

Baseball in Texas

Baseball evolved in the United States during the late 1700s, and has become one of the most popular sports in America. You may have watched shows like “Friday Night Lights” and correctly concluded that Texas is serious football territory. But Texas has known baseball for over a century, and every weekend, in almost every Texas town, one can spot the glowing stadium lights from a baseball game.

The Houston Baseball Club was created in 1861 as the first club in Texas that promoted local baseball, but play was delayed seven years because the country was embroiled in the Civil War. Texans did not let the war stifle their baseball ambitions, and the first game was fittingly played on April 21, 1868 - Texas Independence Day, on the San Jacinto Battlegrounds near Houston. The game was a lopsided victory with the Houston Stonewalls blowing away the Galveston Robert E. Lees 35-2.

The start of Texas baseball was a huge success and over the following 20 years the amateur game spread to other communities across the state. Many soldiers had learned the pastime during their Civil War travels and new immigrants to Texas brought a love of baseball from northern states. The growing popularity of baseball in small Texas towns created some of the major league baseball greats like legendary pitcher, Smokey Joe Williams; Andrew Rube Foster; and Willie Wells.

Residents of large cities like Houston clamored for baseball as well. In 1928 Branch Rickey bought the Houston Buffalos franchise and built an 11,000 seat stadium in Houston to accommodate the growing number of fans. While the Houston Buffs were gaining popularity in Houston, Fort Worth had its own team, the Fort Worth Panthers, that were taking the city by storm. The incredible growth of minor league teams in Texas captured the attention of the major leagues.

Today there are two major league teams located in Texas, numerous minor league teams, hundreds of high school teams, and weekend amateur games in almost every Texas community. On the north side of Austin, the train passes the Dell Diamond Stadium, home to the Round Rock Express minor league team. If you are able to experience a game in this beautiful stadium, or others like it throughout the state, you'll know that Texas is baseball country.

Source(s):

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