



“We’re not in the baseball business.
We’re in the entertainment business.
Whatever is normal - we do the opposite.”

JESSE COLE
SAVANNAH BANANAS OWNER

BANANALAND captures the madcap world of the Savannah Bananas, a collegiate summer league baseball team that happens to be the most innovative sports franchise in America.



The Series

Owner and impresario, Jesse Cole, sports a yellow suit, winning smile, and a pitchman's savvy. Like P.T. Barnum, he understands that without promotion a terrible thing happens: nothing.

Season One of BANANALAND kicks off with Jesse and company's ambitious quest to launch "Banana Ball," a wild new style of play that includes provocative new rules*. At the same time, he and his team will be managing a hectic sold-out summer season as returning champions of the Coastal Plain League - it's the hottest ticket in the South. Featuring an eclectic cast of entertainers and a fiery group of hungry prospects eager to showcase their skills to the pro scouts, the series will feature a little bit of baseball, a lot of entertainment, and a whole bunch of drama.

*SEE RULES ON PAGE 16





The Coastal Plain League named the Savannah Bananas the 2021 Organization of the Year. On the field the Bananas were led by 2021 CPL Coach of the Year, Tyler Gillum, who put together the best winning percentage in league history with a 36-8 (.818) record. The team also won the 2021 CPL Petit Cup Championship.

Originally built in 1926, Grayson Stadium seats 4000 people and has an illustrious baseball history in Savannah.

Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb, Lou Gehrig, Mickey Mantle, Jackie Robinson, and Hank Aaron played on this field.





THE TRYOUTS: A NEW CAST

The two teams tasked with playing by the new Banana Ball rules in the Spring - The Bananas and The Party Animals (the “bad guys”) - will both be comprised of ex-pros, pro-prospects and former standout college and Minor League players. A tryout, held at the end of February in Savannah, will bring hundreds of players to showcase their skills and personalities in hopes of making the team.

For the EX-PROS, Banana Ball gives them a chance to play the sport they love, while having riotous fun for the first time in their careers.

The PRO-PROSPECTS want to show they can play. Every game has state-of-the-art pitching and hitting trackers so scouts know how prospects fare against high level talent in a fast-paced situation.

There are also FORMER STANDOUTS who used to be studs for D1 schools or Minor League teams and now want to have a chance to play in front of their family and kids.

Being selected for the team offers a unique opportunity for everyone. Launching the Banana Ball tour is Jesse’s most ambitious project to date. They’re taking this experimental version of baseball on the road around the country for the first time.

The tour will pass through small towns that have lost their teams but have kept their stadiums, rich in history and quaint details. Like in Savannah, the return of the game promises to transform a community and connect it to its past.





“Every night
is someone’s
first game.”



The Greatest Show in Sports

The Savannah Bananas do baseball differently. In BANANALAND it's non-stop action before, during and after their games. Jesse is the ringleader who wrangles a menagerie of talent - on and off the field. Break-dancing coaches, senior citizen cheerleaders, marriage proposals, bachelorette parties gone wild, hilariously self-announced batter walk-ups, and a team occasionally playing in kilts and stilts means that every home game buzzes with wild excitement.

The fast-paced, hard-working team faces the constant challenge of living up to the expectations of packed crowds every night. Executing elaborate skits and delivering as athletes and entertainers is taxing both physically and emotionally.

We'll meet players like Alex who struggled to face his fear of dancing in front of 4,000 people. Once he eventually masters this mandate, Alex's father tells Jesse how the experience lands his son a leadership role on his college team.

Jesse works with an almost religious determination to save his flock from the boredom of everyday life. He has found that this focus on community, camaraderie and excitement leads to sold-out stadiums and winning baseball. The players are expected to be as entertaining as they are athletic, and they have to quickly "flip the switch" between performing and playing. For the Bananas, a two-way player is one who can hit curveballs and execute a pirouette.

