VICTORIA, BC — Today the City of Victoria announced the return of baseball to the Capital City with a soon-to-be named team within the collegiate level West Coast League. The Victoria Baseball Club has negotiated a three year agreement as the anchor tenant at Royal Athletic Park starting in June of 2013.

“We are thrilled to welcome the Victoria Baseball Club to Victoria,” said Mayor Dean Fortin. “The Capital City welcomes the return of baseball to Royal Athletic Park with open arms and I look forward to great community support for the team.”

“In choosing a location for our franchise, we were drawn to Victoria for a variety of reasons,” said John McLean, Victoria Baseball Club Owner, along with business partner Dwight Willett. “An impressive baseball history dating back to 1866, strong grass roots baseball organizations, impressive fan support for past franchises and teams and a high quality ballpark made this an easy decision.”

The West Coast League (WCL) features a competitive level of play and recruits players from high calibre baseball programs at colleges and universities across North America. Top players from top college programs play in the league, most aspiring to become professional players. With the addition of Victoria, the League has 10 teams, ranging from Kelowna, BC to Klamath Falls, Oregon.

“West Coast League teams focus on bettering their communities,” noted Ken Wilson, WCL President. “We are pleased to welcome Victoria to our league, and look forward to really becoming part of your community.”

The season starts the first week of June each year and ends mid-August, with 27 home games and 27 away games. Average ticket prices are expected to be under $10. Players will need to be billeted with host families during the season, and community participation will be sought in the coming weeks and months in naming the team.

The three year agreement runs June to August each year and facilitates continued community use during the baseball season.

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Q. Who is the ownership group?
A. John McLean and Dwight Willett currently own 100%. John and Dwight are successful business executives based in Vancouver.

Q. Why did ownership select the West Coast Collegiate League (“WCL”)?
A. WCL is well established with a strong group of owners and a history high quality on-field baseball performance, for example in the 2011 and 2012 Major League Baseball Draft, 45 and 54 players, respectively, from the WCL were drafted.

Q. Why did ownership select the City of Victoria?
A. An impressive baseball history dating back to 1866, strong grass roots baseball organizations, impressive fan support for past franchises/teams and a high quality ballpark.

Q. Is there a name for the team?
A. No, not yet. There will be a “select a name” contest.

Q. How long is the season and how many games?
A. WCL season starts the first week of June each year and ends mid-August, including playoff games. Currently the schedule consists of 54 games – 27 home games and 27 away games.

Q. Has ticket pricing been set?
A. No, not yet. Pricing will be established to be affordable family entertainment with average ticket prices under $10 per ticket.

Q. What players will make up the roster?
A. Players from high calibre baseball programs at colleges and universities across North America. All players must have NCAA eligibility.

Q. Is there a coach selected?
A. No not yet. Immediately after the announcement, the team will commence a recruitment process to sign a high calibre coaching staff for the 2013 season.

Q. What type of community support will be sought?
A. To be successful the community will need to help in many ways:
   • Players will be billeted during the season, so host families will be needed
   • Volunteers and interns will be required to help with community outreach programs
   • Volunteers and interns will be required to help with game day preparations and in-games activities
   • And of course, a loyal and growing group of baseball fans at RAP.
Q. How long has the West Coast League been in existence?
A. The West Coast League played its first season in 2005, comprised primarily of former semi-pro teams that played in the Pacific International League (PIL). The teams organized to promote a more professional operating model, like that of professional minor league teams.

Q. Where does the league get players?
A. The league recruits top college players from North America. A player must have NCAA college eligibility to play in the West Coast League. Individual teams recruit their players through relationships developed with college coaches.

Q. What is the level of play?
A. The West Coast League features a very competitive level of play. Top players from top college programs play in the league, most aspiring to become professional players.

Q. Do West Coast League players reach the Major Leagues?
Yes. Outfielder Jacoby Ellsbury (Boston Red Sox), pitcher Tommy Hanson (Atlanta Braves), pitcher Bud Norris (Houston Astros), pitcher Marc Rzepczynski (St. Louis Cardinals), pitcher Tom Milone (Oakland A’s), third baseman Brent Morel (Chicago White Sox), outfielder Nyjer Morgan (Milwaukee Brewers), pitcher Jeremy Hefner (New York Mets), and first baseman Chris Davis (Baltimore Orioles) are among current major leaguers who played with West Coast League teams. Fifty-three West Coast League players were selected in last week’s Major League Baseball First Year Player draft, while forty-five West Coast League players were chosen in the 2011 MLB Draft.

Q. Will the league add additional teams?
A. The West Coast League is currently exploring adding Medford, Oregon and Chico, California. Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, Redding, California, and Yakima, Washington are other markets of interest to the league.

Q. Who owns West Coast League teams?
A. The teams are all owned by folks who love baseball and want to give to the local community. Phil and Penny Knight (Nike) own the Corvallis Knights franchise through a foundation. John Stanton, an owner of the Seattle Mariners, owns the Walla Walla Sweets. He and his partners also own the Tacoma Rainiers of the AAA Pacific Coast League.

Q. Are there Canadian players?
A. Yes. The team in Kelowna strives to include Canadian players. Every team works to include local players developed thru the local minor baseball program. There are currently four Canadian players on the Kelowna Falcons roster. Victoria-native Kelly Norris-Jones played for Kelowna in 2011, after playing at the University of Illinois.

Q. How do teams become involved in their local community?
A. West Coast League teams focus on bettering their communities. The teams assist in raising funds for amateur sports, with an emphasis on amateur baseball. The teams partner with local non-profit organizations, to assist those organizations in promoting their goals. And, WCL teams engage organizations throughout their local communities in fund raising efforts.

Q. Is it expensive to go to West Coast League games?
A. West Coast League teams pride themselves on providing affordable family entertainment. It’s all about having fun at the ball park. It’s typically less expensive to go to a West Coast League game than to go to the movie. WCL teams believe in providing interactive entertainment, with on-field contests and various means of fan interaction.

For more information on the West Coast League visit: www.westcoastleague.com.