

# Grizzlies Announce Returning Position Players For 2024

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**SAUGET** –The Gateway Grizzlies are proud to announce that a large portion of their lineup from their 2023 West Division championship squad, including five All-Stars, has re-signed with the club to return in 2024 as they look to defend their division title and continue their chase for a Frontier League title.



Outfielder **Jairus Richards** comes back to Sauget after a record 2023 campaign that saw the Gig Harbor, Washington native set a new Frontier League record with 75 stolen bases, while also placing inside the league's top-five in batting average (.340), on-base percentage (.472), walks (68), and runs scored (82). In addition, Richards hit 16 home runs and 10 doubles while driving in 56 runs, and was one of the league's very best arms at his position defensively, finishing with 10 outfield assists. He earned both Midseason and Postseason All-Star accolades for his tremendous year.

Joining Richards at the top of the order will be **Gabe Holt**, who was on pace to set numerous records in 2023 as well before a hand injury just after the all-star break sidelined the second baseman for the remainder of the season. At the time of his injury, the Warner Robins, Georgia native was leading the entire Frontier League in batting average (.435), on-base percentage (.513) and total hits (83), along with 12 doubles, four homers, 31 RBIs, 49 runs scored, and 17 stolen bases. He also displayed some of the very best contact ability and plate discipline in the circuit, striking out just 10 times in 48 games played, and was voted a Midseason All-Star.

In the middle of the order, **Peter Zimmermann** brings his formidable bat back to the Grizzlies' lineup in 2024 for his third season with the team. The St. Louis native crushed the competition all year long, tying for first in the Frontier League with a .481 on-base percentage, and placing second in the league with a .361 batting average and .674 slugging percentage. Despite being limited to only 71 games played, Zimmermann also finished inside the league's top-5 with 83 RBIs, and added 21 home runs, 18 doubles, and 93 total hits. In addition, he was voted a Midseason All-Star in July, and finished second in the Home Run Derby competition.

Another all-star and St. Louis native on the infield returns to the "hot corner" in 2024 in **D.J. Stewart**. The third baseman turned in an outstanding, well-rounded season in 2023 by batting .306 with 13 home runs, 22 doubles, 25 stolen bases, and 105 hits across 89 games played. Stewart also drove in 77 runs, good for seventh-most in the Frontier League, and was voted a Midseason All-Star.

A staple on the Grizzlies infield for the past three years, **Abdiel Diaz** will also return in 2024 for his fourth season with the club. The switch-hitter batted .270 with 11 doubles, four homers, 37 RBIs, and 20 stolen bases in 67 games in 2023. He was also outstanding with his glove at shortstop, as he did not make a single error at the demanding position until the second half, and was also voted a Midseason All-Star.

Yet another St. Louisan in **Mark Vierling** comes back for another go-around with his hometown club after providing the Grizzlies with a valuable presence in a utility role in 2023. In his professional debut season in 2023, he batted .282 with six homers, 11 doubles, and 39 RBIs in 74 games while seeing time at five different positions defensively, including as the club's everyday shortstop down the stretch and into the postseason.

Behind the plate, **Willie Estrada** has also re-signed with the Grizzlies for next season. Starting most of his 59 games behind the dish, the Kissimmee, Florida native hit .259 with 10 doubles, six homers, and 29 RBIs for the West Division champs as part of a strong catching core.

A pair of late-season additions to the active roster this past year will also make Sauget their baseball home in 2024. Outfielder **Cole Brannen** signed with the Grizzlies after being released by the Florence Y'alls, and proceeded to make the Gateway outfield among the very best in the league on defense with his speed and glove work. At the plate, the Macon, Georgia native and former 2<sup>nd</sup>-round MLB Draft pick hit .230 with 10 RBIs as well as 19 stolen bases in only 36 games.

Finally, one of the best stories of 2023 was the emergence of hitting coach **Kyle Gaedele**. After not seeing action as a pro player since 2018, the shorthanded Grizzlies activated the Arlington Heights, Illinois native in July, and he responded by hitting .286 with 11 homers and 32 RBIs in only 37 games, providing the team with much-needed power and production down the stretch. He comes back in 2024 as a full-time player-coach, mentoring the Grizzlies' hitters in addition to returning as a veteran player.

The Grizzlies will release more information on their official player signings for 2024 in the coming days. Follow along with the team on social media (Facebook, X, and Instagram) as well as GatewayGrizzlies.com for updates as the team prepares for an exciting 2024 season!

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*The Gateway Grizzlies are a professional baseball team, located a mere 10 minutes from downtown St. Louis in Sauget, Illinois. The Grizzlies offer baseball fans affordable, family fun at Grizzlies Ballpark with a great view of the St. Louis skyline. They have also won two Frontier League Organization of the Year Awards, four West Division titles, and the 2003 Frontier League Championship. For tickets or general information, please visit [gatewaygrizzlies.com](http://gatewaygrizzlies.com) or call (618) 337-3000.*

*The Frontier League debuted in 1993, and is the largest of the Major League Baseball Partner Leagues, featuring teams stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River, and from the Ohio River to the St. Lawrence Seaway. More information and the complete 2023 schedule can be found at [frontierleague.com](http://frontierleague.com).*