It's not just for show; between the lines, the Bananas field a competitive, winning team of professional-level talent. Fourteen of their players were drafted last season. In the greatest show in sports - the players are also trying to find their way to the Major League. This is much bigger than a game. It's about building community and a feeling that one is a part of something grand.

PRODUCTION

DECEMBER 2021 – AUGUST 2022

After fielding the best team in the Coastal Plain League in 2021 and breaking national attendance records at their home stadium in Savannah, Jesse and company have decided to take their new game - Banana Ball - on the road across America this Spring 2022.

Just as innovators created street basketball and 3-on-3 competitions, Jesse sees an opportunity to expand the reach of baseball into a whole new league. While the fans have fallen in love with the team, Jesse and the franchise have been lambasted by cynical reporters, players, coaches, owners, and purists who view their antics as disrespectful to the traditions of The Game. They'll have to fend off the haters while trying to build a new sports competition from scratch. Featuring a series of strict and provocative new rules, Banana Ball is designed to create more excitement, speed up, and modernize the game. Even though they've put together two premier teams of former pros, and top-level pro prospects to take the show on the road and illustrate just how electric the game can be, they don't know if it will work or if anybody will show up. Can the Bananas duplicate their box office success beyond their home turf? Are any of the players good enough to make the next level?

In May, the Bananas will begin to defend their Championship in the CPL. Jesse and the crew will have to train new players on the team's customs. At the same time, Jesse and Emily are raising young kids and juggling the business of operating a franchise. The front office staff is constantly crafting new stunts and lures for the fans. After a season in which their antics went viral, they'll have to go overboard to top themselves. Can the Bananas keep their sold-out home game streak alive? Can they repeat as league Champs? Will having to embrace the zany culture change any of the new players. Will any be good enough to get drafted?





THE MISSION: “Fans First, Entertain Always”

It's the fans-first vision that truly leads every step the Bananas take as an organization. From the parking penguins greeting fans as they pull up, to players and staff shaking the hands of every veteran in the stands each night, to the player and fans dance party in the plaza as fans leave the game— a memory is made at every turn.

There are pregame traditions like "Banana Baby," where a baby in a banana costume is worshiped by the players in homage to Simba's birth in the Lion King. There's a long waiting list among fans for this honor, even among their unborn children.

A kid always throws out the first banana and another is given a shining moment during the "Home Run Hitter," when an inside-the-park home run is staged for a young fan. They create elaborate entrances for the players -- in limousines, on trolleys, in armored vehicles -- and continually challenge themselves to push the boundaries on promotions. Next up: a hot air balloon.

The team employs a pep band and a dancing first-base coach. The cheerleading squad, the "Man-Nanas," is made up of out-of-shape, middle-aged men, and the dance team, the "Banana Nanas," features women over 65. The players take part in choreographed dances, star in extravagant movie parodies and conduct postgame interviews inside of bathroom stalls.

The team has hosted dozens of proposals and marriage ceremonies. They've arranged emotional homecoming reunions between military servicemen and their families. After the games, players approach kids to ask for their autographs. The fans are at the center of every stunt.



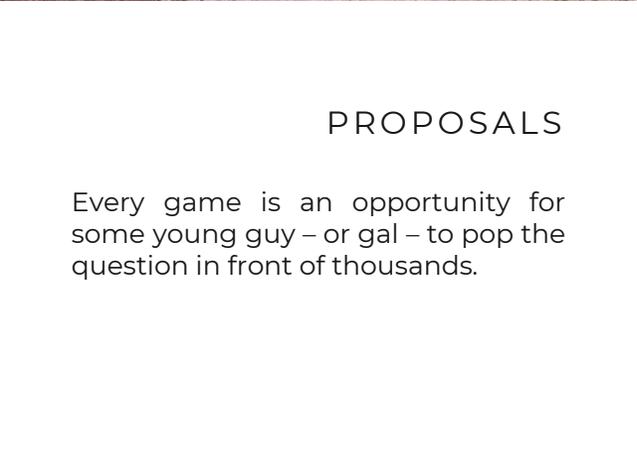
BANANA BABY

Before each game, a newborn baby is held aloft, wearing a banana costume, while players praise and bow down in a ceremonial homage to Simba from the Lion King.



