

Western Pioneers Baseball League

2028 MEDIA GUIDE

15 CENTS



POCATELLO THIRD BASEMEN LIRAK KOCI IS CALLED OUT AT HOME DURING GAME 3 OF THE 2027 WPBL CHAMPIONSHIP AS CATCHER KEITH REHMERT APPLIES THE TAG

FEATURES

PRESEASON PREDICTIONS

BOATS BOWLING BALL WOES

THE "INFIELD INN"

FAMILIAR FACES, NEW PLACES

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The Infield Inn

A Taste of Lake Tahoe's Ace New Venture

Reported by Mitch Isosceles

As a baseball reporter, I'm always on the lookout for places that bring the spirit of the game to life. When I heard about the Infield Inn, a baseball-themed restaurant owned by Tahoe pitcher Victor Patterson, my expectations were as high as a pop fly in the outfield. Unfortunately, my experience turned out to be more of a bloop single than a grand slam. Strap on your helmets, folks, because this review will take you through the hits and misses of this mediocre establishment.

Let's start with the ambiance, or should I say lack thereof. Walking into the Infield Inn felt like stepping into a kitschy memorabilia shop where baseball nostalgia goes to retire. The walls were adorned with an array of dusty, autographed baseballs that seemed to have seen better days. The tables were shaped like home plates, but they were about as comfortable as sitting on a catcher's mask during a long inning. Talk about striking out in the design department!

Now, onto the menu, which I must admit left me scratching my head. The so-called "ballpark inspired cuisine" was a swing and a miss, lacking the finesse and creativity I had hoped for. The first dish I tried was the "Bunt Burger," a sad excuse for a baseball-themed creation. The burger patty was about as juicy as a ground ball to the shortstop, and the bun had the texture of a well-worn baseball glove. It left me wondering if the chef had ever actually tasted a proper burger or if they were simply playing catch with their culinary skills.

Next up was the "Slugger's Slaw," which promised to be a home run of flavor. However, it turned out to be a base-on-balls of disappointment. The slaw was drowning in a sea of mayonnaise, overpowering any hint of freshness or crunch. It was as if the chef was trying to compensate for the lack of taste by adding enough mayo to fill a bucket. Sorry, Infield Inn, but that's not how you hit it out of the park!

And let's not forget about the "Curveball Calamari." I must admit, I was intrigued by the idea of a baseball-themed twist on this classic dish. However, what arrived at my table was a plate of rubbery calamari rings that were about as appealing as a wild pitch. It seemed like the chef had taken the term "curveball" a bit too literally and left

the calamari in the deep fryer for an extra inning. Talk about a strike-out!

To add insult to injury, the service at Infield Inn was about as efficient as a slow-pitch softball game. The waitstaff seemed more interested in their own batting averages than attending to the customers. I had to wave my arms like a third base coach trying to send a runner home just to get their attention.

All in all, the Infield Inn left me feeling more disappointed than hitting into a double play. With its tacky decor, lackluster menu, and subpar service, this restaurant failed to hit it out of the park. If you're looking for a dining experience that embodies the spirit and quality of baseball, you're better off rounding the bases elsewhere. Infield Inn, it's time to take a swing at improving your game or risk striking out with discerning baseball fans like myself.

Final Verdict: A foul ball of a restaurant that fails to deliver on its baseball-themed promise.

Familiar Faces, New Places

Another Offseason Brings More Big Changes to the WPBL

Reported by Buster Spork

Mark Poole, Kennewick

3 Time All-Star and former Reliever of the Year winner Mark Poole finds himself a new home in Kennewick this year. After a successful run with CCK he was traded to Bandon last year. Reportedly, he was unhappy with this trade and declined his contract option. Poole eventually found the right fit for him with the Atoms as he signed a 3-year contract for 620,000 overall. The Atoms feel very optimistic that this move can help them progress from being a below average team to a mediocre team.

Jorge Ordonez, Walla Walla

Ordenez is a true wildcard in the WPBL. When healthy he is exceptionally elite. He has had some very amazing stretches where he's looked like one of the best pitchers in the league. The problem: Those moments have been few and far between because the guy can't stay off the IR. In 2026 it seemed like it was all coming together as he pitched a full season and looked great while doing it. He accrued his second all-star award and was ready for 2027. Unfortunately, it was once again an injury-riddled season for Jorge. Kennewick decided it was finally time to cut ties as they were looking for more stability. Walla Walla has stepped in and is willing to take the gamble. Ordenez is the ultimate high-risk/high-reward player and we shall see how it pays off for the Farmers this year.

