



THE BIG BUSINESS OF SPORTS TOURISM

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SPORTS COMMISSIONS

Hosting amateur and collegiate tournaments and championship events is one of the hottest areas in sports business right now. And, cities, states and regions across the country have responded to the new demand for high quality facilities and amenities by providing innovative production strategies and spectacular new facility construction.

In this special advertising section, we showcase some of the convention bureaus and sports commissions that are setting new standards for localities competing for these prize sports properties. From high school volleyball to NCAA championships, athletes, families and attendees have never had more and better choices for staging unforgettable events.





Youth sports defy economic slumps

Since the Great Recession of 2007, cities and events organizers have learned one truth — that youth and amateur sports tourism is recession resistant.

The dollars parents spend for their kids and themselves to travel to sports tournaments and championships flow unabated, regardless of the economic climate.

"Parents will forgo a regular family vacation to make sure their child and his or her team go as far as possible in league play," said Don Schumacher, executive director of the National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC). "Those families spend nights in hotels, fill restaurants and take in the local sights while attending a tournament. As cities and organizers have come to realize that these dollars don't go away, we've seen a shift from nonprofit events to more profit-minded organizations."

The NASC began in the late 1980s as an affiliation of sports commissions that came together to discuss the rising cost and competitiveness of bidding for amateur sporting events. It formally began operations in April 1992 with 15 members and a \$35,000 budget. Today, the NASC, the only trade association for the sports tourism industry, has an annual budget in the low millions and expects to reach 700 members by the end of 2014. The NASC's goal is to deliver quality education, networking opportunities and event marketing and management know how to members.

"Since the NASC's founding, sports tourism has experienced steady, sustainable growth, even after 9/11 and after the recession took hold in 2007," Schumacher said.

According to the NASC annual study, in 2012, sports tourism was responsible for \$8.3 billion in direct spending nationwide. One year later, sports tourism grew to an estimated \$8.7 billion.

That recession-resistant quality of sports tourism can be a double-edged sword for cities, Schumacher said. Cities that land tournaments are filling hotels and restaurants and bringing new dollars to town. On the other hand, profit-minded event organizers are demanding — and getting — higher and higher bidding fees from cities to host those events, along with commissions and rebates for hotel rooms booked.

"Those profit-minded owners are primarily focused on youth events, such as boys baseball or girls fast-pitch softball," said Schumacher, "but college sports organizers are hardly immune. Even colleges and universities are driving harder and harder bargains with cities, and some cities are complaining about the pressure."

Every year, the numbers of traditional sporting events increase and, every year, new sports, such as Tough Mudder obstacle races, come online. And every year, cities grapple with how best to analyze the costs of hosting events versus the real dollars a city can hope to bring to the community.

"When a city compares what an event



Sports travel, particularly for youth and amateur sports competitions, is the fastest growing segment of the leisure travel market, according to the National Association of Sports Commissions. Parents often turn tournament travel into family vacations.



will cost in bidding fees against what the city hopes to generate in taxes on hotel rooms and in visitor spending in the local economy, very often a true economic analysis will not have taken place," Schumacher said. Cities are often inclined to overestimate the positive economic impact of an event.

The NASC recommends that cities look only at the estimated direct spending from an event to create a fair cost analysis as opposed to a more vague economic impact analysis. The association provides its members with a formula for those calculations.

"A direct spending analysis is safer," Schumacher said. "You can estimate the number of people who came to town for an event and more directly add up how much they spent on hotels and restaurants. But an economic impact projection tries to calculate how much the waitress then spent at the grocery store and how much the grocery store cashier spent somewhere else and on and on. That's where you get in trouble. No one's going to ever come up with a



low economic impact number."

Schumacher cautions that even direct spending figures are still estimates. "A city can show that new dollars came into the city," he said, "but you can't pinpoint precisely where the money came from."

The downside to overestimating dollars spent, Schumacher said, is that event organizers use a previous host city's economic impact estimate to drive up the cost for the next round of bidding.

"There's a lot of profit-making," said Schumacher. "And it's placed on the traveling teams and the people traveling to support those teams. Organizers will offer teams bargains on registration fees, then recoup their costs by demanding hotel room rebates and commissions. Organizers are turning a \$100 hotel room into a \$150 room

and the cost of that room is out of the hands of the hotelier, the city and the parents. If anyone gets blamed for the cost, it's the hotel and city, not the event organizer. We've got to get a handle on room rebates and commissions. We've got to have hotels and cities push back."

