



DETROIT TIGERS ANNOUNCE AFFILIATE-LEVEL CHANGE FOR WEST MICHIGAN WHITECAPS

Whitecaps get called up to "Advanced A" level with Tigers

Comstock Park, Michigan - - Wednesday, December 9, 2020- - The Detroit Tigers announced today the West Michigan Whitecaps are in line for a promotion of sorts, becoming the big-league club's *Advanced A* affiliate beginning in 2021, after spending 24 seasons as their Low A designee. The move comes as part of Major League Baseball's restructuring of the Minor League Baseball player development system.

"We're thrilled for our fanbase," said **Joe Chamberlin**, CEO of the West Michigan Whitecaps. "It means West Michigan will see a higher level of baseball talent which translates to the opportunity to see more Detroit Tigers prospects, along with Midwest League rival prospects, and more fun for the fans!"

The Midwest League has long been a leader within Minor League Baseball recognized for their top-tier facilities, desirable markets, and overall attendance season after season, with many well-respected owners and operators. That means that facilities such as Fifth Third Ballpark, with its award-winning grounds and large crowds, are already maintained near or at a level that MLB wants from the farm system moving forward.

"Player development has never been more important to our organization than it is today, and we're excited to invite West Michigan to move forward as part of the Tigers family as our High A affiliate," said **Al Avila**, Detroit Tigers Executive Vice President of Baseball Operations and General Manager. "The Whitecaps have been standout partners for us, and do a great job ensuring our players are in the best position for growth and development to become impactful contributors to our organization. I'd especially like to thank Lew Chamberlin, the club's executives, state and local government officials, and the West Michigan community for their passion and commitment to this great sport."

The move up the affiliation ladder enhances the already high-standing status of professional minor league sports in West Michigan. In September 2019, Grand Rapids/Comstock Park was named "Top Minor League Market" in the United States by Street and Smith's Sports Business Journal.

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Since 1994, the West Michigan Whitecaps have provided affordable family entertainment for nearly 11 million fans. But while the move to High A raises the talent level on the field, ticket prices will not skyrocket because of this promotion.

“The move to Advanced A does not directly affect our ticket policy” Chamberlin said. “We feel very good about our long track record of delivering affordable, family entertainment, and any changes to our pricing moving forward will continue to be directly related to the cost of running our business, as they always have been, and not this affiliation-level change.”

Today’s announcement further solidifies the Whitecaps long-standing affiliation with the Detroit Tigers, dating back to 1997, as well as adding fuel to an energized fanbase excited to get back to Fifth Third Ballpark in 2021.

“We’re grateful for the strong relationship and partnership we have enjoyed with the Tigers for more than 24 seasons,” Chamberlin added. “Our mission here remains intact. Bringing fun, community, and experiences to West Michigan. Affordable, family entertainment is our job, and we are focused on bringing fans the best season yet in 2021 with a new level of baseball!”

About West Michigan Whitecaps: The Whitecaps minor league baseball team was established in 1994. The Whitecaps are the Advanced A affiliate of the Detroit Tigers and play in the Eastern Division of the Midwest League. The team’s home games are played in West Michigan’s favorite multi-purpose venue, Fifth Third Ballpark. For more information visit <https://www.milb.com/west-michigan>. **Contact:** Steve VanWagoner at stevev@whitecapsbaseball.com or 616.726.7067.

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