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## Huntington Park named Ballpark of the Year

Despite intense and high-priced competition, Columbus, Ohio's Huntington Park has been named the best in the land.

The first-year home of the Columbus Clippers of the International League was named **Ballpark of the Year** by BASEBALLPARKS.COM. Site webmaster Joe Mock made the announcement today.

The honor is presented to the new baseball stadium with the best combination of superior design, attractive site selection and fan amenities. The award will be presented in a ceremony prior to the Clippers' home game Sunday, September 6<sup>th</sup>.

"I think this year's award is even more special than in the past," said Mock. "First, this is the tenth straight year we've presented this honor. Second, we've never seen so much competition for the award."

Indeed, the stadiums in the running for the honor this year include all new parks in pro baseball, and those that were essentially rebuilt. This year, that included three new spring-training parks, two parks in the Majors (both in New York) and five in the affiliated Minors. Joining the list were the extensively renovated stadiums in Kansas City and Visalia, California.

"When you consider that the Mets' and Yankees' new parks were eligible and over two billion dollars were spent building those two, then it's an understatement to say that there was stiff competition this season," Mock remarked.

"To receive this award in a year when there were no less than a dozen new facilities brought on-line, and two of them major league facilities at that, is rather overwhelming and humbling," said Ken Schnacke, President and General Manager of the Clippers. "This award is a tribute to all the outstanding partners who were a part of our design and construction team; and it was the complete cooperation of this team and our entire community that made our vision become a reality."

Members of that team include 360 Architecture (designers of the ballpark), Turner Construction and Nationwide Realty Investors. "The Clippers, Turner and Nationwide were incredible to work with," said Brad Schrock, Senior Principal at 360. "Philosophically as an office, we always step back and say, 'What works and what doesn't work, and how can we make it work better?' The Clippers and Nationwide embraced that philosophy as well.

“We always question convention,” Schrock continued, “and this project allowed us to do things differently.”

This is the first year of a new player-development contract between the Indians and Clippers, and the front office at Progressive Field certainly took notice of Columbus’ new facility. ““It is no surprise to us that Huntington Park earned the lofty ranking as the best new ballpark in America. We congratulate Ken and his staff,” said Indians VP of Public Relations Bob DiBiasio. “Our inaugural season in Columbus has been a monumental success from both a business and player development perspective. Our players especially love the setting.”

Veteran ballpark reviewer Charlie O’Reilly of Rutherford, NJ has attended games at nearly 350 different pro ballparks, and he was anything but shocked to learn the news. “I can see why Huntington Park was chosen for this award. It has received rave reviews, and when I visited it, I was really impressed with how the designers created a very accessible space with great views from everywhere in the park, including windows to watch the game from the street *a la* AT&T Park in San Francisco. The removable batter’s eye is like nothing I’ve ever seen. It’s one of the many novel design elements in the park.”

The fact that the Clippers’ ballpark was up against two big-market, Big League stadiums wasn’t lost on Tim Brunswick, Executive Director of Baseball Operations for Minor League Baseball in St. Petersburg. “This is outstanding news. It’s a great day for Minor League Baseball,” he exclaimed. “This is a testament to the great management of the Clippers. In fact, it’s an honor for all of Minor League Baseball.”

The fans of central Ohio have certainly embraced the new ballpark in their backyard. The team’s average crowd of 9,487 per home date easily leads all of Minor League Baseball, as 531,312 have poured through the turnstiles heading into the last 14 home games of the season.

Huntington Park joins some select company in winning BASEBALLPARKS.COM’s annual award. Past winners include AT&T Park in San Francisco, Pittsburgh’s PNC Park, Petco Park in San Diego and last year’s winner, Arvest Ballpark, home of the Northwest Arkansas Naturals.

Mock’s in-depth review of Huntington Park can be found at <http://www.baseballparks.com/Columbus-1.asp>

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*For more information on this award or on BASEBALLPARKS.COM, contact Joe Mock at 512-826-0853.*

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