

By EARL WATT

• Leader & Times

Last year, five of the top 10 teams of the NBC World Series came from the Jayhawk League.

That is unlikely to never happen again after the NBC and the City of Wichita announced format changes to the tournament beginning this year.

Instead of one tournament of 32 teams, there will be a Championship Week tournament of 16 teams, and a qualifying tournament the week prior also made up of 16 teams with the top two teams advancing to Championship Week.



The Jayhawk League Champion will automatically advance to Championship Week, and the second and third place teams will play in The First Week tournament.

Other teams that will be a part of the “First Week” tournament include the California Cup winner, the Coastal Collegiate League champion, the Colorado State Tournament champion, the Heart of America regional champion, the Mid-Kansas Collegiate regional champion, the Midwest Wood Bat League champion, the North Carolina State Tournament champion, the MINK runner-up, the Sooner League champion, the Southern California regional champion, the Walter Johnson runner-up, the Wichita Alumni champion, the 19-and-under Hap Dumont champion and one at-large bid.

The teams that will be a part of Championship Week include the previous year's tournament champion and runner-up, which this year will be the Santa Barbara Foresters and the Seattle Studs, the Alaska Baseball League champion, the California Collegiate/California Cup champion, the Centex League champion, the Jayhawk League champion, the MINK League champion, the northern illinois League champion, the Pacific Southwest Regional champion, the Rocky Mountain Baseball League champion, the Walter Johnson League champion, the Western Baseball League champion, the "First Week" champion, the "First Week" runner-up and two at-large bids.

The Midwest Regional winner will no longer qualify for the national tournament.

While the Jayhawk League is guaranteed more teams than any other league, it has also had the most success at the NBC World Series.

The pay-outs to the teams has also increased. The national champion will receive \$19,000, and the runner-up will receive \$13,000. A total of \$65,300 will be paid out to the teams according to their order of finish.

Teams have to pay a \$1,300 entry fee.

"We considered many things when coming up with the new format," NBC Tournament Director Casey Walkup said in a release. "We wanted to accommodate the many wishes of local teams, traveling teams, fans, and the tournament's history and tradition. Our No. 1 goal is to get the NBC World Series back on the right track. We hope this format will allow us to seek more affiliates outside of our geographic locations, which in turn, will increase the quality and presence of our great tournament."

The NBC World Series Tournament is owned by the City of Wichita.

"The NBC World Series is an iconic baseball tournament," City of Wichita Mayor Carl Brewer said in a release. "It's a community asset that supports tourism, promotes our city, and enhances the core area. It's our hope that it's future will be as lengthy and bright as its past,

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which includes a loyal fan base, memorable games, and legendary players such as Ozzie Smith, Albert Pujols, Tom Seaver, and Satchel Paige. The changes to the tournament are designed to sustain the NBC tradition and ensure the tournament remains in its rightful home.”