



## **HISTORY of the DeMARINI LONGBALL CHALLENGE**

2013 marks the return of the “DeMarini Longball Challenge” after a one-year partnership with Reebok and the “Reebok Homerun Challenge.” From 2006 through 2011, the annual NCBA HR Derby event has been sponsored by DeMarini and appropriately titled the “DeMarini Longball Challenge.” It all began in the summer of 2006, when DeMarini and Wilson Sporting Goods signed a sponsorship deal with the NCBA to become the “Official Baseball Bat of the NCBA,” which remained through the 2011 NCBA season. As part of this landmark relationship, DeMarini agreed to co-host (with the NCBA) an annual Home Run Derby competition. And thus the DeMarini Longball Challenge was born and returns to showcase the top sluggers across the entire NCBA.

## 2006



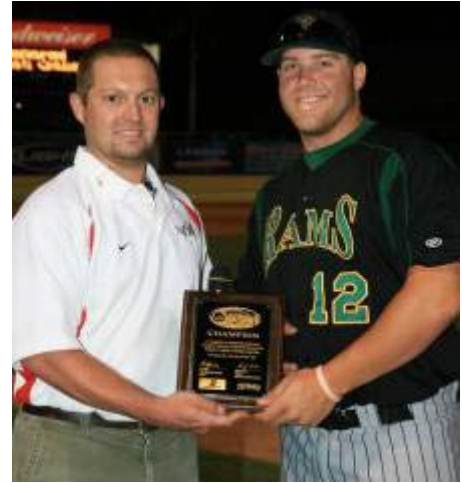
The 2006 DeMarini Longball Challenge marked the first NCBA-sanctioned event of its kind in the 6-year history of the league. The event was held during the 2006 NCBA World Series at Eastwood Field in Niles, OH. Knowing that this event should draw quite a bit of interest from all the participating World Series teams and fans, the NCBA decided to hold the LBC on the night of Memorial Day (Monday May 29<sup>th</sup>). The field of 16 participants was stacked with sluggers from all corners of the country and they did not fail to impress all in attendance with the mammoth home runs they hit. Bombers such as Richie Marrero (Wisconsin), Chris Crum (Virginia Tech), and Zac Snow (Weber State) continuously displayed the sheer power of the DeMarini bats by knocking pitch after pitch out of the STADIUM! Ultimately, Zac Snow showed that consistency dominates (3 HR in Final Round) by outlasting the rest of the field and thus earning the crown of 2006 DeMarini Longball Challenge Champion.



## 2007

As DeMarini and the NCBA eagerly prepared for the 2007 DeMarini Longball Challenge, a few changes were implemented to further enhance the event. Participants were given 10 outs (Up from 8 outs in 2006) per round to hit as many home runs as possible. Also, the event was moved to Friday night (May 25<sup>th</sup>) in order to kick off the weekend of 2007 NCBA World Series action. Despite the strong breeze blowing in from right field, the field of predominately right-handers lit

up the night sky with a spectacle of dazzling homeruns. Preston Prado (Sam Houston State) put on an awesome display by hitting an LBC record 17 Homeruns!!! However, Eric Zaruba (Colorado State) took a page out of the defending champion Zac Snow's (Weber State) book by staying consistent throughout the event and outlasting Preston in the final round to take the 2007 Demarini Longball Challenge with a total of 8 Homeruns.



## 2008



As the NCBA prepared for the 2008 DeMarini Longball Challenge, the day of the event was once again changed. This time the excitement took place on Saturday night (May 24<sup>th</sup>) in order to showcase the LBC as the marquee event of the 2008 NCBA DI World Series. While the derby got off to a slow start in Round 1, the bats got hot and stayed hot the rest of the way. The field set a new DeMarini LBC record by cranking out a total of 47 Homeruns

(2007 - 45HR), while Brian Dilley (Colorado State) overcame a first round goose egg to TWICE tie the event's single round record for Homeruns (Preston Prado – Sam Houston – 2007 – RD3 - 7HR) by blasting 7 in both the 3<sup>rd</sup> AND Final Rounds. LBC favorite Chris Crum (Virginia Tech) joined



Dilley as each of them entertained the crowd with a barrage of majestic homeruns to left and right field respectively.

However, despite tying Crum with a total of 16 Homeruns overall, Dilley claimed the 2008 DeMarini Longball Challenge title by besting Crum's Final

Round (4HR) with 7 of his own!!!



