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FEATURED

Marlins look forward

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Jan 6, 2021



Team president of the Pensacola Blue Wahoos, Jonathan Griffith, left, and Miami Marlins Director of Minor League Operations, [Name], at the construction site of ABC Supply Stadium in downtown Beloit.

Anthony Wahl/Adams Publishing Group

BELOIT—The Miami Marlins sent their first representative to Beloit Wednesday afternoon.

If both sides have their way, hundreds more players, coaches and front office staff will infiltrate the city in the next decade or so.

The Marlins, who recently aligned with the Snappers in the latest Major League Baseball player development contract, sent Director of Minor League Operations Geoff DeGroot to check out the new home of his Advanced-A team.

DeGroot, himself a former minor league player before turning in his cleats for business shoes, said the Marlins are excited about working with the Snappers.



Standing in what will become center field in the Snappers new digs along the Rock River, DeGroot sang Beloit's praises.

“We were very excited as an organization about coming to Beloit,” DeGroot said. “The first thing is, we are going to play in a state-of-the-art ballpark. That’s going to be a great advantage to our players. And after talking with Quint Studer, we felt that our values aligned with theirs in terms of what an organization should look like. We think this is going to be a great place for at least the next 10 years for our players.”

DeGroot said the Marlins have worked hard to develop a sound organization under Derek Jeter, who assumed duties as CEO of the franchise in 2017.



“We pride ourselves in building from within,” DeGroot said. “A few years ago, our farm system wasn’t rated very high. Now, it’s among the top five systems in all of baseball. And the good news for Beloit is that a lot of the top prospects are still at the lower levels, so in the next few years, Beloit is going to see a lot of talented players.”

The stadium is still set for a “mid-summer” opening, according to Gateway Baseball president Jonathan Griffith. While Minor League Baseball announced Tuesday that spring training for players below the AAA level will be delayed, Griffith said the team will still open the season at Pohlman Field, the Snappers’ home since 1982.

“We don’t have details right now on when exactly the season will start,” Griffith said. “But we do plan on starting the season at Pohlman Field before coming over here whenever the park is ready to go.”

Construction crews were humming along, with progress said to be on schedule for that summer opening. Amenities for the players included in the new ballpark include two batting cages and a video room.

“We are going to be the first and so far only ballpark in the country to be 100 percent compliant with the requirements listed in the latest contract between Major League and Minor League Baseball,” Griffith said. “That’s a pretty cool deal. We are consulting with the Marlins on a number of different things. We’ve already added 1,000 square feet to both clubhouses to make sure we are in compliance.”

- **JETER VISIT?:** While DeGroot has a prominent position in the Marlins’ organization, a visit from Jeter would produce significantly more buzz.

“I’m not sure when Derek might come here,” DeGroot said. “But in the past, he’s always made it a point to visit every affiliate, so I’m sure at some point he’ll get up here and check out the new stadium.”



- NAME UPDATE: Griffith wouldn't commit to when the Snappers might announce their new nickname.

“We're close to getting a name finalized,” Griffith said. “The main thing we have to consider is getting all the trademarking done so the merchandise component can be cleared.

“And the other thing is, we're going to start the season in Pohlman Field, and as the Snappers. They've got a proud, 20-plus year legacy of that nickname in Beloit and we do want to preserve that as well.”

Josh Flickinger