It's not uncommon, he said, for a family with kids in sports to spend \$900 attending a single tournament. Cities and organizers are relying on the good will of those parents to continue. But, if room rebates and commissions continue, he warns that participation in youth and amateur events may decline.

"People coming to see a friend run a marathon or parents coming to see their kids play soccer will stop coming because the rooms are simply too expensive for them," Schumacher said. "And that may be the undoing of the seemingly recession-resistant sports tourism industry."

Schumacher recommends that cities begin building some of their own events. Homegrown events, created and owned either by a sports commission or in partnership with local leagues and teams, generate plenty of advantages. Cities don't have to pay bid fees, rebates or room guarantees. City-owned events can act as "quality of life" events for its own residents, as well as attract visitors. And, most importantly, the event doesn't leave town when another city makes a higher bid.

"I don't ever see a day when cities don't bid on events," Schumacher said. "But the big trend in the sports tourism industry now is toward more and more communities building their own. In the end, that trend may be the one thing that puts a lid on bid fees." ■





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The NASC Symposium is the #1 convention for sports destinations and event owners to attend each year.



April 27-30, 2015



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Columbus builds reputation as sports hub

Columbus is a city on the rise, building a national reputation as a premier sports destination, with spectacular growth in the number of tournaments and championships hosted in recent years.

"We want visitors who come to a sporting event in Columbus to become an ambassador for our city and share all that we have to offer," said Linda Shetina Logan, executive director of the Greater Columbus Sports Commission. "Columbus is a sports-loving town and that's reflected in the variety of events hosted here."

The sports commission works with grass-roots sports groups, local businesses, colleges and universities, government entities



Along with its experience handling major sporting events, Columbus offers a fun downtown that's convenient, walkable and affordable.

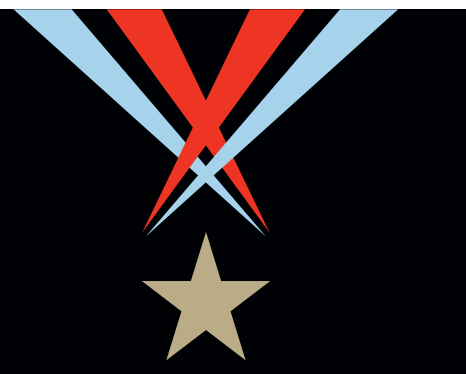
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UPCOMING COLUMBUS EVENTS

- 2014 NCAA Division III Track & Field Outdoor Championships
- USA Fencing National Championships
- 2015 NHL All-Star Celebration
- Big Ten Wrestling Championships
- National Collegiate Fencing Championships
- NCAA Men's Basketball 2nd & 3rd Rounds
- Big Ten Softball Championships
- USA Volleyball Boys' Junior National Championships
- NAGAAA Gay Softball World Series
- 2016 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Quarterfinals
- NCAA Women's Volleyball National Championships
- National Collegiate Men's Gymnastics Championships
- U.S. Senior Open
- USA Half Marathon Championships
- 2017 NCAA Division II Women's Basketball Elite Eight
- National Collegiate Men's Volleyball Championships
- 2018 Big Ten Women's Swimming & Diving Championships
- National Collegiate Women's Swimming & Diving Championships

and the city's professional sports teams in its efforts to keep Columbus' sports community strong.

This summer, Columbus hosted more than 10,000 athletes and fans for the USA National Fencing Championships. In the spring, the NCAA held its Division III Outdoor Track and Field Championships here.

The calendar for Columbus over the next 12 months is packed. The city will host the USA Diving Winter National Championships; NHL All-Star Celebration; and Big Ten's women's swimming and diving championships, wrestling championships and softball championships. The NCAA Men's Basketball second and third rounds are scheduled for March and the National Collegiate Women's Gymnastics Regionals are set for April.

In the last 10 years, Columbus has hosted more than 50 NCAA championships and 25 Big Ten championships in every field from baseball and basketball to rifle and synchronized swimming.

In 2013, the city hosted the FIFA Men's World Cup qualifying match between the U.S. and Mexico for the fourth time in a sold-out 24,000-seat Crew Stadium, which was the first soccer-specific stadium built for Major League Soccer as home of the Columbus Crew.