FAMILY REUNIONS

Military reunions to surprise loved ones at home are always tear-jerkers.



PROPOSALS

Every game is an opportunity for some young guy – or gal – to pop the question in front of thousands.



PLAYER DANCES

The players learn a new routine and dance to the best of top 10 hits.. Their raving and risqué routines with fans always get the crowd hyped.



WILD GAMEPLAY

The players engage in all kinds of creative plays. They wear custom outlandish uniforms, and they announce themselves during their walk-up to the plate.



MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

With officiating by the in-house MC, and witnessed by thousands, young couples create a lifetime of memorable moments by getting hitched during a game.

The Backstory

A former standout college pitcher who suffered a career-ending shoulder injury, Jesse started his career at 23 as general manager of the Gastonia Grizzlies, a small-town college summer baseball team in North Carolina.

With attendance at only a couple hundred per game, Jesse was looking for a spark to turn things around. Inspired by his heroes Walt Disney, PT Barnum and legendary baseball promoter Bill Veeck, he started creating events around “Grandma Beauty Pageants,” “Dancing Players” and “Fun Flatulence Nights.” Soon ticket sales exploded, and they became one of the most successful franchises in the league.

In 2016, he saw an opportunity in the vacant Grayson Stadium, so he and wife Emily sold everything and moved to Savannah. After a name-the-team contest that netted them the Bananas moniker, they launched their brand of fun to a sold-out opening night crowd.

The Bananas recently won the 2021 Coastal Plain League championship and they’ve had the best team in the league for the past five years. Every one of their home games has sold out since they launched.

Will that magic work when they take Banana Ball on the road? At a time when most Minor League teams can’t sell a thousand seats per game, the Bananas are aiming to fill ballparks across the South.



The Front Office

“We think there’s a better way to do almost everything. So we will try it all. Some people may think we’re crazy. But we are okay with that. No matter what, we just want to have fun. We are driven by this goal to make baseball fun. And ultimately give fans the best possible experience at our ballpark. We call this Fans First.”



JESSE COLE

OWNER

“When you have fun you play better, and we’ve won more games than any team in the league.”



EMILY COLE

OWNER

“Our mission is ‘Fans First, Entertain Always.’”



JARED ORTON

TEAM PRESIDENT

“We're doing it because we believe this is the best possible baseball experience.”



COACH TYLER GILLUM

This will be Gillum's fourth summer with the Bananas. Growing up, he rode bulls and wouldn't be caught dead on the field at Grayson Stadium without his cowboy boots.



MACEO HARRISON

Mace serves as the first base coach, and he is the choreographer for the player dances and cheers during the game.

BANANA NANAS

The hottest dance group in town is only comprised of ladies age 65 or better.



BIKO SKALLA

Broadcast Entertainer who is always interviewing players in awkward situations.



