



**Contact:** Jack Cormier  
Polk County Tourism & Sports Marketing  
[jack@centralfloridasports.com](mailto:jack@centralfloridasports.com)  
863-551-4709

## Press Release

---

**For Immediate Release**

### **RussMatt – and 261 college baseball teams – return to Polk County**

AUBURNDALE – Lewiston, Maine and Rock Island, Illinois, may be more than 1,000 miles apart, but college baseball teams from those respective towns will face each other to kick off the first game of the 2019 RussMatt Central Florida Invitational on Tuesday, Feb. 19. The invitational, which has called Polk County home since 2009, is the largest collegiate spring training event in the country, this year topping out at 261 teams, up from 185 teams its inaugural year.

Comprised of NCAA Division I, II and III schools, as well as schools from NAIA programs, teams from junior colleges and even a few baseball academies from Canada, over the duration of a single RussMatt tournament Polk County hotels will enjoy approximately 30,000 room nights during the 39 day event.

“As the business community in the area knows, RussMatt means full tables at local restaurants and full rooms for local hoteliers,” said Mark Jackson, Polk County Tourism and Sports Marketing director. “This year, with the increase in teams, we project a \$30 million shot-in-the-arm for the area.”

And while Auburndale’s Lake Myrtle Sports Park and Winter Haven’s Chain of Lakes Park host the majority of the games, other facilities – such as Warner University in Lake Wales, Henley Field in Lakeland and Polk State College in Winter Haven – will have a few games as well.

The tournament ends March 30, barring rescheduling due to inclement weather.