

WPBL

The logo for WPBL is rendered in large, bold, red-orange letters. The letters are filled with a gradient and contain silhouettes of a cowboy on a horse and a landscape with mountains and a sunset. The letters have a slight drop shadow.

2030 MEDIA GUIDE

The text "2030 MEDIA GUIDE" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is positioned above a faint, semi-transparent reflection of itself, creating a subtle double-effect.

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FAMILIAR FACES IN NEW PLACES

BY BUSTER SPORK

5. Ritter Schwab, Kennewick Atoms.

Ritter Schwab is an interesting case as he's a familiar face to those following the minors, but he has not yet played a WPBL game. Schwab was brought into the Pocatello minor league system in 2023 at the age of 16. He remained a top 50 prospect all the way up until this year. Schwab has shown potential throughout his entire run through the Pocatello farm system. The Old-Timers had plans to bring him into the majors for this upcoming season, but they made a huge mistake and didn't realize his minor league contract expired during the offseason.... the kicker: They were in debt and didn't have any money to offer him a renewal. All their hard work in developing the star went down in flames and he signed with the rival Atoms. This could go down as an all-time blunder for the Pocatello franchise.

4. Manchae Kim, Victoria Geese

Manchae Kim has been a reliable started for several WPBL franchises including Walla Walla, Kennewick, and Great Falls. At the age of 34 he will be joining his fourth team with Victoria. The Geese are excited to be shoring up their bullpen and Kim is excited to be joining a team with playoff potential. Kim offers up some incredible stuff and movement when pitching. His sinker is elite, and his slider is a nice complimentary pitch. After moving around the league throughout this last decade, Kim is hoping to find a team that he can stay with for the remainder of his career.

3. Geoff Healy, Kennewick Atoms

Geoff Healy, former number 1 overall pick in 2021 has not had as stellar of a career as many predicted him to have. Back in 2021 he was considered to be a future superstar that the Astoria Chinooks could build their franchise around. Admittedly, he has not lived up to that hype. However, he has remained relevant through the years and has maintained as a reliable and consistent starter for Astoria and Bandon. He remains very popular amongst WPBL fans and has even produced two all-star seasons along with a platinum stick award. Healy looks to win his first WPBL title and find renewed success with a Kennewick team that is looking to be a championship contender this season.

2. Jaden Richardson, Crescent City Kodiaks

4 time all-star, 1 time platinum stick, and 3-time champion...Jaden Richardson has had a successful WPBL career and is showing no signs of slowing down even at the age of 39. Coming off a fantastic season with Bandon in which he led the league in RBIs and posted a WAR of 3.2, he decided to test free agency. This brought him a 2-year deal with CCK that will get him 432,000 a year. At some point we may see Richardson slow down but heading into the 2030 season he's still a great contact hitter and baserunner. Jaden has been known for his high adaptability and work ethic throughout his career and it seems to continue to be helping him remain in great shape during the twilight of his career. Look for him to remain successful with the Kodiaks.

1. Mitch Jones, Crescent City Kodiaks

The formula for CCK this season seemed to be focused on bringing in well-respected veterans who are still demonstrating success. 34-year-old Mitch Jones has been an all-around great player since the league began in 2021. Throughout his career he has played for Astoria, Kennewick, Tahoe, Bandon,

and now Crescent City....he's a true journeyman. He's been successful nearly everywhere he has played. 6 all-star appearances, 2 gold gloves, 1 platinum stick, and 2 championship rings. That's quite a resume and he's still got plenty of years left in him if he keeps playing at this high of a level. In fact, CCK so firmly believes in him that they signed him to a 5 year contract this offseason. Let's see how CCK's investment in veterans pays off for them this season.

JOE WATTS: WPBL'S FIRST HALL OF FAMER?

BY MITCH ISOSCELES

This offseason one of the true WPBL superstars of its first decade has decided to call it quits. At the age of 39 Joe Watts is retiring and moving into the next chapter of his life. Watts is a WPBL OG, he's been a factor since the inaugural 2021 season and up until this past year was showing no signs of slowing down. After a sub-par 2029 season, he has decided to step aside before Father Time took any further toll on his performance. Joe wanted to go out on his terms and that's exactly what he did. He's accrued quite a number of accolades in his 9 seasons in the league, which we will dive into in this article. Much speculation has gone into who the WPBL's first Hall of Famer will be and Watts is the first player to retire with a legitimate argument for it. Let's look at his case as we walk through his baseball career.

