

Baseball Canada-Junior National Team Information

The Junior National Team is made up of the best 18 and under baseball players in Canada. Since 1999 the JNT started a selection process that has put the program on the map as one of the finest in North America in terms of developing baseball players.

The following is a breakdown of several events that culminate into the selection of the JNT that competes for the right to attend the World Junior Baseball Championship held every 2 years.

Mizuno Elite Development Camp

The Mizuno Elite Development Camp takes place every September at the Rogers Centre, home of the Toronto Blue Jays. Some of the best 16 and under players in the country are evaluated by top coaches in the country including Greg Hamilton, Head Coach of the JNT and Director of National Teams with Baseball Canada. Coaches from the Toronto Blue Jays and Major League Baseball also provide instruction to the players. This camp is used to identify potential members of upcoming Junior National Teams and also gives players the opportunity to receive baseball instruction from elite level coaches. The 4 day event also includes life skills seminars covering topics such as: proper nutrition, career goal planning, strength and conditioning, injury prevention and rehabilitation, talent evaluation and assessment. The event concludes with an exhibition game at Rogers Centre.

Baseball Canada Cup

Another event that takes place annually is the Baseball Canada Cup. This event takes place every August at a different location in Canada. The competition features the best 17 and under players from each of the 10 provinces in Canada competing for a national championship. Once again players are evaluated by JNT coaches and at the conclusion of this tournament players are selected to attend the JNT Fall Instructional League camp at Disney's Wide World of Sports.

Fall Instructional League Camp

Every October the JNT heads to Orlando, FL and Disney's Wide World of Sports to compete in a series of games against MLB Fall Instructional League teams. The opportunity that the players have to compete against professional competition is second to none in amateur baseball circles. This camp is an introduction to the JNT team for many players but also serves as another opportunity to participate for the JNT for returning players who are still eligible. This unique opportunity also gives players insight as to what it is like being a professional baseball player and what it takes to become a professional player. Once again players are evaluated during games and at the same time exposed to playing in front of many MLB scouts and college baseball recruiters.

Spring Training Camp

The next step in the process occurs each spring again, in Florida at Disney's Wide World of Sports. Players are selected by the JNT coaching staff to participate in a spring training camp against MLB teams that are in extended spring training. The players that are selected for this camp are comprised mainly from the roster of the Fall Instructional League camp; however there are new players added and also players subtracted from the fall camp roster. Players are not only showcasing themselves to JNT coaches, but are performing in front of numerous MLB scouts in advance of the June MLB draft and college baseball recruiters against professional competition.

Dominican Tour

One month later at the end of May the JNT will reconvene, this time heading further south to the Dominican Republic. Here the squad competes against teams that are comprised of Latin players who play for a MLB Dominican Academy Teams. Again, there are roster additions and subtractions made from the spring camp. The Dominican trip also gives the JNT the chance to 'fine-tune' their team dynamic and prepares them for international baseball events. The exposure that the players receive during their time in the Dominican is crucial for those players who are draft eligible; it serves as a time for them to showcase their abilities mere days before the MLB Draft.

World Junior Baseball Championship/Summer Tour-Final Camp

The final stage of the process is the JNT summer tour, which eventually leads to the World Junior Baseball Championship taking place every second year. In championship years the tour occurs in a geographic location that is within close proximity to where the world championship is held. In the past this tour has included games against top collegiate summer teams, elite travel or club teams, and national teams from other countries both at the high school and college level. In non-championship years, the JNT will play in either a qualification event or participate in a summer exhibition tour. Previously, the summer tour has made stops in various parts of the United States, Mexico and Cuba. For some members of the team this is their final destination with the JNT who will move on to college or professional baseball, for others the process will start again the following fall in Florida along with a new crop of players joining the program.

JNT Alumni

The JNT has produced many players that have gone on to professional baseball, college baseball and players who have represented Canada in the World Baseball Classic, Olympics and other International baseball events. Some of these players include 2006 American League MVP Justin Morneau, 2004 National League Rookie of the Year Jason Bay, 1997 National League MVP Larry Walker, first round picks Adam Loewen and Jeff Francis as well as current major league players Russell Martin, Ryan Dempster, Matt Stairs and Michael Saunders.