Jaden Richardson, Bandon

Jaden Richardson has been part of the core of Pocatello ever since they traded for him in 2022. He was an integral part of all 3 championship seasons while also accruing three all-star appearances, one platinum stick, and one division championship MVP. He's known for his high adaptability and work ethic and overall brings tremendous value to any clubhouse with his experience. After Bandon's loss in last year's championship, this is exactly the kind of veteran leadership that they are looking to bring to their team. A low-risk 2-year contract that includes a team option for year 2 creates a great opportunity for Bandon to help themselves in the short-term while avoiding any long-term commitment to a 37-year-old veteran.

Chris Boris, Gillette

Journeyman SP Chris Boris has been around since the league's inception but hadn't necessarily been notable until last year. He bounced around the league in his first few years but had seemed to find a home in Victoria after they traded for him in 2023. Last year was his most successful by far as he found his groove and put up a 2.15 ERA en route to his first All-Star appearance but Boris and the team couldn't connect with a contract in the offseason. As a result, he is headed to Gillette on a 2-year deal that gives him the opportunity to be a leader and role model for a young team trying to move up in the WPBL.

Miguel Algarin, Walla Walla

A relatively low-key signing at 1B but one that could pay dividends as the Farmers try to make themselves a more relevant franchise. Algarin is a two-time all-star who started his career in Walla Walla before stints in Astoria and Elko. Miguel is very excited to return home and be a part of the Farmer's re-build.

Honorable Mentions

They don't have a new team yet but surely someone is going to sign them soon enough: Mac Johannson, Kyle Kawa, and Andy Wilkerson are all free agents who are still looking to find a team that they can contribute to this year. These veterans listened to their agent's advice and posted high expectations in what they were looking for in terms of years and money, but a lack of interest from owners and GMs led them to lower their asking price. All 3 are looking for one-year deals at a significantly reduced price in an effort to prove they can still be factors in the league.

Team Previews

WPBLs Resident Bad Boy Buster Spork Dives Deep into Each Teams 2028 Outlook

Astoria

It's no secret that Astoria has the best minor league system by a mile and it's only a matter of time before they're an elite WPBL franchise. The only question now is "When is Jimmy Johnson ready to unleash his group of prospects onto the majors?". Honk Sanderson, Hercules Muldoon, Daniel Horse-Johnson, Malik Duggar, Jeffrey Snowball, Peach Johnson, and Bobby Black are all Top-100 prospects that are projected to be ready to contribute this upcoming season. We'll see how many Jimmy chooses to send up.

Best Case: The new crop of prospects make an immediate impact on Astoria. The team finishes near .500 and creeps into the playoffs as the 3-seed.

Worst Case: Only a couple rookies get called up and they don't live up to expectations. Astoria finishes well below .500 once again.

Bandon

Bandon was considered to be one of the favorites for a championship in 2027 and they lived up to the hype with a successful regular season. This all fell apart in the championship as they dropped the series 4-1 to Pocatello. Bandon strengthened their roster this offseason, including adding former Pocatello CF Jaden Richardson who brings a strong and respected veteran presence to the locker room. Bandon looks just as dangerous as they did last year and are ready to redeem themselves in 2028.

Best Case: Bandon returns to the WPBL Championship, but this time around looks more poised and experienced in their fight for the title as they win it all for the first time in franchise history.

Worst Case: Some of the main veterans begin to show signs of regression and Bandon

doesn't look like the complete team they did last year. The team barely sneaks into the playoffs and gets easily bounced in the first round.

Coeur D'Alene

The Striking Miners found success last year when they made the playoffs in their second season in the league. They are looking to build off that with a team that's centered around Bonifazio Lopez, Jim Boston, and veteran Nick Coffman. Management feels the third spot in the Mainland Division is wide open and sees no reason why they can't return to the playoffs this year.

Best Case: The team continues to develop and makes the playoff for the second year in a row, this time providing an upset and advancing to round 2.

Worst Case: The team takes a step backwards and more closely resembles the 35-46 team of 2026 than the team that made the playoffs last year.

