



2930 Kerry Forest Parkway
Suite 101
Tallahassee, Florida 32309
(850) 488-8347
www.flasports.com

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CONTACT: Nick Gandy (850) 488-1422 or ngandy@flasports.com

FLORIDA SPRING TRAINING SETS ATTENDANCE RECORDS

TALLAHASSEE -- Florida's Grapefruit League established new records for total attendance and average attendance per game over the course of 256 games played in 17 locations around the Sunshine State during the 2005 season, which ran from March 2 through April 2.

A total of 1,598,454 baseball fans attended spring training games, surpassing the previous record of 1,598,255 set in 1998 when 20 teams held spring training in Florida. Currently, 18 teams train in the Sunshine State. The average per game attendance of 6,244 shattered the record set last year of 5,794 by 450 fans per game.

The record attendances were posted even though 24 games were rained out and not rescheduled. On Wednesday, March 9, a full slate of 10 games scheduled were rained out.

Six teams topped the 100,000 attendance mark with the New York Yankees leading the way with 152,655 at Legends Field in Tampa. The Atlanta Braves drew 123,858 fans to Disney's Wide World of Sports Complex in Orlando while the Minnesota Twins had 111,691 fans pass through the gates at Hammond Stadium in Fort Myers. The World Champion Boston Red Sox had a total attendance of 109,071 at City of Palms Park in Fort Myers and the Philadelphia Phillies drew 104,693 to Bright House Networks Field in their second year in the Clearwater stadium. Detroit Tigers eclipsed the 100,000 mark for the first time with 102,685 at Joker Marchant Stadium in Lakeland.

Overall, 14 of the 18 teams holding spring training in Florida had gains in total attendance or average per game attendance. The Detroit Tigers in Lakeland and the Washington Nationals in Viera experienced the largest attendance gains. The Tigers increased total attendance by 17% (85,740 in 2004 to 102,685 in 2005) and per game attendance by 26% (4,763 in 2004 to 6,417 in 2005). The Nationals, formerly the Montreal Expos, saw a 17% increase in total attendance (61,943 in 2004 to 74,904 in 2005), despite four rainouts and per game attendance by 29% (4,424 in 2004 to 6,242).

Florida is home to 18 of the 30 Major League Baseball club's spring training programs, making it the nations leader for such training. According to an economic impact survey released by the Florida Sports Foundation in 2000, Major League Baseball spring training contributes \$450 million annually to Florida's economy.

The State of Florida's tradition with Major League Baseball dates back to 1888 when the Washington Statesmen ventured to Jacksonville to work out the kinks of the off season. But it wasn't until 1914, when Branch Rickey brought the St. Louis Browns to St. Petersburg's Coffee Pot Field, and three other teams followed, that the rush to Florida for spring training caught on. Since those beginnings, 35 different Florida cities have hosted Major League Baseball teams for spring training. All but six of today's major league teams trained in Florida.

Overseen by the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development, the Florida Sports Foundation was created by the Legislature in 1988. As the state's official sports development organization, the Foundation promotes amateur and professional sporting events in Florida for both participants and spectators, including the annual Florida Sunshine Games and Florida Senior Games. For more information on the Florida Sports Foundation, visit www.flasports.com or call (850) 488-8347.

2005 Florida Spring Training

Compiled by individual game box scores and confirmed by teams

Through April 2

32 days, 256 games, 1,598,454 total attendance, 6,244 average

24 games rained out

Atlanta Braves, Cracker Jack Stadium, Disney's Wide World of Sports Complex (9,500), Orlando

13 games (two rainouts)—123,858 total attendance – 9,528 per game average

2004 average per game -- 8,535

High Attendance: 11,421, Sunday, March 20, vs. St. Louis Cardinals

Baltimore Orioles, Ft. Lauderdale Stadium (8,340)

