

WPBL

2026 MEDIA GUIDE



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Table of Contents

- 1 - Table of Contents
- 3 - Letter from the Commissioner
- 5 – Familiar Faces, New Places
- 9 - Team Previews
- 23 – Keep on Truckin’: Elko’s Championship Push
- 27 – Preseason Predictions



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From the Office of the Commissioner

To Our Fans,

Another season looms over the horizon and tremendous changes have come to the WPBL. After five successful seasons the league has expanded, with new franchises starting in Gillette and Coeur d'Alene. Another WPBL founding franchise has relocated, as the former Warrenton Osprey found life too hostile along the bay and discovered a new home in Montana. And with that came a complete realignment, as teams find themselves in uncharted territory with new divisional foes.

And at the same time, the league retains some familiarity. Strikes are thrown, Home Runs are hit. Pocatello once again stands on top as defending WPBL Champs. John Wolverton earns his 2nd WPBL MVP Award. Astoria has a top 3 draft pick. Despite the changes the WPBL experiences, there is always a comfort found in the spring air that brings everyone together.

I look forward to another great season of WPBL baseball, a season that I think will be the best yet. Good luck to all the players and management and have fun.

Play Ball!

Bo Bunyan
WPBL Commissioner

The logo for the Western Professional Baseball League (WPBL) is displayed in a bold, italicized, red font with a slight shadow effect.

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Familiar Faces, New Places

By Buster Spork

The amount of player movement we see year-to-year can be overwhelming to the casual WPBL fan. New teams, new players, lots of trades, free agency....it can be a lot to keep up with! Don't worry folks, ol' Buster's got your back once again. Here's the 2026 version of Familiar Faces, New Places:

10 – Tu-fu Dou – Victoria Geese

The list is starting off with an exception to the rule. Tu-Fu Dou is an unfamiliar face in a new place but he's worth noting. He's a raw prospect who has come into the league with great potential. This led to many teams not knowing exactly how much they should commit financially. The Victoria Geese stepped in to make that commitment and are hoping it pays off long-term.

9 – Dylan Roux – Elko Truckers

Dylan Roux was the anchor of the CCK pitching staff the past 4 years but this year he'll be suiting up with the Truckers after signing a 1-year contract at the age of 38(Those Truckers sure do love players in their late 30s).

8 – Ryan Kadar – Bandon Bung Hammers

Ryan Kadar has had a productive five years in the WPBL that has included 2 All-Star games and 1 Great Glove Award. Despite this, he can't find a stable home. He'll be joining Bandon this year and it will be his fourth different team as heads into his sixth season.

7 – Andy Wilkerson – Lake Tahoe Mustangs

The logo for the Western Professional Baseball League (WPBL) is displayed at the bottom of the page. It features the letters "WPBL" in a bold, stylized font. The "W" and "P" are in a dark red color, while the "B" and "L" are in a lighter red color. The letters have a slight shadow effect, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

Andy Wilkerson will forever be known as the inaugural Tomato Sandwich award winner, but he's also managed to put together a productive career so far. He debuted in 2021 in Lake Tahoe but after his first season he has spent his time in Kennewick and Victoria. However, this year he returns to the place where it all started as he comes back to the Mustangs.

6 – Dustin Duley – Pocatello Old Timers

Dustin Duley is another player who's heading back to where it all began. Despite 3 All-Star games and 2 Platinum Sticks, his career has mostly felt like a disappointment. He left the Old-Timers after his first season and spent some time in Astoria and Kennewick, but for the 2026 season he's coming back to Idaho.

5 – Ricky Jimenez – Bandon Bung Hammers

RP Ricky Jimenez has been a force in Tri-City throughout the WPBL's first 5 years. He's been as reliable as they come. At 36 years-old, the Atoms decided they were ready to move on. Bandon is trying to beef up their bullpen and they were willing to invest in the veteran, let's see if he can keep the consistency going.

4 – Jeremy Wolfe – Lake Tahoe Mustangs

Jeremy Wolfe spent the start to his career as one of the greatest closers in the game for Kennewick. The problem was that no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't get over their stink. It consumed him. They were smelly. So stinky. He had to beg for a trade and finally Kennewick agreed to send him to Tahoe so he could start fresh.