Let's start from the beginning: Watts was born in Danville, Illinois to a pretty typical Midwest upbringing. He fell in love with baseball at an early age and never looked back. It became clear very quickly that Watts was special. Joe loved to swing the bat. He did what he needed to do in the field to get by, but his passion was hitting. Watts got attention from several scouts throughout high school, including some inquiries from several MLB franchises. Ultimately, he didn't generate enough attention to get drafted by a major league team, but he did still have enough talent to make a run at playing the game of baseball as a career. Several independent leagues offered him contracts. The story of his 20s was that of inconsistency. He played for numerous independent leagues throughout the

country. He had some great seasons; he had some not so great seasons. Watts had stints in the Midwestern Future Stars League (MFSL), Texas Baseball League (TBL), and the Florida Sea Turtles Baseball League (FSTBL). His big break came in 2020 when he signed a contract with the Concord Admirals in the well-respected New England Baseball Association (NEBA). Watts had the greatest season of his career to that point, earning the MVP award, triple crown, and a league championship. Only great things seemed to be in his future, and he was excited about finally finding a place of stability as he headed into his 30s. Unfortunately, the league went bankrupt after the season concluded. "I was lost and depressed at that point. At the age of 30 I finally found my game in a way that I had always dreamed of, but the league folded right as I did. A few of my teammates told me about the WPBL and that there were some major investors throwing money into the development of a new league based in the Northwest. I wasn't sure about it, but I figured it wouldn't hurt to throw my name into the draft pool. What's the worst that could happen?"

Scouts from each WPBL team were tasked with reviewing footage and developing reports on each player entering the inaugural draft pool. Watts gained the attention of many teams, but none more than the Warrenton Osprey. GM Scott Peiz prioritized creating a team that would center around Watts and he was willing to spare no expense. Watts was drafted seventh overall and offered a contract that started at 475,000 a year. As Watts recalls, "As I said, I was hitting an age where I was reluctant to feel good about anything...and the idea of heading to the West Coast seemed crazy. I really wanted to stay in Illinois and call it quits on the whole baseball dream. Even though I felt great with how I played the previous season in the NEBA, I was getting tired, both mentally and physically. I was only half-interested when I put my name in for the WPBL inaugural draft. When I was offered that salary, I

couldn't pass it up though...life-changing amount of money. I was now a Warrenton Osprey, and I was going to do everything I could to live up to that contract"

That is exactly what he did. Despite the Osprey stumbling to a 36-45 record and missing the playoffs, Watts was the MVP of the inaugural 2021 season. He led the league in doubles, slugging percentage, OPS, and WAR. Watts reflects, "I was thrilled with the individual honor and happy to live up to the hype, but I felt that I failed in my primary goal: bringing a championship to Warrenton." Two years later he was given that opportunity. Watts continued to play at a high level and in 2023 he led his team to the WPBL championship to square off against the Kennewick Atoms. In an all-time classic series, the Osprey fell short in game 7 and the Atoms were crowned champs. Locker room drama and inner turmoil led to a disastrous 2024 season. Watts continued to produce, but the team regressed significantly and posted a record of 28-53. Management gutted the team to build for the future and Watts was traded to the Elko Truckers.

When asked about how he felt being traded to the Truckers, Watts stated "Total despair and a complete sense of failure. I wanted to bring a championship to Warrenton, and I hate that I never did. With that being said, I fell in love with Elko pretty early on. A lot of my immediate discomfort was put at ease when I sat down with GM Allan Ruby. He explained to me why they spent so much to bring me and Mac here and made me feel valued and appreciated." I reached out to Allan to ask him about the trade who stated "I saw an MVP and a guy who loved winning. Someone who was ready to take a lead in our clubhouse and even expressed willingness to shift from first to third, which is no easy feat. Joe is a complete hitter and someone we saw could lead us to championship glory."

Watts spent his next 5 seasons in Elko. While he didn't look quite as dominant as he did in Warrenton,

he still posted consistently great numbers that helped the Truckers be a regular contender within the league. He never had another MVP-Caliber season, but he did accomplish the goal of being a part of a WPBL championship team. In 2026 the Elko Truckers won their first and only WPBL title. Watts is thrilled that this is part of his legacy and sees it as the highlight of his career. He reflects: "All the individual accolades have been great, but to be a part of a championship win in the league that I finally found a home in... this was the moment I dreamed of". Allan Ruby speaks fondly of Watts' time in Elko, "Joe will tell you himself he never hit the same individual heights he had earlier in Warrenton, but he was an all-star and a big part of the championship run. That was always the goal. We talked about another MVP run in a Trucker uniform when we signed him. That never materialized, and that's okay."