Crescent City

After a couple playoff appearances in their first few years, the Kodiaks are currently struggling. 28 and 29 wins in their past two seasons has the fan base concerned. They are working to build up a strong farm system that will lead to future success, but their current team does not leave much to be excited about.

Best Case: The team overperforms as Chris Mistretta leads the offense and Ben Costa/Bam Boozled anchor the pitching. They finish near .500 and the CCK fanbase develops a sense of hope heading into 2029.

Worst Case: The team further regresses and finds themselves in the basement at the end of 2028 season with the only consolation being the first overall draft pick the following year.

Elko

Elko nearly took down Pocatello in last year's Mainland Division Championship but fell just short. They feel very confident that their championship window remains as

they maintain a roster full of aging yet still high-performing players. This offense is still one of the strongest in the league.

Best Case: Elko avenges their second-round exit and makes it to the WPBL Championship. They go on to win their second title in three years.

Worst Case: Elko's veterans began to show some wear and tear as the season progresses. They make the playoffs but once again fall short of making it to the Championship Series.

Gillette

The Bison surprised many by making it to the playoffs in their expansion season. They then really shocked the league by upsetting the Old-Timers in the first round. They were not able to build on their early success during the 2027 season, finishing 36-45 as reality crashed down on the young franchise. While the team still has a few players to build around such as Nick Crespo, Justin Figert, and Chris Boris...there is still a long way to go for them to be a top contender in the WPBL.

Best Case: The Bison rally together and find a strong team chemistry that leads them to overperform. The Mainland teams that aren't Pocatello/Elko struggle and the Bison sneak into the third seed with a record similar to the 38-44 performance that snuck them in during the 2026 season.

Worst Case: The team's trajectory continues to move downward. They don't produce the way they hope, and they finish last place. The silver lining will be that they get the opportunity to build up their minor league system with the first overall pick.

Great Falls

After a championship appearance in 2023, the Black Eagles have struggled to put together a winning team. They are currently sitting on a 4-season streak with a losing record. They are strengthening up their farm system and hoping to build their team around number 1 overall prospect J.J. Brown, but they are several years away from putting this long-term plan into fruition.

Best Case: Manny Jamboree and Matt Hall anchor their pitching rotation and the team is able to muster up enough offense to keep them competitive. They are able to hover close to .500 and sneak into the playoffs in a weak Mainland Division.

Worst Case: Another team with a worst-case scenario that involves them finishing dead last. While they do have some potential for success, regression from a few of their key pitchers could spell doom for their season as they spiral into last place. Just like the other teams mentioned, a first overall pick for a re-building team always provides some comfort.

Kennewick

The Atoms have done a lot to strengthen their team and turn themselves back into a championship contender. The most notable acquisition was acquiring Mark Poole who has the potential to be an elite closer for Kennewick. Nate Pizzuto should strengthen their bullpen while Ben Bush was one of the most highly sought after independent free agents and he committed to TRI.

Best Case: The new acquisitions gel perfectly with the Atom's core. They return to being a playoff caliber team and finish at the top of their division. John Wolverton gets his fourth MVP and leads Kennewick to their second championship.

Worst Case: At the age of 35 Wolverton begins to show signs of aging and isn't the dominant force he was last year. Some of the Atoms' new additions don't develop quite the way they planned, and Kennewick ends up being a team that gets bounced in the first round of the playoffs.

Lake Tahoe

With 53 wins the Mustangs were a strong favorite to win it all. While their offense has been average, their pitching rotation has been possibly the best the league has seen to this point. Patterson, Herfurth, and Schumacher represent an extremely intimidating 3-man rotation that should be able to hang with anyone if Tahoe makes the playoffs.

Best Case: The Mustangs cruise to first place in their division and run through the playoffs with their phenomenal crew of SPs. They win their third championship and

keep up the pace with the Old-Timers as the best dynasty in the league.

Worst Case: Despite an elite pitching rotation, the Mustangs offense takes a big step back this year. They just can't score enough runs to make them a true championship contender. They make the playoffs but have a first-round exit.

Pocatello

The stars aligned perfectly last year as the Old-Timers found themselves winning their third championship in the first seven years of the WPBL. They continue to depend on a core that centers around Bryan Daniels, Chris Ponder, and Fernando Jimenez. The team has mostly stayed intact this year, so they are once again hoping to go the distance.

