

# Play Ball!

## THE RIPKEN EXPERIENCE GIVES YOUTH TEAMS A TASTE OF THE MAJORS

By Laura Lewis

Bats clank into balls, young voices call out, and coaches yell for players to “go, go, go” amid fans’ cheers and applause.

This family-oriented ballpark is The Ripken Experience, which has been drawing youth baseball teams and coaches from across the country to its major-league-style fields since opening in Myrtle Beach in June 2006.

It is the second such site conceived by Baltimore Orioles brotherly standouts Cal Jr. and Bill Ripken, who launched the first in their hometown of Aberdeen, MD. Its seven fields are the scene of tournaments and weeklong camps for teams of all ages. The fields are designed to offer the experience of play on diamonds patterned after those of the big leagues.

Tim Deyesu, manager of the Myrtle Beach complex, said, “It’s a destination for baseball fans. Everything here—the camps, clinics, tournaments and rental opportunities—are designed to accommodate youth- to adult-league teams.” Deyesu added that most of the bookings for the summer tournaments and camp come December through March, making it easy for families to plan their Myrtle Beach holiday for the same period.

The 50-acre complex, highlighted with a central welcome building accented with baseball-shaped windows, contains five youth and two regulation-sized diamonds. Each field, outfitted with synthetic FieldTurf®, offers a history lesson with inspiration from a major-league namesake including Duncan, Navin and Griffith fields, Huntington and Shibe parks, and Westside and Polo grounds.

Since opening two summers ago, the ballpark has remained consistently booked and busy, especially during summer months. There’s also plenty of weekend tournament action that starts



as early as February and continues until Thanksgiving. Baseball mom, Shelley Berdayes of Myrtle Beach, deems The Ripken Experience a prime place for team-oriented fun for her family.

“We’ve been here several times, and it’s the best tournament facility we’ve ever played on,” said Berdayes, who was at the park for opening day ceremonies with the Ripkens.

The brothers decided to bring their concept to South Carolina after teaming with Burroughs and Chapin, Myrtle Beach’s largest development company, to build the complex on vacant property off 10th Avenue North Extension.

“The partnership, coupled with the area’s great weather, makes Myrtle Beach an ideal setting for wholesome, family-oriented baseball,” Deyesu said. “Teams book months in advance for camps that are led by high school, college and former major-league coaches, with appearances by the Ripkens themselves several times a year. We strive to provide amateur baseball players a positive experience,” Deyesu said.

*Find out more...*

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