When you reflect on a career like this, you can't help but appreciate a man who has dedicated his life to the game of baseball. Let's take a serious look at his potential to be the league's first WPBL Hall of Famer. 9 seasons will not create the biggest resume, but Joe Watts packed many accomplishments within those 9 seasons. 1 MVP Title, 8 All-Star Appearances, 6 Platinum Stick Awards, and 1 WPBL Championship. Every player in the WPBL minor league system dreams of a career like that. It's a no-brainer that if Joe Watts entered the league as a 21-year-old he'd have been a record-setter in multiple categories. Instead, he entered the league at 30. On paper, this writer thinks that Joe has done enough to be the first member of the WPBL HOF. He was a dominant force in the league for nearly a decade and was one of the first true stars in the league during its infancy. He helped the league become what it is. Being a part of the growth of the WPBL is important and shouldn't be dismissed.

Perhaps Allan Ruby has summed it up best: " Joe is your favorite player's favorite player. He was a true "Pioneer" in our league. I personally thought he had a couple good years left at DH, but Joe just

isn't that type of guy, if he's not prime Joe Watts, then why even suit up? Joe will be missed, and we will look back and think what his career numbers would be if he played a full career, but it was so vital to have someone like Joe in our league early to showcase the type of talent the WPBL can attract. I hope he enjoys the next couple years of retirement, before I pound down his door in an attempt to get him back in Elko as our hitting coach." Whether he ends up in the Hall of Fame or he doesn't, the league is better because Joe Watts was a part of it. Let's simply take a moment to appreciate what he did for the Osprey, the Truckers, and the WPBL as a whole. Thank you Joe, enjoy your retirement!

THE LEAGUES NEXT BIG THING: SAM REGNIER

BY BUSTER SPORK

Sam Regnier is about to take the league by storm. You heard it here first, straight from the mouth of Buster Spork. The league has had some infamous free agents from independent leagues: Victor Patterson, Fernando Jimenez, Luis Herrera...but new WPBL pitcher Regnier takes the cake as the biggest free agent to enter the league from the outside. Let's take a moment and really dive into what Sam Regnier currently is and who he can become.

Regnier was born in Massachusetts and was heavily recruited by several teams from the NEBA (New England Baseball Association). The NEBA closed down in 2020 amid financial issues, but in 2028 several investors worked to restart the league. Regnier committed to starting his career in the NEBA, mainly due to his father being a primary investor, and decided to field offers from every team in the league. Eventually he landed with the Portsmouth Sparrows. During the 2029 season Sam Regnier was absolutely dominant. He led the league in Ks, innings pitched, and WAR. Despite his success, a dark cloud hung over his season due to some investigative reporting. Numerous news stories were published that dove deep into the circumstances surrounding Regnier's contract with the Sparrows. After receiving an already lucrative contract, several unofficial perks appeared to be added on that conflicted with NEBA regulations...such examples included a free 2024 used Toyota Corolla provided by a local Portsmouth Car Dealership, a year-long pass for unlimited free steaks at the local Outback Steakhouse, and a free haircut any time at any Portsmouth Best Cuts. Upon further investigation, it

was discovered that Regnier's father's connection to the Portsmouth Sparrows was deeper than anyone had initially realized and his relationship with Sam was a primary reason he landed with the team. This scandal had the potential to rock the re-formed NEBA to its very core.

Sam Regnier was faced with a dilemma.... ride out the NEBA investigation and face potential sanctions or find a new league in which he could have a fresh start. At the age of 22, he knew that there would be many independent leagues that would seek out his services. He landed on the WPBL and entered as a free agent from an independent league. Sam is looking for a fresh start. Numerous teams took immediate interest. I left several messages with Pocatello management to take notice of Regnier, but their phone lines are currently down. Apparently, they're months behind on their phone bill as they experience complete financial despair.

