



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release
January 17, 2017

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BASEBALL HALL OF FAMER JUAN MARICHAL HIGHLIGHTS 22ND ANNUAL RICKWOOD CLASSIC

The Birmingham Barons, Friends of Rickwood and Levy's Fine Jewelry celebrate the return to Rickwood Field

BIRMINGHAM, AL — The Birmingham Barons and The Friends of Rickwood will welcome baseball fans back to historic Rickwood Field for the 22nd Annual Rickwood Classic presented by Levy's Fine Jewelry. The annual game is set for Wednesday, May 31st at 12:30 p.m. and will celebrate "The Fabulous Fifties." The game will feature the Birmingham Barons against the Chattanooga Lookouts, Double-A affiliate of the Minnesota Twins. Former MLB All-Star and Baseball Hall of Famer Juan Marichal will be the special guest of honor and will be available for autographs during the game.

This will be the sixth appearance in the classic for the Lookouts having previously played in the 1997, 2002, 2011, 2012 and most recently in 2016. The Lookouts have a 4-1 record in their five previous Classics winning last year 7-4 over the Barons. In the 21-year history of the Rickwood Classic the Barons are 9-12 overall, including a win in the very first game in 1996 defeating the Memphis Chicks by a score of 3-2.

In celebrating "The Fabulous Fifties" the Barons will honor the four-year affiliation with the New York Yankees from 1953-56. The Barons were a combined 328-285 over that span led by skippers Mayo Smith and Phil Page for two-seasons each. While they did not qualify for the playoffs, they did finish with a record above .500 in all four seasons. During the 1956 campaign Barons records were set by pitcher Wilson Parsons with 33 starts and infielder Milton Graff with 653 at-bats in one season. Over the years Yankee legends such as Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Casey Stengel, Mickey Mantle and Yogi Berra appeared at Rickwood Field as part of exhibition games held at the ballpark.

The Barons will wear throwback uniforms from the 1953-56 seasons featuring a gray jersey with Birmingham across the chest in Yankee blue, the iconic Yankee logo on the right sleeve, and Yankee blue numbers on the back. The team will also wear special gray caps with blue bills and a blue B on it.

"We are honored to once again turn back the clock and celebrate another special era when the Barons were affiliated with the New York Yankees," said Barons General Manager Jonathan Nelson. "The Rickwood Classic is such a special baseball event for this community and we certainly thank Levy's Fine Jewelry for their continued partnership in helping us celebrate 'The Fabulous Fifties.' We also want to thank the Chattanooga Lookouts and the Minnesota Twins for their participation in the game and of course our great partners, the Friends of Rickwood, who continue to do such a great job in maintaining Rickwood Field. The Rickwood Classic continues to attract fans from across the nation and we look forward to providing another fun and memorable day at Rickwood Field."

“The Friends of Rickwood are extremely excited about this year’s Rickwood Classic ballgame, and look forward to the Barons annual return to their former home park. Celebrating the 1950’s highlights Rickwood’s golden era, and continues the tradition of honoring Birmingham’s iconic baseball heritage,” said Friends of Rickwood Director David Brewer. “Hall of Fame member Juan Marichal’s participation as this year’s special guest also continues the Classic tradition of bringing high profile ballplayers to Birmingham”

“The Friends of Rickwood organization appreciates greatly its partnership with the Birmingham Barons, Levy’s Fine Jewelry, and the City of Birmingham, and looks forward to another outstanding community event.”

Juan Marichal, a ten-time MLB All-Star, pitched in the Major Leagues for sixteen seasons including fourteen with the San Francisco Giants (1960-73) and one each with the Boston Red Sox (1974) and Los Angeles Dodgers (1975). He was one of the top pitchers in the pitching-rich 1960s posting all six of his 20-win seasons in the decade and led the NL twice each in wins, complete games, shutouts and innings pitched. He tossed a no-hitter on June 15, 1963 against the Houston Colt .45s. He was named MVP of the 1965 MLB All-Star Game after pitching three shutout innings and facing the minimum batters while allowing just one hit.

Over the course of his career he compiled a 243-142 record with a 2.89 ERA and 2,303 strikeouts over 3,507 innings pitched. Marichal’s career win total was the highest for a Latino pitcher which has since only been passed by Dennis Martinez. His only World Series appearance came in Game 4 of the 1962 series won by the San Francisco Giants over the New York Yankees 7-3. He injured his thumb in the fifth inning of his start and was removed from the game, unable to pitch the rest of the series. The Giants retired his number 27 in 1975 and he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1983 after receiving 83.7% of the vote. Marichal is remembered for his distinctive, high leg kick Sportswriter Ron Bellamy once described as “The symbol of his artistry...was the windup, with the high, graceful kick that left the San Francisco Giants hurler poised precariously on one leg like a bronzed Nureyev before he swept smoothly forward and propelled the baseball toward the plate.”

“To live in the hometown of the national treasure that is Rickwood Field is a great thing. To be able to support the biggest event of the year there is an amazing thing” said Levy’s Manager Todd Denaburg. “Levy’s is proud to help share this beautiful field and this proud event with our home city and the entire country.”

In 2009 the Rickwood Classic was named the most desirable Minor League Baseball game to attend in a poll on MiLB.com. The following year it was named Minor League Baseball’s Promotion of the Year. Over 145,000 people have attended the Rickwood Classic since its inception in 1996. Over the years it has been covered by dozens of local and national media outlets including HBO’s Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel, ESPN and MiLB.com.

Birmingham opens the 2017 season on Thursday, April 6th on the road against the Jackson Generals, Double-A Affiliate of the Arizona Diamondbacks. The Barons open the home portion of their 2017 season at Regions Field on Wednesday, April 12 against the Montgomery Biscuits, Double-A Affiliate of the Tampa Bay Rays, with first pitch at 7:05pm. For ticket information, game schedule, promotions calendar or for additional information about Regions Field, call (205) 988-3200 or visit www.barons.com, www.facebook.com/birminghambarons or on Twitter: @bhambarons.

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