Central Ohio also hosted the PGA's prestigious international golf tournament, the Presidents Cup, at Muirfield Village Golf Club. Muirfield Village, home of the Memorial Tournament presented by Nationwide Insurance and a course designed by Columbus native Jack Nicklaus, became the first in the world to host the Presidents Cup, Ryder Cup and Solheim Cup.

"The Presidents Cup was a great example of how collaborative our region can be for major events, and not just the golf tournament, but also the creation of the ancillary activities and added touches necessary to ensure a great experience for all," said Logan.

Columbus brings thousands of visitors

SEE COLUMBUS, PAGE 42



Columbus will host the **NCAA Division I's men's basketball second and third rounds** in March.

GREATER COLUMBUS SPORTS COMMISSION



New venues ensure Sioux Falls' success

Two newly opened, multi-million dollar sports venues have established Sioux Falls, S.D., as the premier sports destination in the Midwest.

"We have had so much growth that Sioux Falls has become recession-proof," said Mattie Burnham, director of sales for the Sioux Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau. "And we already had so many youth sports here that we wanted to up the ante for the sports world in the Midwest."

Anchored by the Sanford Pentagon, the newly completed Sanford Sports Complex is 162 acres of all thing sports. Opened in September 2013, the Pentagon is a 160,000-square-foot facility with the premium NBA-sized Heritage Court as the epicenter of the nine basketball courts. Outfitted with state-of-the-art equipment, the Pentagon, designed to evoke a 1950s gymnasium, turns back the clock for fans. The Pentagon, which has already hosted several college and professional exhibition games, is home to the NBA D-League Sioux Falls Skyforce.

The Fieldhouse on the complex grounds is the premier indoor sports facility for athletic training, soccer, baseball, softball and football with 62,000 square feet of indoor turf. The Sanford Fieldhouse, which is also used for athletic rehabilitation, is the future home of the National Institute for Athletic Health and Performance.

Scheduled to open this year on the complex grounds are the Scheels IcePlex and Sioux Falls Community Tennis Center. Phase I of the IcePlex will feature three sheets of ice, the ideal number for large youth hockey



Visitors can take in downtown's Falls Park along with other area attractions like the Sculpture Walk, the Outdoor Campus and the Delbridge Museum of Natural History.

SIoux FALLS CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

tournaments. The tennis center will house seven indoor tennis courts to provide a year-round, high-quality experience for players and spectators.

The Sanford Sports Complex features nine outdoor football fields and academies for baseball, football, basketball and volleyball. A Fairfield Inn and Suites and a restaurant are on the grounds to accommodate visitors.

"The Sanford Sports Complex is a game-changing venue for sports in Sioux Falls", said Burnham. "We're bringing in NBA exhibition

games and college games. We have football recruiting camps scheduled. And when the IcePlex with its three sheets of ice is finished, we'll be able to tap into the hockey tournament market like never before."

In downtown Sioux Falls, workers are placing finishing touches on the Denny Sanford PREMIER Center, a multipurpose facility for basketball, hockey, rodeo and trade shows. The 12,000-seat facility joins an existing adjacent entertainment complex that features an 8,000-seat arena and convention center. The center shares grounds with

a hotel, a 10,000-seat football and track stadium and a 4,000-seat baseball stadium. The PREMIER Center will serve as home to the indoor football team Sioux Falls Storm and the USHL hockey team, the Sioux Falls Stampede.

The city also offers Yankton Trails Park, a 21-field soccer complex, and the Tomar Park Soccer Complex, with 10 fields complemented by outdoor tennis courts, a basketball court and a sand volleyball court. Sioux Falls has two additional outstanding baseball and softball complexes at Sherman Park, with nine lighted softball fields, and at Harmodon Park, with seven baseball and eight softball fields.

Sioux Falls is easy to access, served by a newly renovated airport, with five major carriers, and two major interstates. New hotels and restaurants and plenty of attractions, from the downtown SculptureWalk at Falls Park to indigenous history center to Native American arts and culture, ensure visitors are engaged and enjoy their visit beyond their sports experience.

The Outdoor Campus, a learning and outdoor center run by the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department, is ideal for learning to canoe and kayak, fly fish or snowshoe. The campus is adjacent to the Sertoma Butterfly House and near the Great Plains Zoo, Delbridge Museum of Natural History and U.S.S. South Dakota Battleship Memorial.

