."

###

Contact: Steve Densa, Minor League Baseball (702-943-3767)