

Japan-Metro Classic set for Aug. 13

Written by Jim Ecker
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Everyone once in awhile you get a chance to do something that's truly worthwhile, something that makes other people happy and makes a contribution to your community in positive way.

Serving as the president and owner of the Metro Sports Report is like that for me. It's rewarding work and lots of fun, because I get to meet terrific people all the time on our local teams in Cedar Rapids and Marion.

Now it's time to stage another special event in Cedar Rapids that hopefully will be well-received by the community again.

The Metro Sports Report is proud to announce that we will hold the second Japan-Metro All-Star Baseball Classic at Veterans Memorial Stadium on Thursday night, Aug. 13 at 7 p.m.

The game will match a team of talented high school players from Yamanashi, Japan against an all-star team from the Metro area that will be comprised of graduated seniors from our eight local schools.

Some of you may remember our first Japan-Metro All-Star Classic that was held in 2012 at Kennedy High School. We had an overflow crowd that night of more than 500 fans who came to see our Japanese guests and support our Metro all-stars. It was a terrific night and we enjoyed a competitive game on the field, with all the participants benefitting from the experience.

We will play one nine-inning game on Perfect Game Field at Veterans Memorial Stadium. Based on the attendance we had in 2012, we thought it was time to stage this special event in a special venue for the fans and players on both teams.

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Doug Nelson, the CEO of the Kernels, was very receptive about staging the Japan-Metro Classic at the stadium and is working closely with us to make it a memorable experience for everyone. The Kernels are one of our sponsors for the Classic and undoubtedly will be gracious hosts.

We've set the ticket price at \$5. All seats will be general admission and there will be open seating. All children 5-&-under will be admitted for free. One of the concession stands will be open.

The trip by the Japanese students is part of an exchange program that is coordinated by the Iowa Amateur Athletic Union (AAU). The team from Japan will spend one week in Iowa and will be based in Des Moines. They will play a series of games in Des Moines against central Iowa all-star teams and also will participate in cultural events during their visit to our state.

The Japanese team will arrive in Cedar Rapids during the noon hour on Aug. 13. They will be treated to a lunch at the stadium and receive a guided tour of the ballpark. After lunch, they will meet their local host families who will house them overnight.

There will be a dinner at 5 p.m. at the stadium on game day for both teams, followed by a pre-game ceremony at 7 p.m. and then the game itself.

The Japanese team will be returning to Des Moines on Friday morning, Aug. 14.

The Metro Sports Report will announce the members of the Metro all-star team in the coming weeks as we put the club together, with the help of the Metro coaches themselves. We will announce the coaching staff next Sunday, featuring an Iowa Hall of Famer as our head coach.

Please mark Thursday, Aug. 13 on your calendar. It should be a fun night at the stadium for everyone.