Sam Regnier has come into the league at 22 with an already established strong pitching skillset, but potential to develop these skills even further. We haven't seen this combination of age, skill, and potential many times in the league. It was clear he'd pull in a fat paycheck from the team who'd be willing to take him in. That team was the Gillette Bison. Regnier signed a 10-year contract worth 7,320,000. Gillette GM Ty Fish was asked about the signing and was very enthusiastic in sharing his excitement, "Good starting pitching is really rare around here I've found, Gillette needs a big name to lead their team through this era and Regnier seems like a great option to be that guy. In terms of the large dollar value, we decided to make our first offer our best offer. The goal of this was to surprise the other teams trying to get him on the cheap."

Regnier's current ratings put him within the top tier of WPBL pitchers. He has one of the most

complete set of skills the league has witnessed. How this will equate to the WPBL remains to be seen, but it appears to be an extremely safe bet that Regnier will be a force in the WPBL. One of the best prospects the league has ever seen joining up with the previous year's champion is an alarming sequence of events. The reality is that this is Gillette's chance to become a repeat champion and push towards dynasty status. The Bison were underdogs last year, but they overachieved and won it all. Banking off their success, they have strengthened their team significantly. The Bison saw an opportunity with Regnier, and they went for it. Could this be the year we see the league's first championship repeat?

LAKE TAHOE MUSTANGS REBRANDED AS YAKIMA HOPS IN WPBL'S TENTH SEASON

BY ALFRED IGLOO

Under new ownership, the Lake Tahoe Mustangs unexpectedly announced their relocation to Yakima, Washington and a fresh identity as the Yakima Hops. This move has sparked widespread excitement among the baseball enthusiasts in Yakima, a picturesque city nestled in the heart of Washington's wine country.

Yakima, renowned for its breathtaking landscapes and thriving agricultural industry, has a rich baseball heritage. The city has a strong tradition of supporting sports, making it an ideal new home for the WPBL's latest addition. With its vibrant community spirit and love for the game, Yakima promises to be the perfect backdrop for the Yakima Hops' endeavors in the WPBL.

The decision to relocate to Yakima was influenced by the city's passionate sports culture and the growing interest in baseball. With a population that takes immense pride in their local teams, Yakima provides a fertile ground for the Hops to establish a dedicated fanbase. The city's central location in the

Pacific Northwest also ensures accessibility for fans from neighboring areas, making it a strategic choice for the WPBL franchise.

Yakima residents have expressed immense enthusiasm about welcoming the Hops to their city. Longtime baseball fans and newcomers alike are optimistic about the positive impact the team will have on the local community. The prospect of witnessing high-quality baseball, coupled with the excitement of supporting an independent league franchise, has generated a buzz among sports enthusiasts.

Local resident Emily Thompson shared her excitement, saying, "I've been following the WPBL for years, and having a team right here in Yakima is a dream come true. I can't wait to attend the games and cheer for the Hops alongside my fellow Yakima residents."

The Yakima Hops' management has expressed their commitment to building a successful franchise in their new home. With the support of the enthusiastic Yakima community, the team aims to create memorable moments on the field and establish a lasting legacy in the WPBL. As the upcoming season approaches, anticipation continues to build, and Yakima stands ready to embrace their new baseball heroes with open arms.

The WPBL's decision to bring the Hops to Yakima represents a new chapter in the city's sports history. With a blend of tradition, community support, and unwavering optimism, the Yakima Hops are poised to make a significant impact on the league and the hearts of baseball fans in the Pacific Northwest.

2029 PREDICTIONS

TEAM	2029 PROJECTION	2028 RECORD	DIFFERENTIAL
COASTAL DIVISION			
Kennewick Tri-City	47-34	43-38	+4
Astoria	46-35	42-39	+4
Bandon	41-40	46-35	-5
Yakima	40-41	46-35	-6
Victoria	38-43	38-43	0
Crescent City	32-49	30-51	+2
MAINLAND DIVISION			
Pocatello	48-33	53-28	-5
Walla Walla	42-39	38-43	+4
Gillette	41-40	48-33	-7
Coeur d'Alene	38-43	30-51	+8
Elko	37-44	45-36	-8
Great Falls	31-50	27-54	+4

Projected Award Winners

MVP – Chris Ponder – Pocatello

No stranger to postseason hardware, Ponder is possibly the greatest star in WPBL history. Now 33 years old, he's nearing the twilight of his career, and this may be his last chance to cement himself as the greatest ever. Since last season, he shares the title of 2-time WPBL MVP with two other players (Wolverton & Washington), but a third award would prove his dominance. While many may say he is past his prime, and it is true that his numbers have not quite been the same since reaching thirty, his stats in 2029 were on an MVP pace before getting hurt and missing 4 weeks in July. If he is able to play his 5-tool complete game and hit .300 again, he will be in the MVP race this season.