ENTERTAINMENT TEAM

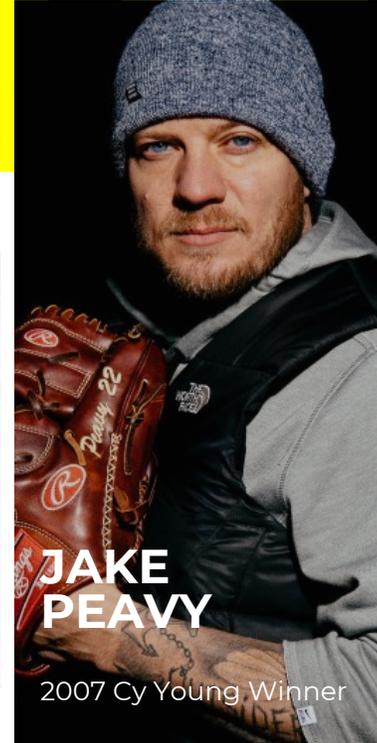
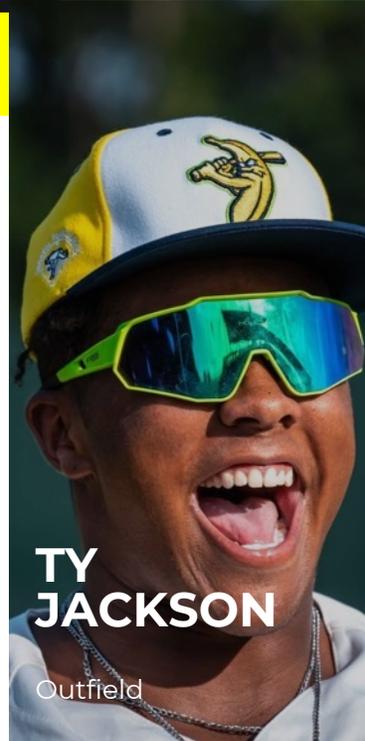
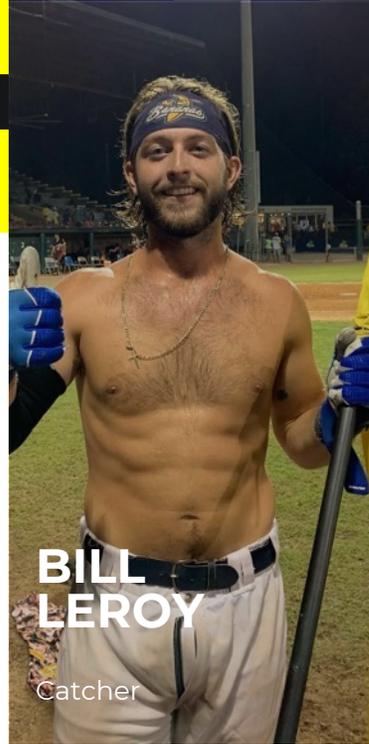
This talented group coordinates all the Fans First moments and keeps the crowd engaged and entertained with new skits and activities every game.



MAN-NANAS

The Dad-bod cheerleading squad hustles throughout the game, keeping the fans on their toes.

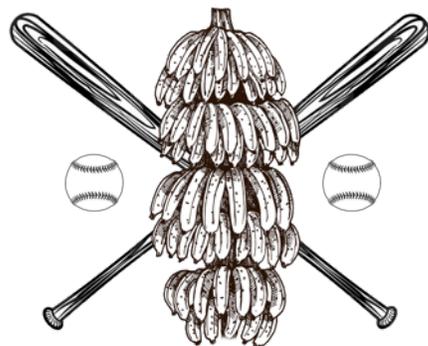
PLAYERS



“These guys have to be willing to dance in front of 4000 fans, and then immediately flip the switch and go out and play ball and win the game.”

- COACH GILLUM

BANANA



BALL

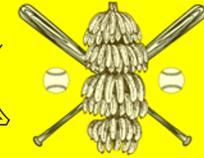
"All innovation is about falling in love with a problem," Jesse said. "We saw a problem -- that people were saying baseball is too long, too slow, too boring. We said, 'How do we defeat that?'"

"Banana Ball" was born out of a desire to keep fans engaged and incentivize them to stay. The rules for "Banana Ball" are as wacky as they are strict:

"What we are trying to prove to people is that you can have real baseball and you can have real fun and they don't have to exist separately," said Jared Orton, team president.



RULES OF THE GAME



1. NO BUNTING

If you attempt to bunt, it's an ejection. Bunting sucks. Swing the bat.

4. CAN'T STEP OUT OF THE BATTER'S BOX

If you step out of the batter's box, it's a strike. Batter's take too much time adjusting their gloves, moving around.

7. EACH INNING IS A WINNER TAKE ALL

The games are a match play-style format where scores reset for the top half of each frame, preventing huge blowouts and creating the possibility of nine walk-offs. The first team to take five innings wins the game.

2. WALKS ARE SPRINTS

After the fourth ball, a batter begins sprinting around the bases and the defense can't do anything until all nine of its players touch the baseball.

