

Merchandise

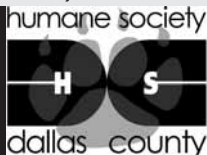
Animals, Pets & More

“Pets of the Week”



KAROLINE Momma Karoline was found with two babies, Kade and Kady, in front of an apartment complex. Within an hour of arriving at the shelter, they had four new adopted siblings, Karl, Karmel, Cassidy and Kasper -- little orphans who needed a family! Four of the kittens have gone to forever homes - but Karoline, Karmel and Kasper are still looking. Karoline likes to play and chase string toys. Loves fresh grass. Might take a little time to warm up, since she has been through so many changes, but ohhh, she is worth it!

TEX Our big Tex was found by a caring rescuer running around in Lancaster after the storms a while back. He had on a harness with a rope attached and matted hair so apparently escaped from some situation where he was obviously tied up. After a diligent search his family could not be located, he is not microchipped and he is now at the shelter looking for a new home - no dog likes to be tied up. Tex is energetic and playful and gets along fine with other dogs - he loves people and is happy when he receives attention - and has been doing just fine while he has been at the shelter. Tex is believed to be Papillion/mix - a very intelligent dog that is easily trainable and affectionate. Tex is not big, weighing between 10-15 pounds, he is very sweet and just wants a loving family who will keep him safe. Since he is so small, apartment life would be just fine for him. If you want to meet big Tex, please come and see him at Dog & Kitty City.



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The Grand Prairie AirHogs' fourth year of existence was their best yet. With new, local ownership taking over just before the season, the AirHogs did not have a great deal of time to prepare for the season.

The AirHogs lost their first two games to the Gary SouthShore RailCats, but won the next two to split the series, and then got hot, not losing a series until June when they were already entrenched in first place. The club cruised to its best record in franchise history, going 64-36 to take the American Association South Division crown by 16 games with the league's best record to boot.

Behind the stellar starting rotation of former National League Rookie of the Year and ex-Texas Ranger Jason Jennings, Josh Rainwater, John Brownell, the bullpen of Reliever of the Year Jon Hunton, Jon Fulton, Matt Sartor and Bo Schultz, and a powerful offense led by Greg Porter, Cesar Nicolas, David Espinosa, John Alonso and German Duran (another former Ranger), the AirHogs had the second best ERA in the league at 4.13 while hitting .297 overall as a team.

After dispatching the Wichita Wingnuts three games to one in the Division Series, on the strength of two dramatic comeback wins at home and a nail-biting 2-1 triumph behind Brownell and Hunton in Wichita, the AirHogs headed to St. Paul, Minn., to start the Championship Series against the Saints.

The AirHogs lost both games at Midway Stadium to put themselves in a hole, but coming back to QuikTrip Park Grand Prairie slipped by in Game 3 in extra innings, before routing the Saints in the final two games to claim the league championship for the first time in team history.

After a year of such great heights, 2012 may prove to be an even better one for the AirHogs.

Manager Ricky VanAsselberg, who has now won four championships in six years as a manager, including the last two American Association crowns, had a whole off-season to re-tool, and that's exactly what he did.

To returning players in Brownell, Porter, catcher Chris McMurray, outfielder Dave Thomas and pitchers Jakob Cunningham and Lance Janke, VanAsselberg has added a new veteran core to the lineup with sluggers Brian Myrow and Andres Rodriguez, as well as to the bullpen with former triple-A closer Justin Dowdy, who has played for VanAsselberg twice before.

The second-year AirHogs manager has also signed or traded for experienced hurlers in Griffin Bailey, Nick DeBarr, Stephen Faris and Cody White, with some youthful arms in Ryan Hanna, Mike Hart and Josh Strawn.

On the offensive side, McMurray will be joined in the battery by former Yankees farmhand Mitch Abeita, and the AirHogs traded for slugging infielder Trent Lockwood and speedy outfielder Keanon Simon.

Grand Prairie also signed Japanese infielder Yasutsugu Nishimoto and rookie infielder Seth Boyd.

While the roster may look somewhat different, there will still be some familiar faces

and the club should once again contend for the championship.

There will also be a slew of popular and new promotions for the upcoming season. The AirHogs will celebrate their 2011 championship with a ring ceremony before opening night on May 21, and will continue with magnet schedule and championship cap giveaways the first week of the season.

The popular Thirsty Thursday and Fireworks Saturday night promotions will return as well, along with an expansion of the "Jerseys/Shirts off our Backs" promotion that was a hit with the fans at QuikTrip Park in 2011.

A new league structure and interleague play with the Can-Am League will also see some new opponents during the 2012 season, with the AirHogs welcoming in the brand new Laredo Lemurs (managed by former AirHogs skipper Pete Incaviglia), along with the first visits of the Kansas City T-Bones and Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks as well as the Can-Am League's Newark Bears, and the first trip in several years for the Sioux Falls Pheasants.

Aside from opening the season in the new stadium in Laredo, the AirHogs will also visit Fargo for the first time and head up to the East Coast for a 10-game road trip to Little Falls, N.J., Pomona, N.Y. and Worcester, Mass.

Away from professional minor league baseball, the AirHogs staff is continuing to make QuikTrip Park a year-round venue for affordable family entertainment.

Already since the last pitch was thrown in the 2011 Championship Series, the AirHogs and QuikTrip Park have hosted the annual "Taste of Grand Prairie" event, Little River Band and Cory Morrow concerts, boxing, the 26th annual "Big Texas Toy Run" and two music festivals, "South by So What?!" and "Dayglow."

More concerts and festivals have been booked for 2012, with the return of the Taste of Grand Prairie, boxing and the Toy Run, along with high school and youth baseball tournaments, and plans are being made to have even more action at QuikTrip Park in the future.

The AirHogs are also fully committed to the community, making appearances at many events and schools throughout the area. The David Nicklas Organ Donor Awareness Foundation, the AirHogs' official charity, will also be the beneficiary of the annual golf outing, a championship ring raffle, and a daily 50/50 raffle that will help the Foundation.

The AirHogs' mascot, Ace Bacon, is also making himself more known throughout the area with an improved presence in the social media world. Visit him or the AirHogs on Facebook or Twitter, and watch the accounts for special giveaways and prizes.

The team has also unveiled a new Web site at www.airhogsbaseball.com and a revamped www.quiktrippark.com for more information about the stadium.

With all of this happening at QuikTrip Park, the fifth season of AirHogs baseball in Grand Prairie should be one that fans will never forget.

The Greensheet is not responsible for content in this article. For more information: Please visit www.airhogsbaseball.com.