



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**WORLD BASEBALL CLASSIC INC. NAMES ESPN AND MLB NETWORK OFFICIAL  
BROADCAST PARTNERS IN THE UNITED STATES FOR THE 2009 WORLD BASEBALL CLASSIC**  
ESPN and MLB Network to Air All 39 Games Nationwide

World Baseball Classic, Inc. has reached agreements with ESPN and MLB Network for shared broadcast rights for the 2009 World Baseball Classic, it was announced today. The World Baseball Classic, the world's premier international baseball tournament, will feature the world's best players representing 16 countries and territories, and will be played in seven different venues in five nations and territories from March 5 - 23.

"ESPN has the proven ability to convey the excitement and national pride that the World Baseball Classic generates among the players and fans," said Bob DuPuy, Major League Baseball President and Chief Operating Officer. "With so many interesting stories to cover, the World Baseball Classic is the perfect event to air on MLB Network."

"It was a simple calculus that produced our agreement with ESPN to broadcast once again the World Baseball Classic," said Gene Orza, Major League Baseball Players Association Chief Operating Officer. "ESPN recognized that the second Classic promises to be even more captivating than the first, and we recognized that the excitement of the games demanded partnering with the premier sports broadcaster in the world. And we're thrilled that MLB Network will be joining us too. The Network has in place a team with great ideas and ingenuity, and its programming will only further solidify the tournament's place as the ultimate in international baseball."

ESPN will televise 23 games of the tournament in the U.S., including the Semi-Final and Final Games, across ESPN and ESPN2 and on its Spanish-language platform ESPN Deportes. ESPN's agreement includes English and Spanish radio broadcast rights as well as digital rights, including the live-streaming of games on

ESPN360.com. In 2006, more than 24 million fans watched ESPN's U.S. broadcast of the inaugural World Baseball Classic, which was acclaimed by fans, sponsors, players and the media.

ESPN International has also obtained the rights to broadcast all 39 games of the 2009 tournament outside of the United States, to 167 countries in Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Australia.

"ESPN looks forward to working with the World Baseball Classic to build on what we started in 2006," said Len DeLuca, ESPN Senior Vice President, Programming and Acquisitions. "We have more games for ESPN, a deeper multimedia offering, and wider international rights. We look forward to collaborating to make this the best global championship in March."

MLB Network, which will debut on January 1, 2009, will televise 16 World Baseball Classic games and a nightly highlight show titled *World Baseball Classic Tonight*, beginning in late February. The program will feature highlights, analysis, feature stories and special reports on the tournament, its teams, players and coaches. MLB Network also will air the *World Baseball Classic Selection Show*, a studio show reporting on the announcement of the rosters.

"The acquisition of the World Baseball Classic demonstrates our commitment to airing big events and showcasing a wide variety of baseball programming," said Tony Petitti, MLB Network President and CEO. "With game broadcasts and studio programming dedicated to the World Baseball Classic, MLB Network will provide in-depth coverage to all of the action and stories of the ultimate global baseball tournament."

The opening round of the 2009 tournament will begin on March 5 and will be played entirely outside of the 50 United States, with Pool A (China, Chinese Taipei, Japan and Korea) competing at the Tokyo Dome, home to the Yomiuri Giants of the Nippon Professional Baseball league; Pool B (Australia, Cuba, Mexico and South Africa) at Estadio Foro Sol in Mexico City, Mexico, home to the Mexico City Red Devils of the Mexican League; Pool C (Canada, Italy, United States and Venezuela) at the Rogers Centre in Toronto, Canada, MLB regular season home to the Toronto Blue Jays; and Pool D (Dominican Republic, Netherlands, Panama and Puerto Rico) at Hiram Bithorn Stadium in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

In the opening round, ESPN will televise the entire Tokyo Pool, three games from the Toronto pool, and four games from the San Juan pool. MLB Network will air the entire Mexico City pool, three games from the Toronto pool, and two games from the San Juan pool.

Round Two games will be played in PETCO Park, home of the San Diego Padres, and Dolphin Stadium, home of the Florida Marlins. The four advancing teams from Pools A and B will compete in San Diego from March 15 – 19, and the four teams emerging from Pools C and D will contend in Miami while MLB Network will air one game from San Diego and four from Miami. ESPN will air the Semi-Final and Final Games live from historic Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles on March 21, 22 and 23.

### **About World Baseball Classic, Inc.**

World Baseball Classic, Inc. is a company created at the direction of Major League Baseball (MLB) and the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) to operate the World Baseball Classic tournament. The tournament, which is sanctioned by the International Baseball Federation (IBAF), is supported by MLB, the MLBPA, Nippon Professional Baseball (NPB), the Korea Baseball Organization (KBO), their respective players associations and other leagues and players from around the world.

### **About the World Baseball Classic**

The World Baseball Classic is the premier international baseball tournament, sanctioned by the International Baseball Federation, and features the best players in the world competing for their home countries and territories. In March 2006, 486 players – 235 of them from MLB organizations – representing 16 teams from across the globe competed in the inaugural event. More than 740,000 fans from 48 states and 15 countries attended games – 16 of which sold out – and millions more watched on TV as Team Japan was crowned the first-ever World Baseball Classic Champion. Broadcast by 48 media outlets in 10 languages to 205 countries and territories around the world, the inaugural tournament had 50 official sponsors and 21 official licensees. Media members representing 25 different nations attended the 39 games in seven host venues across three countries/territories. The next tournament will be held in March 2009 and will again feature 16 of the greatest baseball-playing nations in the world. The tournament will be held every four years thereafter, with plans in place to expand the participant field beginning in 2013.

### **ESPN and MLB**

ESPN is the home of the *Sunday Night Baseball* franchise – the only exclusive, national game of the week – along with weekly *Monday* and *Wednesday Night Baseball* telecasts and *Baseball Tonight*. ESPN Radio continues to exclusively broadcast Sunday night games, along with select games throughout the season, MLB All-Star festivities and every post-season game through the World Series. ESPN Deportes televises all *Sunday Night Baseball* games. ESPN networks televised the inaugural World Baseball Classic in 2006.

### **About MLB Network**

Projected to launch in approximately 50 million cable and satellite homes on January 1, 2009, MLB Network will be the largest and most successful debut in cable television history, exceeding any other cable television launch by approximately 20 million. With live games, original programming, highlights, classic games, and coverage of baseball events, MLB Network will be the ultimate destination for baseball fans on television.

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