5. HITTERS CAN STEAL FIRST BASE

Hitters can "steal" first base on a wild pitch at any point in an at-bat.

8. TWO HOUR TIME LIMIT

Games are limited to a two hour time-limit. If the game is tied at expiration the game goes to the one-on-one showdown

3. NO MOUND VISITS

Coaches waste too much time scooting to the pitcher, and it slows the game down.

6. IF A FAN CATCHES A FOUL BALL IT'S AN OUT

Fans want to be a part of the game, well now they can

9. OVERTIME ONE-ON-ONE SHOWDOWN

A one-on-one showdown is staged in lieu of extra innings. The field empties, leaving only a pitcher, a catcher and a batter. The pitcher either records a strikeout or chases a hit ball in play and throws it home before his opponent sprints around the bases.



The first part of season one of BANANALAND will focus on the launch of the Banana Ball tour. Jesse and the organization are investing up to \$1 million to make this five city tour a success. In addition to the financial risk, he and his team will face profound pushback from baseball purists every step of the way.

The second part of the season follows the Savannah Bananas' summer college season as the team seeks to defend last year's championship title. Featuring D1 and D2 pro prospects, they are always fired up to put on a show for fans and scouts, being mindful that fans aren't coming every night to see baseball as usual.



STORYLINES

Every episode covers a unique storyline where we meet a character, see him or her overcome an obstacle and we then experience the joy of seeing their success.



A fan decides to propose to his girlfriend at the location of their first date – a Bananas game. The team rehearses the stunt. Jesse and the crew bring his girlfriend onto the field to do a skit. Her boyfriend pulls out a ring hidden in a baseball. She's shocked but says yes.



A young Banana outfielder is nervous to make his debut. He learns to loosen up and he plays his best game earning the attention of scouts. He's hoping to follow in the footsteps of the 14 players drafted from the previous Banana team.

THE REACH

They sell-out more than 100,000 tickets each summer, and off the field the Bananas' continued rise in popularity has reached over 1 million total followers across social media, with over 900,000 of those coming on TikTok (which is more than any MLB team). The Bananas were also featured in stories from USA Today, the Boston Globe, CBS Sports and most recently were highlighted in a SportsCenter Feature short.



MLB

Savannah Bananas: The greatest show in baseball The Savannah Bananas have made going to a baseball game an experience and have become the greatest show in the game.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

SPORTS

The Crazy Baseball Team That Lets Fans Catch Foul Balls for Outs

The Savannah Bananas are trying to play two-hour games with a menagerie of wild new rules. If you go: bring your glove.



Sports

Baseball teams put ads everywhere. One summer league team is ditching them entirely.



thesavbananas ✓

thesavbananas

Follow

85 Following 882.7K Followers 18.8M Likes



Ashley Brewer ✓
@ESPNAshley

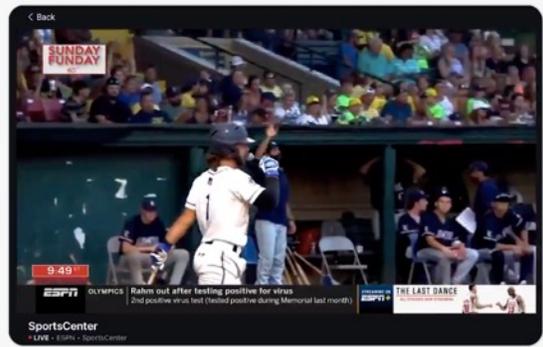
My bucket list includes visiting Greece, Switzerland, Paris and now- a **Savannah Bananas** baseball game.



SYNERGY



Over the Summer 2021, the Bananas were featured in clips across the ESPN Network, ESPN+, ESPN.com, and the twitter feeds to generate millions of combined views and a lot of spirited engagement.