"We call ourselves a 'big small city,'" said Burnham. "We're easy to access in every way and we have plenty to see and do for our sports visitors."



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- New Sanford Sports Complex • Denny Sanford PREMIER Center open fall 2014 •

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OKLAHOMA CITY CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

The Amateur Softball Association's world-class stadium is undergoing a \$20 million renovation.

OKC is full package: great facilities, fun

Oklahoma City is more than you might expect.

For starters, Oklahoma City is the only city hosting three NCAA Division I championships in 2014, said Sue Hollenbeck, director of sports business for the Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"After the Final Four, there are five big championships in college sports," said Hollenbeck. "Oklahoma City is hosting three of them."

In addition to its longstanding role as host of the NCAA Division I softball championship, Oklahoma City hosted Division I wrestling in March and is slated to host Division I volleyball in December. Oklahoma City, home to the Amateur Softball Association, has hosted the Division I Women's College World Series every summer since 1990.

The city's already world-class softball stadium is undergoing a \$20 million renovation, growing from 9,000 seats to 13,000, and adding an upper deck and an underground complex that will include dugouts, locker rooms and meeting spaces.

"We have continuously built a softball empire here in Oklahoma City," Hollenbeck said. "Softball is one of the fastest growing sports. We actually get calls in September from people wanting tickets for the next summer."

Oklahoma City is also headquarters for USA Canoe/Kayak. The Oklahoma River, running near downtown, serves as the training site for Olympic flat-water canoeing and kayaking and as a training site for USRowing. The city is also building a whitewater center on the river that is scheduled to open in 2015.

In addition to facilities, Oklahoma City offers a hidden gem of a downtown.

"It's walkable, it's safe and it's affordable," said Hollenbeck. "Downtown offers a wide variety of things to do and gives visitors real local flavor with our restaurants, bars, shopping and activities. When you come to Oklahoma City, you get the full package – a great, well-run event in outstanding facilities along with a great vacation. I think that comes as a surprise to people."

The city is big enough to offer a variety of fun for visitors, but not so big it is indifferent to visitors.

"When you come to Oklahoma City for a tournament, everyone's excited you're here," Hollenbeck said. "People greet you at the airport, people hang banners everywhere, everyone knows why you're here."

Hollenbeck attributes Oklahoma City's success to its history of overcoming adversity and the unexpected. In the 1889 Land Run, the area grew from a few souls to 10,000 res-



OKLAHOMA CITY CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

The Oklahoma River, above, serves as a training ground for USA Canoe/Kayak and USRowing. Oklahoma City's Bricktown is a center for dining, entertainment and hotels.

idents in a single day. The city suffered one of the worst modern tragedies with the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building and economic turmoil in the oil bust of the 1980s.

"We believe in 'teamwork through adversity,'" said Hollenbeck. "We know we will achieve our goals only if we do it together. And that's the spirit that carries us today."

The city hosts more than 25,000 runners annually for the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon in honor of the 168 people killed in the bombing.

Most recently, Hollenbeck pointed out, was Oklahoma City landing an NBA franchise.

"Nobody ever thought a city our size could support an NBA team," she said. "Nobody but us. A group of businessmen got together and decided, 'If we build it, they will come.'"

The Chesapeake Energy Arena was finished in time for Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The city played host to the New Orleans Hornets, successfully filling seats for the next two years. In 2008, the Seattle SuperSonics left the Northwest to become the Oklahoma City Thunder.

"From youth and amateur sports to the NCAA to Olympic hopefuls to professional teams, we cover the gamut," said Hollenbeck said. "We want to do all of the things we do and do them better than anyone else. Who would think 'rowing' when they think Oklahoma City? Oklahoma City IS the unexpected."



Raleigh's Trademark: Key Partnerships

Through a combination of strong partnerships with more than 20 local organizations and a wealth of world-class facilities, Greater Raleigh has emerged as one of the nation's leading destinations for sports events.

"The key to our success is our host partners," said Scott Dupree, executive director of the Greater Raleigh Sports Alliance (GRSA). "That's our trademark. That's what makes Raleigh such a great sports town. It's all about teamwork and partnerships. We have so many teams, colleges and universities, venues, municipalities and clubs that not only host championship events, but host them incredibly well."

Greater Raleigh and surrounding Wake County are coming off a successful spring, hosting a slew of major events.