3 – Sean Rahm – Bandon Bung Hammers

There has been debate amongst fans over who the best starter is between Wolfe and Sean Rahm. While that argument can lead to some contention, it's difficult to dispute that Rahm has been the

most popular. The combination of Rahm's personality and success made him a true fan-favorite in Astoria the past five years. As part of their re-build, Astoria has decided to move on and sent Rahm to Bandon this year. Bandon is pushing hard for a re-build and is hoping Rahm will be a strong part of their success.

2 – Sandy Gonzalez – Crescent City Kodiaks

Sandy Gonzalez has been a part of the core of Pocatello since they traded for him with the Atoms in the midst of the WPBL's inaugural season. 2 championships, 3 All-Stars, 2 Platinum Sticks, and 1 Great Glove later he decided to part ways. Sandy wanted to be recognized for his accomplishments financially, and the Old-Timers were spread too thin to do so. CCK stepped in to capitalize and signed Sandy to a lucrative contract that will make him a cornerstone of their franchise for years to come.

1 – Joey Hoffmann – Lake Tahoe Mustangs

Lake Tahoe's owner Henry Collins has been a model of modesty and humility during his time in WPBL. Despite the two championships for the Mustangs, he's never felt the need to explain to others why his team is so great. The actions should speak for themselves right? He shouldn't have to make sure everyone knows how awesome he is, and he's not that type of guy that will do that. He happened to trade for Joey Hoffman this offseason. I know Henry wouldn't want me to make a big deal about this, so we'll keep it low-key. The guy's been pretty good since he came into the league in 2022. Henry gave up A LOT for a guy he's hoping will be a contributor but time will tell. When asked for comment, Henry Collins said something along these lines " blah blah blah once in a generation talent, franchise player, will immediately make our a team a top contender, blah blah blah" or at least I assume that's what he would have said if I bothered to listen to him. Either way, Hoffman to Tahoe is a game-changer, look out folks because the Mustangs are ready to rumble.

Team Previews

Contributed by Richard Salas



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Astoria Fighting Chinooks

After a disappointing couple years for Astoria, the lack of winning sucked the fun out of the battle of the bay. With their former arch rival no longer next door and competing in a new division, look for Astoria to start forming a new identity on the bevy of early draft picks they have over the next few years. With the said, they still currently lack superstars now, especially after trading away fan favorite Sean Rahm down the road to Bandon , and will probably find themselves with another good draft pick next year.

Player To Watch

John Hofer

Sometimes it's easy to forget he's still only 24 years old after debuting at 22. He's coming off his best year, and still has room to improve. Astoria might not win many games, but the games they do will likely have him on the mound.



Projected Starting Lineup:

C – Min-yeol Lee
1B – Miguel Algarin
2B – Muwaffaq bin Jafar
3B – Luis Villagomez
SS – Mario Yepiz
LF – Doug Baxter
CF – Bonifazio Lopez
RF – Joram Van Der Wal
DH – Josh Richardson

SP – Mike Epperly
SP – Neil Pryzbyla
SP – John Hofer
SP – Jose Bernal
SP – Gabe Castaneda

RP – Tyler Benfield
RP – Bobby Muraca
RP – John Kuhlman

Bandon Bung Hammers

After a bevy of offseason moves, Bandon finds themselves in a spot a lot of teams want to be in, good enough to compete now, but young enough to compete in the future. Dana Krynski and Colby Stillman lead that, both are under 25 and are all-star material. Their rotation isn't as young, but Jim Thorp should be a steadying presence and Luis Diaz is solid at 27 years old, with room to improve.

Player To Watch Colby Stillman

His bat was all-star level last year, but his pitching performance was below average. With 3 of his pitches being very good, and 3 more as below average, it may be as simple as developing a good 4th pitch to round out his arsenal. If he does, Stillman will fast track himself into the MVP race as the only 2-Way force of the WPBL.