Best Case: They pick up where they left off last year and continue to show off a team with a balanced offensive and pitching attack. They win their 4th championship and further solidify themselves as the villain of the league.

Worst Case: The age of the Old-Timers begins to show, and they can't quite keep up with the youth revolution. While still making the playoffs, they are bounced in the first round by a younger team with a much better potential for the future.

Victoria Geese

The Geese have been a team that has seen some highs and lows throughout their franchise run. They seem to be a team in limbo at the moment as they nearly finished as a playoff team last year before losing a play-in game. Despite this, they seem to know they have a long way to go before being a real contender. With the third best minor-league system in the league the Geese seem to be committed to not making any harsh moves that will damage their future.

Best Case: The Geese don't fall off too much despite minimal offseason moves. They produce similar results to last season and finish with a record that's hovering around .500.

Worst Case: We see the Geese take a step back and show that they're not ready to return to playoff contention until we see them move their strong minor-leaguers into the WPBL major division.

Walla Walla

A new team brand with the Farmers seems to indicate that Walla Walla is ready for an overall fresh start. New ownership believes they will be contenders soon enough and feels the additions of veterans such as Jorge Ordonez and Miguel Algarin should help them be a team that contends for the playoffs when paired with stars such as Gumball Washington.

Best Case: The team lives up to the hopes of ownership and the Farmers find their way into the WPBL playoffs. While they don't make it out of the first round, they do establish themselves as a team to be reckoned with as they further develop their prospects and build up their franchise. Washington wins MVP and establishes himself as a true star of the future.

Worst Case: Their free-agent signings end up being busts, Gumball doesn't look as good as they hoped, and the young core of WW isn't developing as hoped. The team finishes well out of playoff contention. The re-build is in jeopardy and looks tougher than initially expected.

One Strike, You're Out

How One Player's Hobby Turned into A Tight Situation

Reported By Mitch Isosceles

A very peculiar incident seemingly went unnoticed this offseason. WPBL has had its fair share of odd injuries that have impacted players' performances on the field. We have a new one that occurred this past October when Geese star Boat Shumpert suffered a back injury while bowling when his fingers became lodged in the bowling ball during a powerful throw. The incident occurred at a local Victoria bowling alley. Fortunately, medical professionals are confident that Shumpert will make a complete recovery and be ready for the upcoming baseball season.

Witnesses at the scene described the incident as both shocking and bizarre. According to onlookers, Shumpert was participating in a friendly bowling match when he unleashed a powerful throw. However, as he released the ball, his fingers became unexpectedly stuck in the holes of the bowling ball. The force exerted by Shumpert's throw caused his hand to twist awkwardly, resulting in an immediate sharp pain in his back.

"I couldn't believe what I was seeing," said Melanie Thompson, a fellow bowler who witnessed the incident. "Boat had been bowling strikes all night, and then this happened. It was like something out of a movie. I hope he recovers quickly."

Shumpert, renowned for his athletic prowess and strong arm, expressed his regret over the accident. In a statement released by his agent, Shumpert stated, "I never expected a fun night of bowling to end like this. It was a freak accident, and I'm frustrated that it happened. But I'm determined to bounce back stronger than ever. I'm already focused on my rehabilitation and getting back on the field."

Medical professionals, after assessing the extent of Shumpert's back injury, are optimistic about his recovery prospects. Dr. Rebecca Lawson, an orthopedic specialist, stated, "Boat Shumpert suffered a lumbar strain as a result of the incident. While it's a significant injury, it's not career threatening. With proper treatment and rehabilitation,

he should be fully healed and ready to play by the start of the next season." In fact, Boat Shumpert is expected to fully participate in spring training prior to this upcoming season. However, the question remains if the effects of the injury will negatively impact his performance on the field.

The team's management has shown support for Shumpert throughout his recovery process. The organization has assured fans that they are committed to providing the necessary resources to aid in Shumpert's recovery. "Boat is an invaluable asset to our team, and we stand behind him completely. We are confident that he will make a full recovery and return to his dominating form on the field."