CLIPS



Savannah Bananas: The greatest show in baseball

1M



Savannah Bananas' Bill LeRoy calls own play while miked up

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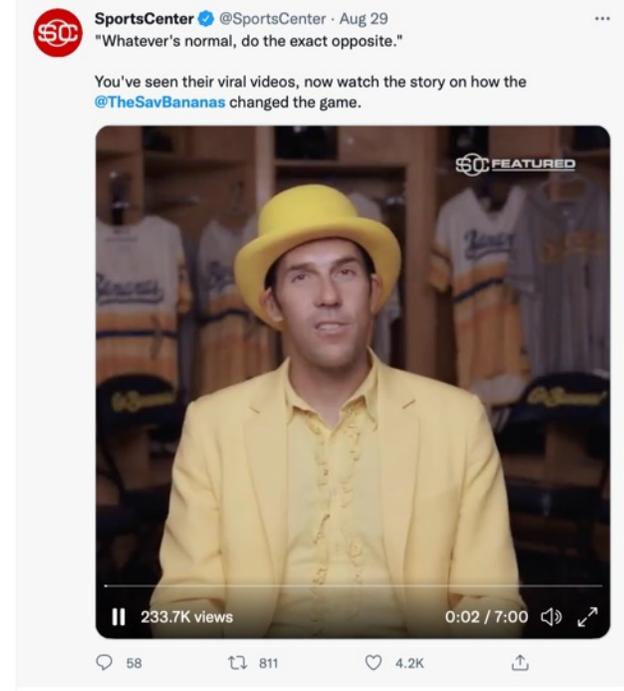
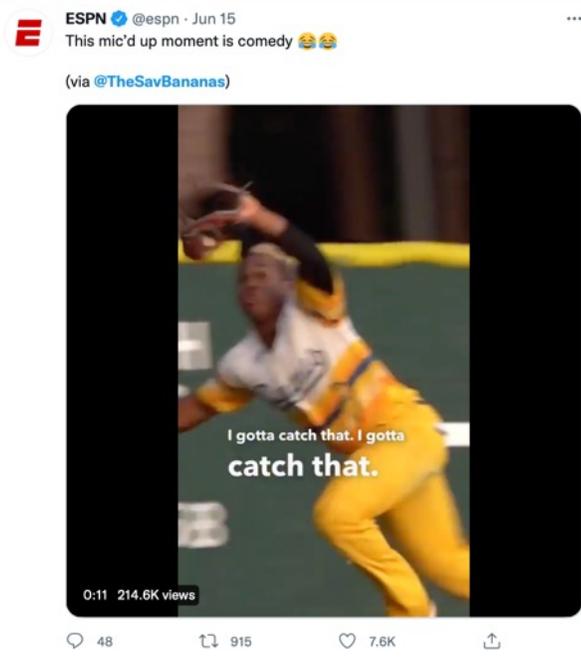
Savannah Bananas player goes all-out on Masters-themed intro