Projected Starting Lineup:

C – Keith Rehmert
1B – Dana Krynski
2B – Ryan Gregson
3B – Geoff Healy
SS – Mitch Jones
LF – Alejandro Castillo
CF – Gabe Nuno
RF – Erik Draeger
DH – Colby Stillman

SP – Jim Thorp
SP – Luis Diaz
SP – Mario Gutierrez
SP – Colby Stillman
SP – Ryan Kadar

RP – Sean Rahm
RP – Larry Petry
RP – Ricky Jimenez

Coeur d'Alene Striking Miners

The WPBL has made its way into the beautiful town of Coeur d'Alene. The Striking Miners will look to compete right away, led by a lights out bullpen and C Andy King. While it might not jump out at you on paper, the Miners' lineup screams competency from 1 to 9. Their starting rotation could use some supplementing, but the Striking Miners look like the better of the two expansion teams currently.

Player To Watch

Andy King

It's not even close. King is instantly the best catcher in the WPBL upon arrival, and should provide instant impact. King is this season's iteration of King Kong last year. At the seasoned age of 35, it will be interesting to see if he will stay in Coeur d'Alene the duration of his contract, or if he will be moved at any point to prepare for the future.



Projected Starting Lineup:

C – Andy King
1B - Paulus Roos
2B – Ryan Bournias
3B – Jesus Bello
SS – Danny Escobedo
LF – Jamie Knechtges
CF – Jose Mayi
RF – Carlos Cortes
DH – Sam Gross

SP – Giovanni Ervilho
SP – Lachlan Wynn
SP – Tom Schuh
SP – Phil Gorecki
SP – Fernando Moran

RP – Justin Foster
RP – James Kiser
RP – Justin Figert

Crescent City Kodiaks

The Crescent City core is set. After extensions were given to 1B Victor Verver and LF Chris Mistretta, The Kodiaks went and signed Sandy Gonzalez to a very lucrative deal, essentially making him the face of the franchise. Sandy will be looked up to lead in the clubhouse and perform on both sides of the ball. After coming within a game of the WPBL championship series, the Kodiaks want to further their legitimacy as contenders, and this major acquisition could be the answer.

Projected Starting Lineup:

C – Angel Hornedo
1B – Victor Verver
2B – Sandy Gonzalez
3B – Brent Updike
SS – Micah Peterson
LF – Bryan Elbert
CF – Alexander de Knegt
RF – Ruben Morales
DH – Chris Mistretta

SP – Jesus Farelo
SP – Ben Costa
SP – David Page
SP – Will Duran
SP – Matt Thornell

RP – Mark Poole
RP – John Good
RP – Geoff Collins

Player To Watch The Bullpen

Without top of the line starting pitching, CCK will be relying on their offense to get them leads and their bullpen to hold them.

With their offense looking powerful enough, their ability to compete for a championship will depend on their pitching.

Elko Truckers

If you step onto the wrong part of the field of John Deere Park, you may be greeted by a chorus of, "Get off my grass!" While a lot of teams have a balance of age throughout their roster, Elko has continued to lean into their aging core for another season. While their age is getting up there, they still have the talent to compete, and one could argue their offseason could more than make up for the expected age regressions of their top guys.

Player To Watch

Joe Watts

Former MVP finished top 5 last year, and remains the unquestioned leader of the Truckers



Projected Starting Lineup:

C – Nick Coffman
1B – Randy Barbeque
2B – Mac Johansson
3B – Joe Watts
SS – Sterling Snell
LF – Brian Sicard
CF – Yen-nien An
RF – Ashton Hamby
DH – Jake Dickinson

SP – Bill Sykes
SP – Sean Worth
SP – Bob Umphrey
SP – Matt Dutton
SP – Vance Picon

RP – Alejandro Ferrer
RP – Alberto Herrera
RP – Zach Clement

Gillette Bison

The WPBL is happy to expand into Wyoming with the Bison. After a successful expansion draft, The Bison traded away SP Vance Picon, showing their willingness to sacrifice short term to build up enough talent to compete, even if it takes away from the present.

The Bison Manager looks willing to wheel and deal, which is always welcomed in the WPBL.

