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## Miners to host all-stars in 2011

**By Gary Fauber**

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BECKLEY — It didn't take long for Mike Gilligan to reach his immediate goal.

The West Virginia Miners on Wednesday were awarded the Prospect League's 2011 all-star game. A league-wide vote was held at a meeting in Indianapolis, with the Miners winning out 9-5. One team did not have a representative at the meeting.

"This was a goal that I set as soon as I accepted the job," said Gilligan, who was named the Miners' general manager in December. "I told Doug (Epling, the Miners' founder) that I wanted to go right after the all-star game. So in my short career in Beckley, this is my proudest moment.

"Next on my agenda is winning a championship."

The game will be held on a Tuesday next July, although the date has yet to be determined.

"We will have to wait until Major League Baseball announces their date," Gilligan said. "We do not want to conflict with them because, from what they (Prospect League officials) tell me, 20 to 30 major league scouts will be there. This will be a golden opportunity for them to see the league's very best players."

Much like the MLB All-Star game, the Prospect League's is a two-day festival. A home run derby will be held the day before the game, and plans for a fan festival will be in the works.

"We feel the game will sell out in a hurry, so for people who can't get tickets, we want to make it an experience for them," Gilligan said.

There also will be a 2 1/2-hour showcase on the day of the game for players who are not selected for the game but want to play in front of big league scouts. Several league players come from college teams that play in the College World Series. The deeper those teams go into the CWS, the later the players' arrivals onto their respective Prospect teams.

"He may be one of the best prospects around, but statistically speaking he isn't getting voted in," Gilligan said.

Gilligan will begin work on an official logo for the game that will be played at the new Linda K. Epling Stadium. The logo will be imprinted on all baseballs used for the game.

Gilligan said a number of factors contributed to the Miners being awarded the game, including a new facility and a community new to the league. Epling Stadium will have a state-of-the-art jumbotron — the only one of its kind in the league — installed in May.

The league expanded from eight teams to 15 over the winter. Beckley is one of the new spots that can be showcased by the all-star game.

“I think a thing that helped us was, the last two years the all-star game was held in the West,” Gilligan said. “I said, ‘Now it’s time to go east.’ You can’t get anymore eastern in this league than us.”

The positive effect the game will have on Beckley’s economy will be enormous, Gilligan stressed. The Miners will be working with several local businesses.

“We are thrilled,” he said. “It just shows that the league wants to showcase our community and our venue. We have a lot of neat things in store that were part of the proposal. We will be working with the state, the county and the city to orchestrate all of this.”

This year’s all-star game will be played July 6 in Quincy, Ill.

— On the Internet: [www.wvminersbaseball.com](http://www.wvminersbaseball.com); [www.prospectleague.com](http://www.prospectleague.com)

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