



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 23, 2015

CONTACT: Kevin Reichard  
608.836.3730  
[kreichard@augustpublications.com](mailto:kreichard@augustpublications.com)

## **CenturyLink Sports Complex/Hammond Stadium Makeover Is Ballpark Digest's Best Major Ballpark Renovation of 2015**

It was a two-year project, an extreme makeover designed to keep spring-training, regular-season and developmental operations running while the CenturyLink Sports Complex and Hammond Stadium were renovated and expanded. The end result is a model for Major League Baseball, as the upgrades for the spring training and developmental home of the Minnesota Twins earned enhancements at CenturyLink Sports Complex and Hammond Stadium Ballpark Digest's Best Major Ballpark Renovation of 2015.

"Most Twins fans are very familiar with the Lee County Sports Complex and Hammond Stadium as the team's spring-training home," said Kevin Reichard, Ballpark Digest publisher. "But the newly named CenturyLink Sports Complex and Hammond Stadium are designed to do so much more: the ballpark also served as the regular-season home of the Fort Myers Miracle, and the complex is used year-round to develop the next generation of Twins players. With a new state-of-the-art player development academy, the Twins and their partners have created a facility that is a model for other MLB teams planning their developmental roadmap."

The two-year, \$48.5-million renovation was funded via a public-private partnership between the Twins and Lee County, which used tourist-development tax dollars. The design came from Populous, the Kansas City (Mo.) sports-architecture firm also responsible for the Target Field design, while construction was overseen by Manhattan Twins Joint Venture, a partnership between Manhattan Construction Company, Chris-Tel Construction and Casey Construction. For fans, the biggest change in the 2014-2015 CenturyLink Sports Complex renovations was the overhaul of Hammond Stadium. The renovations, which were totally unveiled in Spring Training 2015, took the bones of what was already a decent ballpark and added a 360-degree concourse, upgraded seating options, outfield bars, expanded concourses, improved restrooms, a new retail store, and more. The renovations benefited the Twins at spring training, but they also benefited the

Florida State League's Fort Myers Miracle as well: the team set both single-game and season attendance records in 2015.

But some of the more groundbreaking improvements are behind the scenes and won't ever be seen by fans. Chief among them: a state-of-the-art player development academy. While player acquisition these days now a global effort, MLB teams draft and sign many players from the Caribbean and South America. For these young men, transitioning to professional baseball and America can be a wrenching experience. The Twins, who partially funded the \$6-million construction cost, are calling it a player development academy, but it wouldn't look out of place on most college campuses. With a modern design featuring dorm-like housing built around a courtyard, a group multimedia/game area (complete with big-screen TVs, game consoles, domino tables, and more), conference rooms named for Twins greats, 24-hour security, and a large cafeteria with the capacity to feed 150 players and coaches.

"The Twins have enjoyed a model partnership with Lee County since moving to SW Florida in 1991," Twins President Dave St. Peter said. "We are incredibly proud of the CenturyLink Sports Complex renovation project and the results it delivers each and every day for our players, staff, fans and citizens of Lee County."

"We wanted to create the best baseball experience for our residents and the spring training fans who visit Lee County," said Brian Hamman, Chairman, Lee County Board of County Commissioners. "The results of this renovation have exceeded our expectations. Not only are we setting an example for the nation when it comes to spring training, but we're driving millions of dollars into our economy by creating an amazing venue for sports tourism."

"The Fort Myers Miracle are grateful to call the CenturyLink Sports Complex home for twenty-five years," said Jason Hochberg, President of SJS Beacon Baseball and principal owner of the Fort Myers Miracle. "The renovations have made the ballpark one of the best spring training and minor league baseball complexes in all of baseball. We would like to thank Lee County, the Twins and all of the contractors for their efforts."

"The Minnesota Twins and Lee County aspire to excellence and the renovations to CenturyLink Sports Complex ensure an excellent fan experience and baseball training experience for decades to come. From start to finish, the team involved – from the Twins to Lee County to Manhattan Construction – had a vision for creating the best spring training experience for fans and athletes in the nation," said Bruce Miller, Senior Principal at Populous. "It's safe to say that was accomplished. The renovated CenturyLink Sports Complex is now a model for Major League Baseball spring training and player development facilities."

"This best major ballpark renovation designation is a fitting recognition of Lee County community's vision, The Twins' player-development leadership, and Populous' design innovation," said Bob Bowen, senior vice president at Manhattan Construction. "We are excited for Lee County families who will enjoy events at the ballpark and the memorable

moments they will share there. It is an honor to have played a part in renovating this ballpark, which will be a lasting positive influence in this community for generations to come.”

“Player development is such an important activity for MLB teams,” Reichard added. “CenturyLink Sports Complex is a model for MLB and their development needs, while Hammond Stadium is a hit with fans throughout the entire baseball season.”

#### **ABOUT THE BALLPARK DIGEST AWARDS**

Each year Ballpark Digest honors noteworthy accomplishments in the baseball world, whether it be Major League Baseball, Minor League Baseball, independent baseball, summer-collegiate baseball or college baseball. Team officials and readers are asked to submit nominations for awards in specific categories; Ballpark Digest editors then go through the submissions (numbering some 400 pages of documentation in 2015), consulting with industry leaders before a final decision. This is the seventh season for the Ballpark Digest Awards. A complete listing of Ballpark Digest Awards can be found at [www.ballparkdigest.com/awards](http://www.ballparkdigest.com/awards). This year’s award winners will be honored at a Baseball Winter Meetings reception.

#### **ABOUT BALLPARK DIGEST/AUGUST PUBLICATIONS**

The leading Website covering the culture and business of baseball since its inception in 2002, Ballpark Digest ([www.ballparkdigest.com](http://www.ballparkdigest.com)) has been called an “indispensable” guide to baseball and ballparks by *The New York Times*; it’s been used as a source by publications and Websites ranging from *The Wall Street Journal* to *Epicurious.com*. August Publications is a publisher based in Middleton, Wis. Besides Ballpark Digest, August Publications websites include [SpringTrainingOnline.com](http://SpringTrainingOnline.com), [ArenaDigest.com](http://ArenaDigest.com), [SoccerStadiumDigest.com](http://SoccerStadiumDigest.com) and [FootballStadiumDigest.com](http://FootballStadiumDigest.com).

#####