Player To Watch Gary Johnson

The smooth stroking corner fielder has a swing that should rival the best of the WPBL. The question will be if he will be a part of Gillette in the long term or if this is just a quick stop on his way to his more permanent WPBL home.



Projected Starting Lineup:

C – Kevin Cucumber
1B – Donald Hulleman
2B – Dustin Whiteford
3B – Jimmy Horne
SS – Ryan McCary
LF – Nick Crespo
CF – Ricardo Suarez
RF – Gary Johnson
DH – Jonathan Sano

SP – Leonardo Ruggeri
SP – Ryan Rouse
SP – Alex Enriques
SP – Tony Merced
SP – Brian Madore

RP – Manny Naranjo
RP – Finlay Murphy
RP – Eddie Thornton

Great Falls Black Eagles

Back after a move and a rebrand, Great Falls finds itself in a very similar spot to last year despite the new digs. Look for the Black Eagles to cycle between players, looking for young overperformers who could contribute to the team long term. Although a rebuilding team might have a tough time bringing in fans, they have some talented pitchers in the pipeline and a competitive on field product might be closer than some people think.

Player To Watch Tim Candelora

A premiere closer who remains one of the last pieces Great Falls can move for something in the future. Which team he inevitably gets traded to could decide the title



race.

Projected Starting Lineup:

C – Daniel Kravetz
1B – Chris Flores
2B – Ed Silva
3B – Mike Cervantes
SS – Jay Kestenbaum
LF – Sam Dodson
CF – Frog Claxton
RF – Kyle Kawa
DH – Tony Buanoroti

SP – Tim Scudder
SP – Gustavo Cortes
SP – Nate Young
SP – Matt Hall
SP – Victor Dones

RP – Tim Candelora
RP – Masato Nakatani
RP – Toyoji Kuwahara

Kennewick Tri-City Atoms

Kennewick finds itself in a very unfamiliar position, rebuilding. They are a far cry from their 2023 championship team, and moved on from a bevy of veterans in favor of restocking their prospect pipeline. CL Jeremy Wolfe and SS Mitch Jones have said their goodbyes, but have cemented themselves as Atoms greats. A lot of Atoms fans will spend this year figuring what players to invest their love and admiration into.

Player To Watch

Pete Freedom

Besides his awesome name, he has 20 HR potential. If he can come close to that and earn a spot in the home run derby, he could be the player that captures Atoms fans hearts and leads them back to relevancy.



Projected Starting Lineup:

C – Andy Barger
1B – Freddie Person
2B – Jacob Craft
3B – Rafael Trujillo
SS – Tetsuya Honda
LF – Robby Liford
CF – Steve Brown
RF – Jim Boston
DH – Pete Freedom

SP – Mike Seibert
SP – Joe Watkins
SP – Matt Daley
SP – Jorge Ordonez
SP – Mike Puopolo

RP – Javier Torres
RP – Kunihide Tanaka
RP – Sean Fox

Lake Tahoe Mustangs

The Mustangs bring back the most feared triumvirate of starting pitchers in Patterson, Herfurth, and Schumacher. While fans are excited about it, they've become accustomed to top end starting pitching. Lake Tahoe faithful are abuzz with the acquisition of premiere CF Joey Hoffman, and rightfully so. After a down year by his standards, Hoffman will be looking to bounce back and prove he is the best CF in the league and obtain his first WPBL championship.

Player To Watch Andy Wilkerson

He may never come close to 2023 and his 24 homers, but if he can just get to double digit homers, Lake Tahoe could easily be the team to beat Pocatello



Projected Starting Lineup:

C – Bailey Harman

1B – T.J. Ketchum

2B – Ruben Galaviz

3B – Jeff Barnett

SS – Mario Gamino

LF – David Love

CF – Tom Saylor

RF – Joey Hoffmann

DH – Andy Wilkerson

SP – Victor Patterson

SP – Danny Schumacher

SP – Gregg Herfurth

SP – Javier de Santiago

SP – Alex Lopez

RP – Jeremy Wolfe

RP – Mason Donaldson

RP – Alvin McLafferty

Pocatello Old Timers

Pocatello brings back the bulk of the team that captured the 2025 WPBL title. They did lose Sandy Gonzalez, who took a lucrative deal with scrappy Crescent City. Sandy played the bulk mostly at 3B, with some spot duty at 2B. It's hard to imagine one of the younger guys coming in and matching his production at 3B, but the Old Timers will be hoping 2B Noel Trentadue can build upon a solid first year in the WPBL and go from good to great.