In March, Greater Raleigh and North Carolina State University welcomed the second and third rounds of the NCAA men's basketball tournament at PNC Arena, making 2014 the third time the area hosted March Madness events in the last 10 years. According to Dupree, the tournament generated more than 10,000 hotel room nights and \$4.2 million in direct visitor spending.

Right on the heels of the basketball tournament came the first ever Rock 'n' Roll Raleigh Marathon and 1/2 Marathon in April.

"The Rock 'n' Roll Raleigh Marathon and 1/2 Marathon was an inaugural event for us and a major success," said Dupree. "We had 12,500 registered runners from 49 states and seven nations."

Rock 'n' Roll Raleigh generated more than 7,400 hotel room nights and \$8.1 million in total economic impact, according to a study by San Diego State University. More than 18,000 visitors came to Raleigh for the event. The Greater Raleigh Sports Alliance (raleighsports.org, [@raleighncsports](https://twitter.com/raleighncsports)) has a five-year contract with the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Series and Dupree expects even more success over the next four years.

In June, the Greater Raleigh Sports Alliance brought in the Ironman 70.3 Raleigh for the second consecutive year. Registra-

SEE RALEIGH, PAGE 42



Greater Raleigh hosted numerous competitions this year, including NCAA men's basketball, the Rock 'n' Roll Raleigh Marathon and 1/2 Marathon and Ironman 70.3 Raleigh.

We can offer you everything under... the blimp.

- 2014 NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL 2ND & 3RD RDS
- 2014 ROCK 'N' ROLL RALEIGH MARATHON & 1/2 MARATHON
- 2014 IRONMAN 70.3 RALEIGH
- 2014 NCAA BASEBALL DIVISION II WORLD SERIES
- 2013 NCAA WOMEN'S COLLEGE CUP
- 2013 GREAT AMERICAN CROSS COUNTRY FESTIVAL
- 2011 NHL ALL-STAR WEEKEND
- MULTIPLE ACC & N.C. HIGH SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIPS
- CASL VISITRALEIGH.COM NATIONAL SOCCER SERIES

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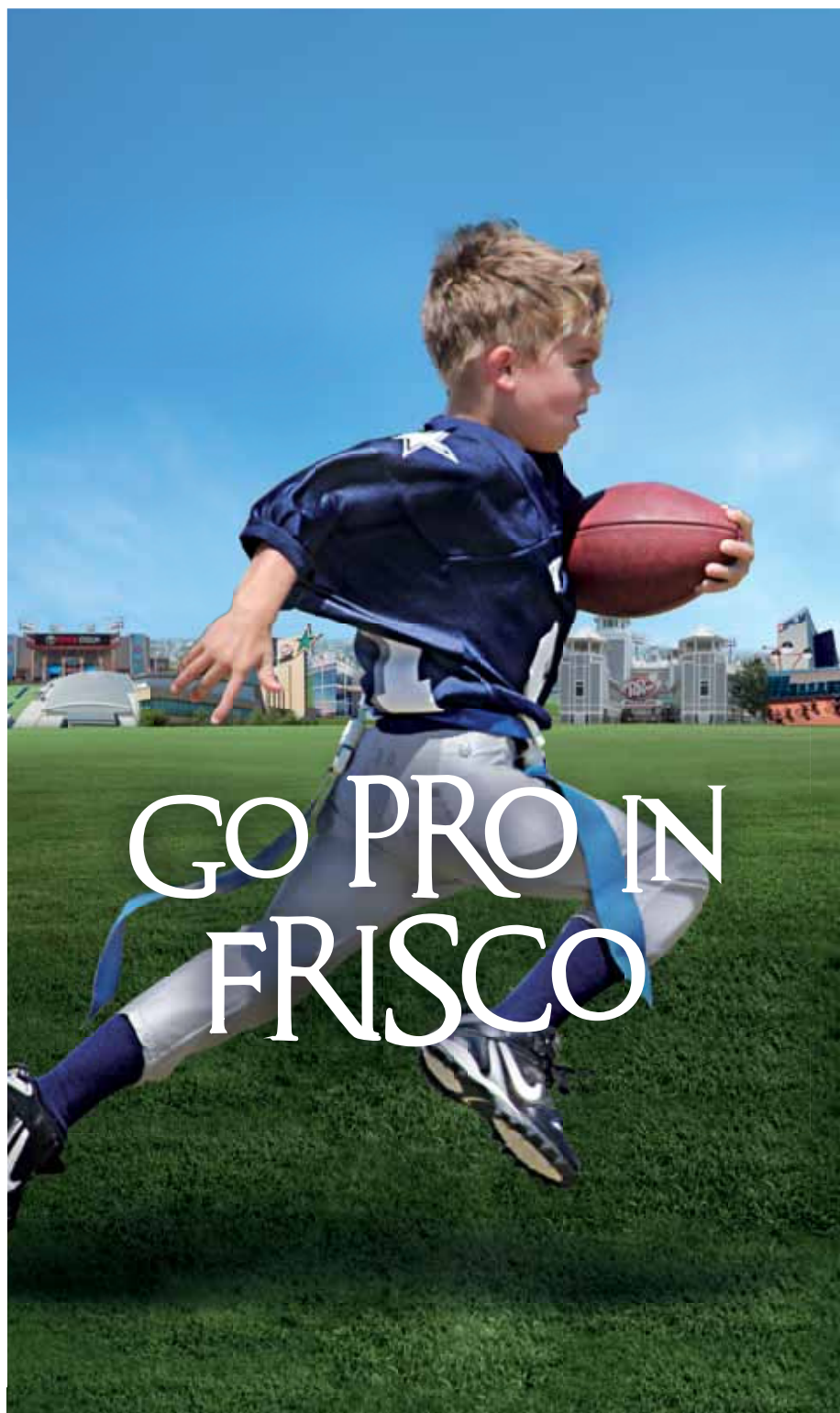
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A division of the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau

A Sampling of Sporting Events in Greater Raleigh in 2014

- NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, second and third rounds
- Rock 'n' Roll Raleigh Marathon and 1/2 Marathon
- Ironman 70.3 Raleigh
- NCAA Baseball Division II World Series
- NCAA Men's College Cup
- ACC Men's Soccer Championship
- Great American Cross Country Festival
- CASL visitRaleigh.com National Soccer Series
- SAS Championship, part of the PGA Champions Tour
- U.S. Lacrosse Southeast Championships
- USA Baseball Tournament of Stars
- Deep South Classic
- ACC Tennis Championships
- NCAA Division I Men's Golf Regional
- 12 N.C. High School Athletic Association State Championships



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Toyota Stadium, home of the MLS FC Dallas, features 17 tournament soccer fields for youth and amateur competitions.

Frisco tailor-made for sporting events

Frisco, Texas, goes hand in baseball glove with youth and amateur sports. Frisco, 20 minutes north of Dallas, is one of the fastest growing cities in America, with a population that skews young. In 2011, Men's Journal magazine named Frisco "the best place in America to raise an athlete."

"Being the home to four major sports teams that have affiliations with the NBA, NHL, MLB and NFL provides us the opportunity to have quality well-managed venues to use for our youth and amateur sporting events," said Maria Roe, executive director of the Frisco Convention and Visitors Bureau.

While FC Dallas plays professional soccer at Toyota Stadium, the complex features 17 tournament soccer fields for youth and amateur players. In addition to soccer tournaments, the complex serves as the site for such diverse sports as USA Ultimate disc football and flag football.

The Dallas Stars and the NBA D-League Texas Legends practice and play at Dr Pepper Arena, Roe said, but the 6,000-seat arena is more than just ice and basketball events. The state-of-the-art arena's flexibility means it's frequently reconfigured to fit other tournaments, as varied as gymnastics and trampoline championships.

In July 2016, the Cowboys will open the Dallas Cowboys World Headquarters and Training Facility on 91 acres in Frisco. A 12,000-seat multi-use indoor stadium will anchor the facility. The Cowboys have already partnered with the Frisco high schools to allow them to play both regular season and championship football games in the stadium.

"The partnership between the Cowboys, the city of Frisco and the Frisco Independent School District to build a multi-purpose facility will not be just a great addition for the local teams, but an optimal facility for any sports organizer in the country that looks at Frisco to host its next event," Roe said.

Frisco is also in the midst of breaking ground on the PIT (Performance Training Center), a 60,000-square-foot indoor soccer facility. In addition to youth soccer games and tournaments, FC Dallas will use the PIT for training.

"It's a wonderful addition to our inventory of sporting venues and is very high-tech," Roe said. "Families that cannot make the trip will be able to log in from home and watch their kids play soccer."