14 games -- 92,546 total attendance – 6,610 per game average

2004 average per game – 5,906

High Attendance: 8,711, Thursday, March 24, vs. Boston Red Sox

Boston Red Sox, City of Palms Park (6,990), Ft. Myers

14 games – 109,071 total attendance -- 7,791 per game average

2004 average per game – 7,248

High Attendance: 8,056, Wednesday, March 30, vs. Tampa Bay Devil Rays

Cincinnati Reds, Ed Smith Stadium (7,500), Sarasota

16 games – 87,292 total attendance – 5,456 per game average

2004 average per game – 4,684

High Attendance: 7,547, Wednesday, March 30, vs. New York Yankees

Cleveland Indians, Chain Of Lakes Park (7,000), Winter Haven

14 games (two rainouts) – 64,302 total attendance – 4,593 per game average

2004 average per game -- 5,004

High Attendance: 6,036, Monday, March 28, vs. Atlanta Braves

Detroit Tigers, Joker Marchant Stadium, (8,500) Lakeland

16 games (one rainout) – 102,685 total attendance – 6,417 per game average

2004 average per game -- 4,763

High Attendance: 8,930, Friday, April 1, vs. New York Yankees

Florida Marlins, Roger Dean Stadium (6,800), Jupiter

15 games (one rainout) – 86,429 total attendance – 5,761 per game average

2004 average per game -- 5,630

High Attendance: 7,537, Friday, March 25, vs. New York Mets

Houston Astros, Osceola County Stadium (5,225), Kissimmee

13 games (one rainout) – 58,581 total attendance – 4,506 per game average

2004 average per game -- 5,067

High Attendance: 6,562, Sunday, March 13, vs. New York Yankees

Los Angeles Dodgers, Dodgertown (6,474), Vero Beach

15 games (one rain out) – 62,930 total attendance – 4,195 per game average

2004 average per game -- 4,297

High Attendance: 8,137, Monday, March 21, vs. Boston Red Sox

Minnesota Twins, Hammond Stadium (7,500), Ft. Myers

15 games (one rainout) – 111,691 total attendance -- 7,446 per game average

2004 average per game -- 7,355

High Attendance: 7,795, Thursday, March 31, vs. Boston Red Sox

New York Mets, Tradition Park (7,347), Port St. Lucie

15 games (two rainouts)—83,822 total attendance – 5,588 per game average

2004 average per game -- 4,708

High Attendance: 7,177, Friday, April 1, vs. Florida Marlins

New York Yankees, Legends Field (10,200), Tampa

15 games (one rainout)—152,655 total attendance -- 10,177 per game average

2004 average per game --10,185

High Attendance: 10,325, Tuesday, March 29, vs. Boston Red Sox

Philadelphia Phillies, Bright House Networks Field (7,515), Clearwater

14 games (one rainout) – 104,693 total attendance – 7,478 per game average

2004 average per game -- 7,536

High Attendance: 9,117, Friday, March 25, vs. NY Yankees

Pittsburgh Pirates, McKechnie Field (6,562), Bradenton

14 games (two rainouts) – 68,562 total attendance – 4,897 per game average

2004 average per game -- 4,577

High Attendance: 6,015, Friday, March 4, vs. New York Yankees

St. Louis Cardinals, Roger Dean Stadium (6,800), Jupiter

14 games (one rainout) – 95,352 total attendance, 6,810 per game average

2004 average per game -- 6,324

High Attendance: 8,008, Wednesday, March 23, vs. New York Mets

Tampa Bay Devil Rays, Progress Energy Park (6,759), St. Petersburg

14 games (one rainout) – 65,461 total attendance – 4,675 per game average

2004 average per game -- 4,880

High Attendance: 8,930, Saturday, April 2, vs. Washington Nationals (Game played at Tropicana Field)

Toronto Blue Jays, Knology Park (5,510), Dunedin

13 games (one rainout) – 53,620 total attendance – 4,124 per game average

2004 average per game -- 3,678

High Attendance: 5,509, Friday, March 11, vs. Boston Red Sox and Monday, March 28, vs. NY Yankees

Washington Nationals, Space Coast Stadium (8,100), Viera

12 games (four rainouts) – 74,904 total attendance – 6,242 per game average

2004 average per game – 4,424

High Attendance: 8,100, Tuesday, March 29, vs. New York Mets

Florida Spring Training (1996-2005)

2005: 1,598,454, total attendance; 6,244 average attendance

2004: 1,557,934, total attendance; 5,792 average attendance

2003: 1,397,144, total attendance; 5,272, average attendance

2002: 1,538,444, total attendance; 5,028, average attendance

2001: 1,500,184, total attendance; 5,320, average attendance

2000: 1,598,255, total attendance; 5,473, average attendance

1999: 1,502,617, total attendance; 5,042, average attendance

1998: 1,418,488, total attendance; 4,776, average attendance

1997: 1,353,788, total attendance; 4,468, average attendance

1996: 1,371,465, total attendance; 4,795, average attendance

2003-2005: 18 teams held spring training in Florida

1996-2002: 20 teams held spring training in Florida

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