Player To Watch Fernando Jimenez

It's hard to pick anyone else. King Kong took the WPBL by storm and was ROY and finished 3rd in MVP voting. Vegas has him as the odds on favorite to win MVP in 2026.



Projected Starting Lineup:

C – Kyle Kulzer
1B – Danny Rivera
2B – Noel Trentadue
3B – Hamilton Chompers
SS – Fernando Jimenez
LF – Chris Ponder
CF – Jaden Richardson
RF – Alejandro Sanchez
DH – Chris Powers

SP – Bryan Daniels
SP – Adam Hembree
SP – Moises Batista
SP – Victor Melendez
SP – Mike Bessant

RP – Juan Rodriguez
RP – Joaquin Lopez
RP – Rick Saxton

Walla Walla Wallabies

The Walla Walla Wallabies should consider a rebrand to the Walla Walla Wolvertons. John Wolverton captured his second MVP in 2025(2023) and looks no worse for wear this year. With that said, Walla Walla was just above average and finished just outside the playoffs last year. Sistrunk finished strong after a slow start, but Walla Walla will need both at full power all year to make a run this year.

Player To Watch Gumball Washington

He has shown flashes, but at just 21 years old, hasn't found consistency yet. Is this the year he puts it together? If so, that will alleviate the pressure on Wolverton and Sistrunk and could elevate Walla Walla from playoff hopeful to playoff contender



Projected Starting Lineup:

C – Ken Canelli
1B – Chris Gachupin
2B – Bobby Whelan
3B – Richard Figueroa
SS – Frank Reetz
LF – Gumball Washington
CF – Tim Sistrunk
RF – John Wolverton
DH – Nick Kenney

SP – Mike Finazzo
SP – Jimmy Pig
SP – Josh Mays
SP – Joel Arellano
SP – Nick Johnson

RP – John Bumiller
RP – Phil Gaskins
RP – Chris DeYoung

Victoria Geese

With the departure of Joey Hoffman, the Flying Geese have stopped for a rest stop on their quest for their WPBL championship. They have obviously shifted their focus to youth and talent development, which was always bound to happen as they sport one of the smallest payrolls years over year.

Player To Watch Frank Vitela

The Victoria 2B/leadoff man had a solid 2025 and is still only 24 years old. Watching Frank compete for a batting title could be a storyline that captivates the Victoria faithful in the midst of a rebuild.



Projected Starting Lineup:

C – Juan Lopez
1B – Tommy Deyampert
2B – Frank Vitela
3B – Lirak Koci
SS – Hector Cabral
LF – Mike Stefanovic
CF – Tu-fu Dou
RF – Antonio Caamano
DH – Jason Oman

SP – Manny Gaona
SP – Ken Williams
SP – Chris Phillips
SP – Esteban Monsivais
SP – T.J. Roach

RP – Ross Blanchette
RP – Jose Perez
RP – Glenn Furlong

Keep On Truckin'

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Elko's Championship Push

By Buster Spork

When one thinks about the great franchises of the first 5 years of the WPBL, a few teams come to mind.....Pocatello, Lake Tahoe, and even an idiot or two might throw the name Kennewick into the debate. One team though has been on the cusp of being part of that conversation since year 1 and that is the Elko Truckers. A dominant year in 2021 went horribly wrong when they crumbled in the playoffs. They lost a significant part of their core that offseason and stumbled into oblivion during the 2022 season. Initially, the team seemed committed to a re-build from the ground up. Elko developed one of the strongest farm systems in the league. They were ready to patiently build a powerhouse and they understood it was going to take time. Seemingly out of nowhere, everything changed. This is the story of that change.

