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Bowling Green Ballpark

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rays, Hot Rods Announce 2022 Coaching Staff Led by Jeff Smith

Smith returns for his second season in Bowling Green

BOWLING GREEN BALLPARK (Bowling Green, KY) – The Bowling Green Hot Rods, in conjunction with the Tampa Bay Rays, are excited to announce the club's 2022 coaching staff. Jeff Smith will return as the manager of the Hot Rods while newcomers Alberto Bastardo (pitching coach) and Paul Rozzelle (hitting coach) join Skeeter Barnes on staff. Jordan Brown returns as the club's Strength and Conditioning Coach, while Tsutomu Kamiya will be the club's Athletic Trainer.

Jeff Smith, 47, returns after leading the organization to the High-A East Championship and the organization's second title in three seasons. Smith managed the team to an 82-36 record while being named High-A East Manager of the Year in his first season with the Hot Rods. Smith previously led the Charlotte Stone Crabs (the Rays former High-A affiliate in the in the Florida State League) to the league's best record while earning Baseball America's title of Best Managerial Prospect in the FSL for the 2019 season, the second time in his career he won the award. Before joining Tampa Bay, Smith spent two seasons as the Minnesota Twins first base coach and managed at three levels for the Twins, including four years for the AA New Britain Rock Cats. The Akron, Ohio native has a career managerial record of 950-842 (.530) over 13 years and owns a 732-421 (.635) record over five seasons at High-A. Smith was drafted by the Twins in 1995 and played in the minors until 2002, finishing out his playing career with the Red Sox (2003) and Texas Rangers (2004) before starting his coaching career.

"We are excited to welcome Jeff back to Bowling Green and are excited to welcome some new faces to the team, as well as seeing some returning faces again. It is very special to see the pieces coming together as we prepare to defend our crown here at Bowling Green Ballpark." Said Eric C. Leach, Hot Rods Chief Operating Officer and General Manager.

Alberto Bastardo, 37, joins Smith as the Hot Rods new pitching coach for the 2022 season. Bastardo spent the beginning of the 2021 season as the bullpen coach for the Durham Bulls, until the short season started when he became a coach for the FCL Rays. Bastardo was pitching coach for the DSL Rays in 2017, the GCL Rays in 2018-2019, and was scheduled to coach the Princeton Rays in 2020 before the season was canceled due to Covid-19. Before his coaching career, Bastardo pitched ten seasons in Minor League Baseball, reaching Triple-A three times as part of the Dodgers farm system.

Paul Rozzelle will coach on Smith's staff after joining the Rays organization in December of 2021. Rozzelle joins the Rays organization after spending eight seasons at the helm of the Catawba Valley Community College Men's Baseball team, where he was the schools' winningest coach in program history with 228 wins. While at CVCU, Rozzelle was awarded the NJCAA Southeast District Coach of the Year Award, as well as the Diamond/American Baseball Coaches Association Southeast Coach of the Year. Prior to Catawba Valley, Rozzelle had stints with the Morgantown Militia, the Statesville Owls, and the USA Baseball National Team Identification Series.

Skeeter Barnes, 64, returns to the Hot Rods after spending the 2021 season with the team. Bringing in over a decade of coaching experience as the Rays' Outfield and Baserunning Coordinator, Barnes also managed the Southwest Michigan Devil Rays (a former member of the Midwest League) in 2006 and the Lakeland Tigers (Florida State League) in 2000. Other coaching stops include the Toledo Mud Hens, West Michigan Whitecaps, Indianapolis Indians, Orlando Rays, and Montgomery Biscuits. Barnes enjoyed a successful playing career, logging over 350 MLB games with the Reds, Tigers, Expos, and Cardinals. His number (00) was retired by the Nashville Sounds in the early 1990's.

Jordan Brown enters his third season with Tampa Bay and his second as the Hot Rods' Conditioning Coach. Brown spent two seasons with the St. Louis Cardinals Farm System in a similar capacity with the Johnson City Cardinals (2016) and State College Spikes (2017). Brown also filled in for the Hot Rods late in the 2019 season into the playoffs.

Lastly, Tsutomu Kamiya joins the Hot Rods after spending the 2021 season with the Charleston RiverDogs. The Ohio State alum begins his fifth season with the Rays organization.

On Saturday, March 12th, the Hot Rods are hosting Fan Fest from 11 AM - 1 PM, followed by the Bourbon and Brewfest's Second Annual St. Patty's Day Party from 6 PM - 10 PM. Both events will be held at Bowling Green Ballpark with free admission. At the St. Patty's Day Party, guests can enjoy live music, green beer, Irish-themed food, outdoor games and more. Must be 21 years of age or older to attend.

The Hot Rods begin the 2022 season at home with a three-game series against the Asheville Tourists, as the Hot Rods begin their quest to repeat as league champions. The best way to guarantee tickets for the 2022 season is by having a ticket package. For more information on the Hot Rods ticket options, visit www.bghotrods.com or call 270-901-2121.

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Hot Rods Baseball