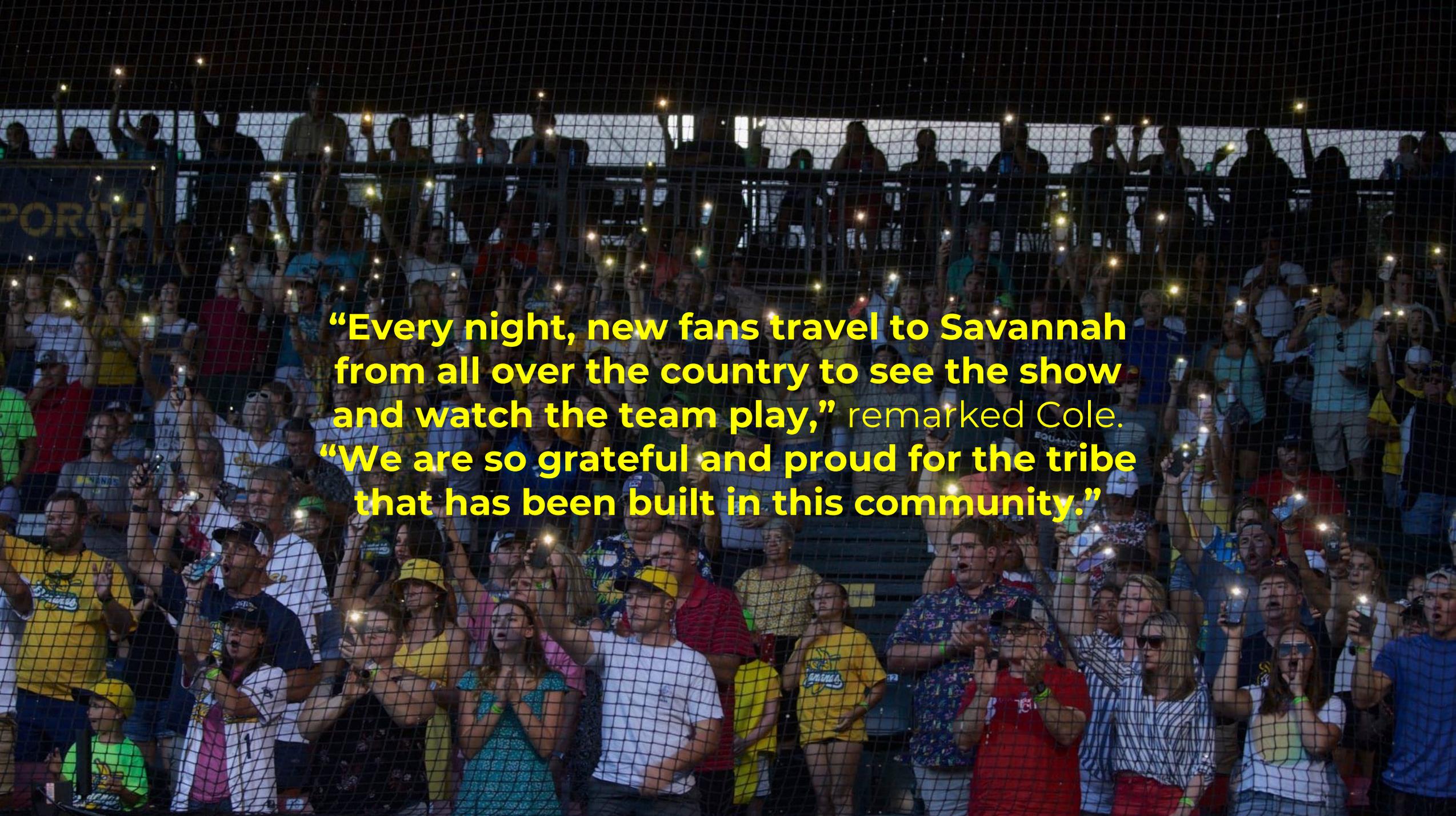
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Savannah Bananas owner calls on MLB to modernize

3M





“Every night, new fans travel to Savannah from all over the country to see the show and watch the team play,” remarked Cole. **“We are so grateful and proud for the tribe that has been built in this community.”**

THE PRODUCERS

Recently, Rumur and Fans First Entertainment collaborated on the ESPN SC Featured Short *The Ripe Stuff* - which introduced the story of the Savannah Bananas to millions of viewers worldwide.

For more than 20 years, award-winning film studio RUMUR has produced documentary projects for ESPN, HBO, NETFLIX, A&E, NBC, ABC, and PBS. Their work has been shortlisted for the Oscars and screened at the top film festivals around the world.

This past year, Rumur produced *Relative Unknown*, a popular 10-part true-crime series as well as the ESPN Film *Win or Else*, which tells the story of the first integrated team to win a national championship at Kentucky.

Fans First Entertainment manages the Savannah Bananas. The Bananas have been awarded Organization of the Year, Entrepreneur of the Year, and Business of the Year. Fans First Entertainment has been featured on the INC 5000 lists as one of the fastest growing companies in America. The Savannah Bananas currently have sold out every game since their first season. Fans First has welcomed more than one million people to their live events.



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