If you ask Elko's owner Allan Ruby where it started, he will point directly at 2023 first round overall pick Randy "The Donkey" Barbeque. After putting up successful numbers in the minors for a year, he was ready to go in 2024. He put up phenomenal stats in route to a ROY award, but the Truckers remained in mediocrity with a 39-42 record. When asked about what happened next, Ruby had this to say : "Having a talent like him come in at his age and contribute right away gave the front office the push it needed to try to win now and maximize the chance of winning while he was still on an affordable contract. With some extra trade pieces that came from the tear down of the 2021 rendition of the Truckers, the front office felt they could trade for and sign enough players around Randy to create a contender."

The rest is history....Elko blew up the team and traded away their draft stock to create a contender for the now. Most notably, the team was able to trade for Brian Sicard, Joe Watts, and Mac Johannson. Per Ruby, "The Joe Watts trade sort of fell

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in our laps. When we reached out, it was with the expectation he was unlikely to be gettable. When it turned out he was, we felt now truly was the time to push for the championship." This further emboldened Ruby as he worked to make free agent signings of RF Ashton Hamby, CF Yen-nien An, and CF Nick Coffman. This is an elite team, but it must be noted that many of these great players are in their mid-to-late 30s.

Suddenly Elko was once again in control of a powerhouse. Yes, they gave up their future to win in the present, but the dividends immediately paid off. Elko was one of the top teams in in the 2025 season. As it became increasingly clear that their starting pitching rotation wasn't up to par, they made a great trade that brought in veterans Bob Umphrey and Sean Worth. They came close, but ultimately fell short as they fell to Pocatello in 6 games in the WPBL Championship. It's clear that Allan Ruby expects a championship from the team he's created. When asked about the window of time they're up against, he had this to say: "We're looking at 2 to 3 years. Luckily, we still have Randy locked up and he has expressed a willingness to become the leader the team needs as we lose the likes of Watts, Sicard, and Hamby. Rebuild is synonymous with losing, so we don't like that word around here. As long as we have Randy, we know we are only a RETOOL away from competing again."

As we head into the 2026 season, Elko is once again a top contender. Although no one in the clubhouse will admit it, the tension is palpable. The front office knows they need a championship in the window they've created. The fans know the same. The players won't acknowledge it but they're feeling the pressure. The players look as strong as they did last year and Elko has not stopped making moves, they are ready. Most notably, a new manager has entered the scene and this could be the biggest wild card of all. Manager Curt Bauer signed with the team after much success with Pocatello's AA team the Idaho Springs Miners. This was a very smart signing for the team after Josh Montessori (who had been the Trucker's manager for its

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current full tenure)and Elko decided to part ways. Allan Ruby had this to say on the matter: "Josh Montesanti did not want to return to Elko. We would have gladly retained him, but for whatever reason, he was not interested. We wish him the best. We wanted someone on the up and up, someone with a good relationship with our players and could grow in the role."

So here we are...A super team with star players at nearly every position. There's one clear problem and it's that not a lot of those star players have many years left. You heard it from their owner, they have 2-3 more years as a powerhouse and you know management expects a championship in this time. Yes, they believe they can re-tool but it all comes back to the expectation that Sicard, Watts, Johannson, and Hamby are a part of at least one title. This is WPBL drama at its finest.