Preseason Predictions

Preseason All-WPBL Team

P – Gregg Herfurth – Lake Tahoe

C – Andy King – Elko

1B – TJ Ketchum – Lake Tahoe

2B – Noel Trentadue – Pocatello

3B – Geoff Healy – Bandon

SS – Fernando Jimenez – Pocatello

LF – Joram Van Der Wal – Astoria

CF – Luis Herrera – Astoria

RF – John Wolverton – Kennewick

Coastal Division Predictions

Team	Predicted Record	2027 Record	Difference
Lake Tahoe	52-29	53-28	-1
Kennewick	48-33	41-41	+7
Bandon	47-34	49-32	-2
Victoria	36-45	40-42	-4
Astoria	35-46	29-52	+6
Crescent City	30-51	29-52	+1

Mainland Division Predictions

Team	Predicted Record	2027 Record	Difference
Elko	52-29	47-34	+5
Pocatello	49-32	49-32	0
Coeur d'Alene	40-41	41-40	-1
Walla Walla	40-41	37-44	+3
Great Falls	37-44	36-45	+1
Gillette	28-53	36-45	-8

Championship Prediction

Elko Truckers Over Lake Tahoe Mustangs

Award Predictions

MVP – Fernando Jimenez, SS – Pocatello

King Kong experience has been a roller coaster ride through his first 3 years in the league. He lived up to the hype in year 1, winning ROY and finishing third in MVP voting. However, we saw a dramatic regression in year 2 that led many to label Jimenez as a bust and a one-year wonder. Fernando came into last year much more focused and consistent. Having a stellar season, he was the clear front-runner for the MVP. Unfortunately, he suffered a season-ending injury 65 games into the season. His MVP hopes were crushed but it did not take away from the fact that he was such an effective contributor to Pocatello's successful season. King Kong finished with a .306 batting average, .571 slugging percentage, and .371 OBP. Despite missing out on his last 16 games, he finished tied for first in HRs with 18, fifth in WAR with 3.4, and first in WPA with 2.71. If he can stay healthy 2028 could be the year we finally see Jimenez get the MVP and live up to his true potential.

Pitcher of the Year – Victor Patterson – Lake Tahoe

Since arriving in the league in 2024, Push Pop has been a force to be reckoned with. He has been dominant in his last 3 seasons, finishing in the top 5 in countless categories and was awarded the Pitcher of the Year title in 2025. Last year Patterson had another strong season, posting a 2.53 ERA, 2.56 FIP, 3.0 WAR, and an impressive record of 7-2. Despite this he watched his teammate Greg Herfurth win pitcher of the year, who had a tremendous season himself. Additionally, the Mustangs were upset by the Barons in the first round of playoffs and Tahoe was left out of the championship. If there's one thing we know about Victor it's that he's

competitive. While he was happy for his teammate, there is a general feeling in the clubhouse that Patterson is going to bring everything he has this season to keep up with Herfurth. Push Pop also reportedly feels very strongly that Tahoe is currently still in their championship window and wants to do all that he can to help the Mustangs get their third title. Expect another strong season.

Rookie of the Year – Hercules Muldoon, OF – Astoria

The Astoria Fighting Chinooks are ripe with young talent and potential. They have multiple players that could be in the running for ROY for several upcoming seasons. This year Hercules Muldoon, 2026 second overall pick and currently number 7 overall prospect, stands alone as the player with the best chance of snagging the ROY. If Astoria chooses to call him up, he is coming into the WPBL on fire. Muldoon just recently put on a show in the Hawaiian League. He finished first in batting average, runs, walks, OBP, OPS, and WAR. He is ready for the WPBL and it's difficult to imagine that any other potential rookie is more destined for the ROY award than Muldoon. Hercules is going to be a star and it seems his WPBL story begins in 2028.

Reliever of the Year – Jeremy Wolfe – Lake Tahoe

Sean Rahm and Jeremy Wolfe have been in a heavyweight battle over the best closer in the game through the first 7 seasons of the WPBL. Ask any fan in the league and they could give you a very legitimate reason why one is better than the other. They have combined for 5 of the 7 reliever of the year awards and have showed great consistency throughout their careers at this point. While Rahm edges out Wolfe in many categories as it relates to career statistics, Wolfe had a tremendous season last year and won his third reliever of the year award to Rahm's two. Wolfe posted a 0.47 era along with 24 saves as he looked dominant all season long. While both are obvious candidates to win this year, this is Wolfe's award to lose until we either see him cool off or Rahm catch fire again.