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LITTLE

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: POLISH LITTLE LEAGUE  
WARSAW, POLAND  
MONDAY, JULY 10, 1989

Ladies and gentlemen, friends of Poland and America. Thank you for those words of welcome. It is indeed a pleasure to be in this great and lovely city.

Fifty years ago, an American institution was born: Little League Baseball. It has grown to become America's Ambassador of Goodwill, and the largest youth sports program in the world.

This year, that program has come to Poland. As have these words of the Little League pledge: "I trust in God," it says. "I love my country, and will respect its laws. I will play fair to strive to win. But win or lose, I will always do my best."

That spirit, of course, is Poland's spirit. And its values are Poland's values -- self-discipline, sportsmanship, teamwork, hard work.

We see these values in Poland's history, and her people. And in the many Poles who've enriched American baseball. Big-leaguers like Ted Kluszewski -- nicknamed Big Klu. Or Greg Luzinski -- the Bull. Or the Niekro boys -- Phil and Joe -- who won more games than any pair of brothers in big-league history.

Today, it's time to return the favor -- to help America enrich Polish baseball. These gloves, hats, bats, and jerseys will field 12 Little League teams. And bring our national

pastime to a place called home by \_\_\_ million Polish-Americans. And a land called friend by every American.

I understand that baseball came to Poland only a couple years ago. Yet already more than 1,000 kids are playing on 18 Little League teams in four cities -- Rybnik, Kutno, Jaslo, and Wroclaw. And more teams are on the way.

This equipment will help you. And I want to thank the Rawlings Company. And to all you boys, let me add: Take pride in Little League. For you're among over 20 million youngsters who've worn its uniform. This year alone, more than 2,000,000 Little Leaguers will play in 33 countries -- among them, Poland and three other countries chartered this year.

These are great times for Poland's Little League. And another great moment will come 13 days from now. For on that day America's Baseball Hall of Fame will induct the first former Little Leaguer. He's my good friend Carl Yastrezmski of the Boston Red Sox. And he's Polish.

In Cooperstown, New York, where the Hall of Fame is located, Yasztremski will join three other Polish-Americans. Al Simmons and Stan Coveleski. And Stan Musial -- Stanley Musielski -- of whom it once was said: "Here stands baseball's perfect warrior. Here stands baseball's perfect knight."

Stan Musial was already a major-league player by the time Little League was born. But he embodied its qualities, and Poland's. He was a humble winner, and a gracious loser. A man of generosity and pride. As the son of Polish immigrants in

Donora, Pennsylvania, he had a dream: to make the major leagues. Like so many Poles, hard work made his dream come true.

Perhaps you've heard the story of how, campaigning for the American Presidency in 1960, John Kennedy approached Musial in Milwaukee and introduced himself. Both men were in their early forties. "They tell me," Kennedy said to Stan, "that you're too old to play ball and I'm too young to be President, but maybe we'll both fool them."

They "fooled them," all right. JFK, of course, won the Presidency. And Stan The Man played three more years before retiring. Later, Musial said, simply: "My greatest thrill was just putting my uniform on every day."

My friends, I suspect you'll feel the same. Thank you, God bless you, God bless Poland and the United States, and "Podaj pilke" -- yes, Play Ball.

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