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Preseason Predictions

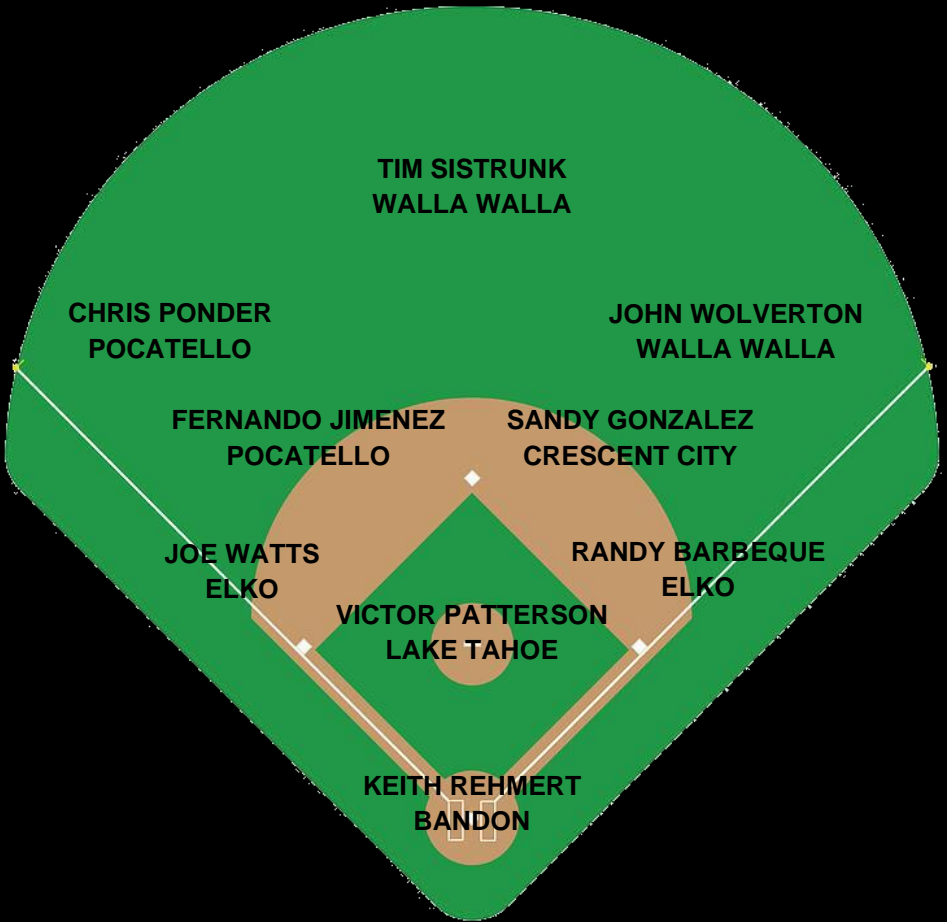
Coastal Division

Team	Projected Record	2025 Record
Lake Tahoe	49-33	46-35
Crescent City	45-37	41-40
Bandon	43-39	37-44
Victoria	40-42	36-45
Kennewick	37-45	42-39
Astoria	34-48	30-51

Mainland Division

Team	Projected Record	2025 Record
Pocatello	55-26	54-27
Elko	52-30	51-30
Coeur d'Alene	41-41	0-0
Walla Walla	40-42	42-39
Gillette	33-49	0-0
Great Falls	29-52	24-57

Preseason All-WPBL Team



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Award Projections

MVP - Fernando Jimenez - Pocatello

An international rookie in 2025, Jimenez put together an incredible first season as he took home Rookie of the Year Honors to go along with an all-star selection, silver slugger award, and a WPBL Championship. Batting .266/.348/.492 with 18 Home Runs, he will look to follow it up with an even more impressive sophomore season.

Pitcher of the Year - Danny Schumacher - Lake Tahoe

After falling all the way to the third pick in the 2022 amateur draft, “Frosty” has done nothing but perform better every year. In his second season last year, Schumacher saw his K rate jump and BB rate fall, and saw an overall increase in his game. If this trend continues, expect Schumacher to take home some hardware at the end of the year.

Rookie of the Year – Joram Van Der Wal – Astoria

It’s hard to find a prospect with such a high profile minor league career as Van Der Wal, and it is even more impressive that he has been able to perform at a high level with so much attention. After signing as an international free agent to play in the Pocatello system in 2021 at 16 years old, many think this is finally the year the young phenom makes his debut. Twice Joram was the centerpiece of blockbuster trades, going from Pocatello to Bandon and then from Bandon to Astoria. Now 21 years old, Joram has all the tools to succeed at the big league level. In a season with no clear big rookie debuts, Joram could make a big splash.

Reliever of the Year - John Good - Crescent City

Good made his WPBL debut an incredible 18 years old in 2021 and has spent the last five seasons as a member of the Wallabies bullpen. After hitting free agency this year and signing a big deal with Crescent City, many expect Good to take a big step forward with more opportunity with his new team. If given the chance, expect Good to turn into one of the leagues elite relievers.

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2026 WPBL Champion Prediction



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