## 2009

As the NCBA continued to improve the DeMarini Longball Challenge for 2009, the league decided to alter the rules slightly to make the event a bit more exciting for the fans in attendance. Having realized that the first round of the competition can get a bit long and drawn out, the league lowered the number of outs from 10 to 8 for the first round only. While the 2009 event lacked the tape measure homeruns previously provided by



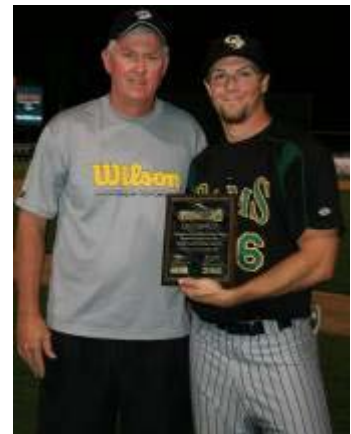
Chris Crum (Virginia Tech) and Preston Prado (Sam Houston State), a crew of newcomers made the night exciting for everyone. Nick Powden (Penn State) and Shawn Linebaugh (Clemson) got the fire started in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round with 3 homeruns apiece. Watson Lavigno (Georgia) warmed up in Round 1 with 2 homeruns and then caught fire in Rounds 2 and 3 leading the way with 3 homeruns in each of those. But a familiar face to the DeMarini Longball Challenge was looming close behind. Brian Dilley (Colorado State) was operating at his usual slow but steady pace through the first three rounds hitting just enough homeruns to qualify for the next round. Perhaps Lavigno was starting to run out of gas in the finals as he was only able to muster 2 homeruns while defending LBC champion Dilley was just getting warmed up. Dilley hit 3 homeruns in walk-off fashion to claim the 2009 DeMarini Longball Challenge title becoming the first participant to successfully defend his crown.



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## 2010

2010 marked another great year of DeMarini Longball Challenge competition. Amongst the celebration around the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NCBA, the DeMarini Longball Challenge



was also marking its 5<sup>th</sup> year of homerun derby competition. With the reigning back-to-back champion (Brian Dilley –CSU) off playing pro baseball, all eyes were on the 2009



runner-up Watson Lavigno (Georgia) as this year he entered the event surrounded by the support of his entire team who was making their first ever

NCBA World Series appearance. Watson was quick to impress as he led the



1<sup>st</sup> Round by

hitting 3

homeruns.

The first round

also brought

an end to Mike

Abernathy's

(Colorado

State Head

Coach) run of

pitching to 4

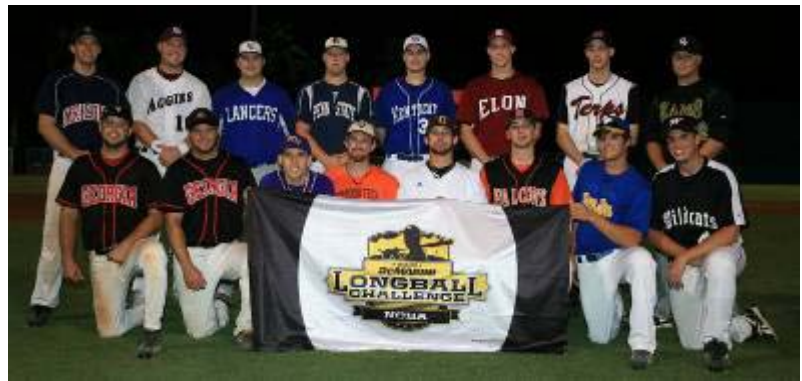
straight DeMarini Longball

Champions when CSU's

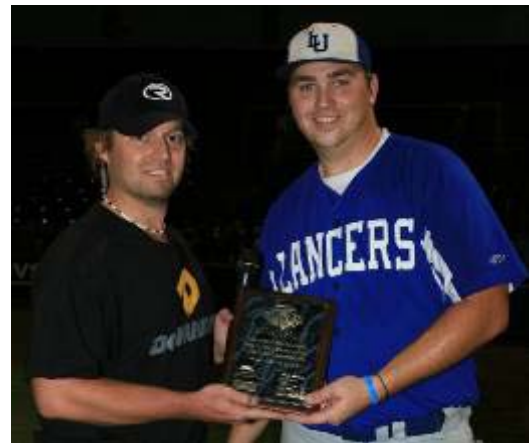
representative (Ryan Cooper) was

eliminated. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Round was

dominated by Aaron Smith (Texas



A&M) who slammed 3 more of his own. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Round went back to Watson who smashed 4 more majestic shots while a no-name out of Division II Longwood University (BJ Harlow) kept chugging along smacking a pair himself to put himself in head to head competition with Watson in the Finals. In the Finals it was Déjà vu from 2009 as Watson's bat seemed to tire as he could only muster a single HR while BJ kept at it hitting yet another pair of homeruns, and thus taking the 2010 DeMarini Longball Challenge title in true upset fashion. It appeared that BJ did his homework taking a page out of Brian Dilley and Zac Snow's playbook that to take home the title; you have to pace yourself and have some gas left in the tank for the Final Round.



