



2020 SEASON

RECAP

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FRONTIER LEAGUE CANCELS 2020 CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In a year unlike any other, 2020 forced the Frontier League to act in a way it had never done before in the League's 28 seasons. After holding out hope and postponement, the Frontier League canceled the 2020 championship season due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The Frontier League was heading into the 2020 season with a lot of momentum following a merger with the former independent Can-Am League during the offseason to expand Frontier League's team membership to 14 organizations. The new geographical map of the League stretched from the Mississippi River in Illinois to the Atlantic Ocean near New York and New Jersey and running from the Ohio River along Indiana and Kentucky to the St. Lawrence Seaway in Canada.

The Frontier League's expansion allowed for new opportunities across the different markets and new competition, while making the Frontier League the largest and longest running of the modern independent professional baseball leagues in North America.

However, on March 11, the sports world started its shutdown as the uncertainty surrounding the unprecedented pandemic took over. The NBA season, MLB Spring Training, NHL season, college athletics, and more came to a halt. Even though the hope at the time was to resume sports and start the Frontier League season on time in May, that was not the case.

The entire webs and flows of society also stopped due to shutdowns as well as self-quarantining and isolation. The government at all levels and health departments issued guidelines and mandates to follow to reduce the impact of the Coronavirus and slow its spread. Sanitation, social distancing, and wearing masks became the norm in 2020, but the risks involved were too great to conduct a Frontier League season.

League officials and owners reviewed numerous alternatives to play in 2020, but in the long run, unresolved regulatory and health issues made playing unfeasible. The seven states where franchises are located (and the country of Canada) chose vastly different ways of handling the pandemic, and that dilemma impacted the league's ability to play as a single unit. The health of the players, fans, employees, vendors, and others upon whom the League relies on to create an entertaining season is always of the utmost importance, and the risk for crowds was a primary factor.

The Evansville Otters were also excited about the organization's momentum heading into a 2020 season, as historic Bosse Field underwent major renovations and upgrades during the offseason. The 105-year-old ballpark received a new brick wall backstop and along the first base line, new LED field lights to brighten the playing area, a larger LED videoboard to replace the scoreboard and smaller videoboard, a new heating and air system across the interior rooms of the ballpark, improved LED lighting and ceiling fans in the grandstand, LED lighting along the outer concourse, an extended protective netting for safety further down the first and third base lines, and had some touch-up work done to the outer brick facade. All of those upgrades followed up a newly installed sound system the year before. The improvements allow the Otters to host a variety of events at Bosse Field, besides baseball, for people to enjoy themselves with the unique backdrop of Bosse Field.

On the field, there was a lot of excitement and anticipation for the Evansville Otters' 2020, as the franchise was coming off its fourth consecutive postseason appearance in 2019.



Many players from the 2019 roster had signed to come back to the Otters in 2020, including the Otters' all-time strikeouts and wins leader on the mound Tyler Vail. Also re-signing for 2020 was Tyler Beard-sley, Drew Beyer, Anthony Arias, Abraham Almonte, Trace Norkus, and Brandon Wilkes from the pitching staff. Tanner Cable, an Otters' pitcher in 2018, was also signed to the team for 2020. In the field, the Otters signed outfielders Elijah MacNamee and Keith Grieshaber to re-join the club, while also having infielders David Cronin, Tanner Wetrich, and Jacob Adams slated to come back in 2020. Catcher Dakota Phillips had also signed to return in 2020.

The biggest player news from the offseason heading into 2020 was the news of outfielder John Schultz announcing he was coming out of retirement to re-join the Otters, as the Frontier League had changed its rules and increased the playing age of some roster players. Schultz is a three-time Frontier League All-Star, led the Otters to the 2016 league championship, and had his number four jersey retired at the end of 2017. Schultz holds career franchise records in games played (420), RBIs (207), at-bats (1,560), hits (458), runs (280), doubles (90), total bases (710), and walks (219).

With the Frontier League's 2020 season canceled, some Otters found other opportunities to compete in 2020. Dakota Phillips played in Sugar Land, Texas, former Otters like Josh Allen and Ryan Long played in the American Association, and former Otters' closer Taylor Wright continued his stint with the Somerset Patriots of the Atlantic League. Many other former Otters and some of the new 2020 Otters' signees found playing opportunities elsewhere.

Even though the 2020 Frontier League championship season was canceled, a lot of excitement went into a hopeful 2021 season, including the granted membership to Ottawa as the 15th team in the League and the announced partnership between the League and MLB. Following the disappointment in 2020, the Otters looked forward to 2021 with a lot of plans for the enjoyment of the fans.