

MORE TOP PROSPECTS TO PLAY FOR 2014 BANDITS

Written by Marco LaNave

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Preliminary roster has seven of Houston's top 30 prospects, six returnees from 2013 Midwest League Champions **DAVENPORT, Iowa (April 2, 2014)** – More of the top prospects from baseball's No. 1-ranked minor league system will play at Modern Woodmen Park this season. The defending Midwest League Champion Quad Cities River Bandits and their major league affiliate, the Houston Astros, announced the club's preliminary roster for the 2014 season on Wednesday. Included are seven of the top 30 Houston Astros prospects, according to Baseball America, and six players who played for the River Bandits during their championship season. Quad Cities alumni account for five of the top seven and nine of the top 30 prospects in the Astros organization. Adding the seven others set to play for the 2014 squad, more than half of the Astros' top prospects (16 of 30) will have played at Modern Woodmen Park since last year's season opener that began Quad Cities' new affiliation with the Houston Astros, whom ESPN.com ranked this year as having the best minor league system in baseball.

“This great roster is a perfect example of why we are so proud to be affiliated with the Houston Astros,” said River Bandits owner Dave Heller. “The Astros are not merely sending us future major leaguers, they are sending the Quad Cities future stars. Like last season's roster featuring Carlos Correa and Mark Appel (among many others), this season's roster is loaded with future stars. For young people in our area, they will have many chances to see, meet and get autographs from many of the best up and coming players in major league baseball. We're not just breeding major leaguers, we're grooming future major league stars!”

The 2014 River Bandits' pitching staff includes six top prospects. The youngest on the staff, 20-year-old right-hander Michael Feliz, is the No. 9 prospect in the Astros' minor league system, according to Baseball America. Also ranked among the top prospects are right-hander Andrew Thurman (15), left-handers Kent Emanuel (23) and Chris Lee (24), and right-handers Gonzalo Sanudo (26) and Jandel Gustavo (27). Outfielder Brett Phillips (30), who played 12 games with Quad Cities in 2013, is the only ranked position player on the roster.

In addition to Phillips, five other River Bandits played for Quad Cities last season. Catcher Jobduan Morales, infielder Austin “Catfish” Elkins, and right-handed pitchers Patrick

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Christensen, Zach Morton and Andrew Walter were all on the championship squad last September. Walter finished five playoff wins, including the championship clincher at Modern Woodmen Park.

Of the 27 players on the preliminary roster, 18 played last season for the Astros' Short-Season Class-A affiliate, the Tri-City ValleyCats, who won the 2013 New York-Penn League title. In all, 21 players on the River Bandits' 2014 preliminary roster played for a championship-winning club in 2013. Five others were on the rookie-level Greeneville club that reached the Appalachian League Championship Series.

In 2013, the Houston Astros had a franchise-record six minor league playoff clubs, becoming the first organization to have six domestic affiliates qualify for the playoffs in the same season since Pittsburgh in 2003. Each of the highest six affiliates - Triple-A Oklahoma City (Pacific Coast League), Double-A Corpus Christi (Texas League), Class-A Advanced Lancaster (California League), Quad Cities, Tri-City, and Greeneville made the postseason. The combined regular season winning percentage of all affiliates (.569, 476-360) ranked second out of 30 MLB organizations.

The roster is subject to change before the opening game at 7:00 p.m. Thursday at Modern Woodmen Park.

UP NEXT:

Opening Day is April 3, so lock in your seats now to see the defending Midwest League Champions in 2014! Single-game tickets are available online at

www.riverbandits.com

. To order any of the ticket plans - with new lower prices - call the River Bandits box office at

[563-324-3000](tel:563-324-3000)

. Season ticket and mini-plan packages start at just seven games and begin at less than \$40. Call a River Bandits account representative today to choose your seats and get the details of our various mini-plan packages.

ABOUT THE BANDITS:

Having just been named Ballpark Digest's winner of Best Ballpark Improvement in America under \$1 million, the River Bandits ownership is making one of the biggest improvements to Modern Woodmen Park since the ballpark was first built back in 1931! A new Ferris wheel, standing 110 feet over the playing field, is opening this spring, along with a carousel, a new ride called a "Drop and Twist," an expanded 300-foot long zip line, and many other new games and attractions. In 2013, the team unveiled a new 220-foot long dual zip line, a rock climbing wall, and a number of new bounce houses. The team's major league affiliate, the Houston Astros, just saw all six of its affiliates reach the playoffs - the first time in a decade any MLB team can claim such success. The River Bandits were one of three affiliates to reach the championship round and one of two to win their league championship.