## 2011

The 2011 LBC and NCBA DI World Series moved to Golden Park in Columbus, GA. Located on the Chattahoochee River in downtown Columbus, Golden Park is a 5,000 seat baseball only stadium that opened in 1926. Multiple minor league teams have called Golden Park home including the Columbus Astros (1970-1988) and most

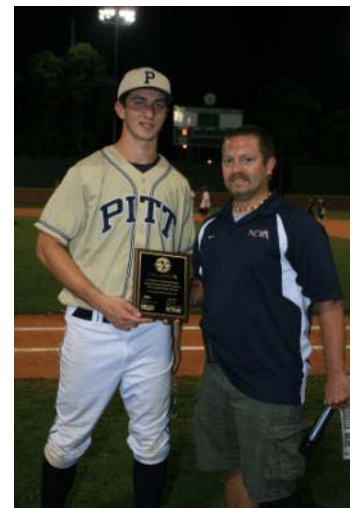


recently the Columbus Catfish (2004-2008). Having undergone major renovations for the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, Golden Park served as a phenomenal backdrop for the NCBA's sluggers to compete for the 2011 DeMarini Longball Challenge title.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Round of the 2011 Longball Challenge saw a pair of sluggers from the Lone Star State put on a show, with Texas Tech's Chris Manross and Sam Houston's Cole Lehmann each belting four dingers. Round 2 belonged to Brian Burgess of the soon-to-be National Champion ECU Pirates. Burgess hit five homers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Round to bring his total up to nine.



Pitt's Max Hegedus quietly snuck into the 3<sup>rd</sup> Round after knocking two out of the park in Round 1 and one more in Round 2. Max's bat really came alive in Round 3, however, when he went yard five times. Burgess continued to stay hot, going yasta pasta three more times to

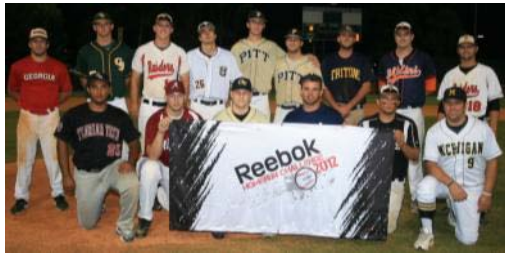


advance to the Finals to face off against Hegedus.

In the Finals, both players put on a great show, blasting home runs at an impressive pace. In the end, Hegedus edged out Burgess by one home run, 4-3, to take the crown as 2011 DeMarini Longball Challenge Champion.

## 2012

In 2012, the NCBA signed Reebok as the new “Official Bat Sponsor of the NCBA,” and the event name was changed to the “Reebok Home Run



Challenge”. Once again the event was held at Golden Park in Columbus, GA and oh what an event it was. For the first time Longball

Challenge history the event featured a player from north of the border as Michael Meany

(Lakehead University) not only participated but battled all the way to the bitter end, launching homer after homer into the



Georgia night sky. Meany and the defending champ

(Max Hegedus – Pittsburgh) both got off to

and early start bashing three homeruns apiece in the 1<sup>st</sup> Round.

Round 2 put Meany ahead as he out slammed Max, six homers to Max’s five and the

battle was on. Falling behind Meany must have woken up Max as

he went into Round 3 hungrier than ever to defend his title and to try and join Brian Dilley (Colorado State - '08 & '09) as the only players to win back to back HR derby titles.

Meany was able to muster just three dingers in Round 3 before Max stepped to the plate and bashed a whopping 8 long balls to not only take the overall lead, but taking over sole possession of the all time record for homeruns in a single round previously held by Brian Dilley (Colorado State - 2008 – RD3 & FINALS - 7HR) – and Preston Prado (Sam Houston – 2007 – RD3 - 7HR).



But there was still a big question left going into the Final Round... had either Meany or Max left anything in the tank? Meany had been launching majestic moon shots all night over the wall, but in the Final Round was only able to knock one out. With 16 total homeruns in his pocket, Max held the tiebreaker over Meany should he tie him in the Final Round with just one homerun. And that tiebreaker would become crucial as like Meany, Max was only able to squeak one ball over the fence. But that’s all he needed to take home his 2<sup>nd</sup> HR Derby Title along with tying Preston Prado (Sam Houston – 2007 – 17HR) for most total homeruns ever hit in the event. With another year of NCBA eligibility, the question around the ball park quickly switched to, “Can he do it again in 2013?”

## **2013**

For 2013, the NCBA has brought DeMarini back on board to once again host the “DeMarini Longball Challenge.” The 2013 DeMarini Longball Challenge will be held at the University of Tampa Baseball Stadium in Tampa, FL on Saturday, May 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. The 2013 contest will showcase some new rules such as the “Moneyball Homerun,” 3 Rounds instead of 4, 3 finalists instead of 2, and ultimately a new final round “Sudden Death” tiebreaker. Combining the new rules with DeMarini’s “Insane dedication to performance” is sure to make the 2013 DeMarini Longball Challenge the best ever. Will Max Hegedus be able to be the first player ever to three-peat? Will a new slugger emerge from his shadow to steal his crown? Be sure to check out all the action for yourself down in Tampa this May! See you there!