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FEATURED

Studer speaks out

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Jun 24, 2020



Studer

Quint Studer couldn't be more excited about the future of baseball in Beloit.

Just not the near future.

Studer, the future owner of the Beloit Snappers and current owner of the AA Pensacola Blue Wahoos, made no bones about the future of the 2020 season in a Q&A session hosted on a Zoom call with media and fans Wednesday night.

“There won’t be minor league baseball in 2020,” Studer said. “They haven’t announced it officially yet, but there won’t be minor league ball this year, and the main reason for that is safety. Think about how many issues the Major Leagues are having with this, and then think about minor leagues: Smaller clubhouses, bus trips, and host families. How many families are going to want to sign up to host a player that’s constantly traveling and exposing themselves to the virus. We are focused on getting ready for 2021.”

Studer, a Janesville native and founder of Studer Entertainment and Retail that’s based in Pensacola, said he expects there to be no issues to getting approved for ownership as Major League Baseball and Minor League Baseball continue negotiations.

He also doesn’t believe that Beloit will be one of the teams contracted, a factor he credits two invest heavily to build the ballpark.

“The Snappers were on the original contraction list when it came out in October,” Studer said. “And there are some teams around that would love to keep Beloit on that list, because that would give their team a better chance for surviving. But Diane got in a plane and flew to New York and met with some of the top-ranking officials in baseball. They knew who she was and the success she’s had. She showed them the pictures of the new ballpark, and since then, we’ve felt very confident about our situation.”

Construction began on the new facility June 19 along the banks of the Rock River in downtown Beloit. Studer outlined three areas a team with a new facility needs to succeed.

“The first is the right location,” Studer said. “This ballpark just wouldn’t work on the interstate. Miller Park is an exception to this rule. Look at where the Bucks are, and all the things that have happened in the area since the new arena was built. In minor league baseball, standalone stadiums just don’t work as well. We want to bring people downtown to spend time there, too. We want this to be great for Beloit, and the downtown location was the way to do that.

“The second thing is it has to be a great facility. We’ve definitely got that with this ballpark. Diane Hendricks doesn’t do anything that isn’t great. This is going to be the first all-brick minor league facility that’s been built in a number of years. A lot of teams make the mistake of overbuilding. We didn’t do that. Capacity is going to be around 3,500, with 2,500 hard seats. We want this to be like Fenway Park or Wrigley Field. A smaller environment that is a great place to watch a game.

“And the third thing s you need to have great ownership that has deep enough pockets to run it right. Our staff in Pensacola is about 30 percent higher than average in the minor leagues, but we also do better than most teams because our fan satisfaction level is very high.”

Studer said the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on stadium construction and the ballpark’s timeline.

“We’re expecting it to open in mid-June,” Studer said. “And opening a park in the middle of the year is not something particularly unique in Minor League Baseball. We will start the season at Pohlman Field and move on from there when the park is ready.”

Another unique aspect to the new ballpark is its artificial turf, which will allow the team to host a number of different activities.

“When we did this in Pensacola, everyone said ‘Ah, you’re only going to play baseball there anyway,’” Studer said. “Well, last year we hosted 23 football games, lacrosse, soccer. We had concerts, all sorts of things that were made possible because of the durability of the turf. We envision high school and college baseball games being played here along with a lot of activities.”

While ticket prices aren't set for the new park, Studer announced a unique opportunity for Snappers fans.

"We did this in Pensacola and we're doing it here," Studer said. "Anyone that has current season tickets can purchase them in the new stadium for the same price for the first year. We are going to do our best to keep everything affordable so people can enjoy this facility."

In the meantime, Studer said fans can either roll their current tickets over to the 2021 campaign or obtain a refund from the Snappers.

Josh Flickinger