Pitcher of the Year – Taylor Simkins – Kennewick Tri-City

After winning the Pitcher of the Year award the past two seasons, it's hard to find another pitcher more poised for long term dominance than Simkins. Only 25 years old, the power pitching right hander has taken the WPBL by storm over his first three seasons. There is competition in pitchers such as Hembree and Herfurth, or possibly newcomers Grijalva and Regnier, but none have the dominant talent that Simkins showcases when he is on top of

his game. Simkins stats have only gotten better each season, so there is no clue what his real peak actually could be.

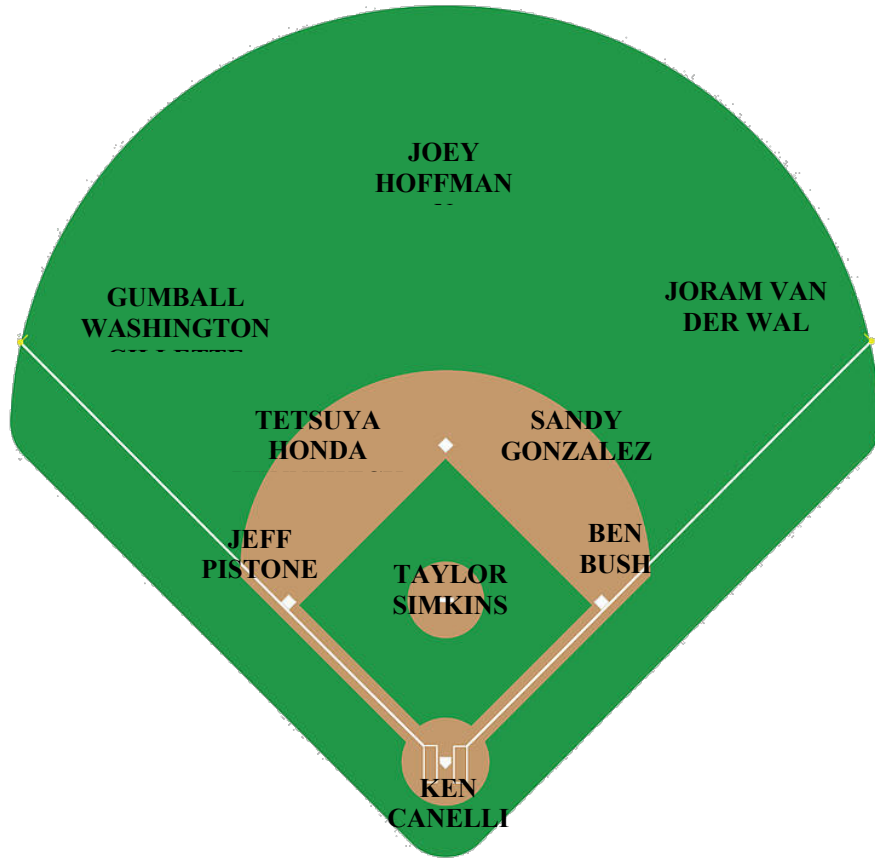
Rookie of the Year – Sam Regnier - Gillette

The easiest prediction to make this preseason, everyone expects the young independent free agent to make a statement in his WPBL debut season. After signing a massive contract with the Bison, there are high expectation for the 22-year-old. The closest comparison player is Victor Patterson, who entered the league in the same fashion in 2024. Patterson struggled initially before coming back to win Pitcher of the Year in his second season. The difference in Regnier's start could be the Gillette pitching coaches, who have developed a reputation for getting the most out of their arms.

Reliever of the Year – Bam Boozled – Crescent City

Since inception, the WPBL has been known for a small set of elite relievers who dominated the closing scene. Now as these guys begin to age out, new arms are showing up to fill their void. One such name is Bam Boozled, who has quietly put together a great career as the Kodiaks reliever. A former 4th overall pick as a starter, Boozled made a great transition to the bullpen where he boasts an elite slider and sinker. Bam Boozled represents a new age of WPBL shutdown pitchers, and this year could be their season to take over.

PRESEASON



ALL-WPBL TEAM

2029 WPBL CHAMPION PREDICTION



WPBL SPONSORS