State-of-the-art Dr Pepper Arena is frequent site for basketball and hockey tournaments, along with gymnastics and trampoline competitions.

The complex will feature five indoor fields, one of which is regulation size, and a regulation-sized outdoor field.

Also in the works for Frisco is a new swim and tennis facility, scheduled to open this year. Frisco Aquatics, a local swim club affiliated with USA Swimming, is building the First Interval Natatorium complex, which will have an Olympic-sized competition pool for training and for state and national swim meets. Volleys Tennis club is breaking ground on a new venue that will feature 12 outdoor and five indoor tennis courts.

Tournaments and championships come to Frisco because of the quality and volume of facilities, said Roe, and because Frisco is both sports friendly and youth friendly.

Almost half of the city's fast-growing population is under the age of 18, which means the city has a great mix of things for visiting players and their families to do when the tournaments are finished for the day, from go-karting to indoor skydiving to games and food at Dave and Buster's.

"The vision the city government has with its master plan of parks, residences, retail and sports is great," Roe said. "A big driver of our success has been our exemplary-rated school district, which has attracted young families — including some Cowboys players and their families — which, in turn, has brought us exemplary sports facilities for both youth and amateur sports and professional teams. And the quality of our facilities cultivates our tournaments and championships."



Intersport events wow fans, TV audience

For nearly 30 years, Intersport has been building live sports properties from scratch, using its unique set of capabilities to create seamless, nationally televised events that benefit athletes, host communities and sponsors.

"We're traditionally known for our television production and sponsorship marketing divisions," said Drew Russell, vice president of sports properties for Intersport. "The live sports properties division combines both of those elements to showcase all of our great capabilities."

Since its founding in 1985, the Chicago-based company has been a leader in sports and entertainment marketing, with expertise in sponsorship strategy and activation, experiential marketing, media production and digital and social media.

Intersport's eight live sports properties include Under Armour All-America Football and the Hockey City Classic.

The Under Armour All-America Game, which brings together the best and brightest in high school talent, showcases the innovation and expertise for which Intersport is known. Since the inaugural contest in 2008, the Under Armour game has seen several of its participants become NFL professionals, including first-round picks Julio Jones, A.J. Green, Trent Richardson and Jadeveon Clowney.

For the Under Armour game, Intersport flies elite players and coaches from across the nation to Orlando for a week of televised practices at the ESPN Wide World of Sports complex, culminating in a nationally televised game at St. Petersburg's Tropi-



The Under Armour All-America Game brings together the best and brightest in high school football talent.

cana Field.

In addition to a one-of-a-kind experience for a nationwide audience, Intersport weaves together a week of unique travel experiences for the players, along with an annual community service project.

"Last year, the student-athletes spent the day putting together bicycles with kids from the local Boys and Girls Club," said Russell. "These young athletes realize that someone along the way has given them a hand. This is an opportunity for them to give back."

The week makes an impact on the host city, bringing players, coaches, families and staff members to Orlando.

"We fill 2,500 to 3,000 room nights in

Orlando over the course of the week," Russell said.

Now in its second year is Intersport's Hockey City Classic, 18 days of hockey-related events that culminate in a college doubleheader. The inaugural event, which took place in Chicago, marked the first-ever hockey game played at Soldier Field, home of the NFL Chicago Bears.

"We wanted everyone to have a chance to be a part of this experience," Russell said. "We wanted the city — the entire state — to embrace this event, not just as a spectator, but as a participant. We had everyone from the six-year-old Mites to the Chicago Blackhawks seniors on the ice."

The nearly three-week festival was capped with a double-header played by the University of Notre Dame, Miami University (Ohio), University of Wisconsin and University of Minnesota.

"We sold tickets in 47 states," Russell said. "Chicago is a great tourism city, but in January and February, it's cold, making it a downtime for visitors. With the Hockey City Classic, we brought in 4,000 hotel room nights — a major increase for that time of year."

Russell estimated the classic brought Chicago \$15-20 million in direct spending. Of the 52,000 attending the outdoor games, about 25 percent were visitors to Chicago.

"Our business is built on relationships," he said. "We have strong relationships in every market with sports commissions, sponsors, the local media and community leaders. We believe in getting things done the way we want them done — and that's in a first-class manner — and we believe that's why cities and sponsors continue to want to do business with us."

Intersport expects to double the number of its live sports properties within the next five years, Russell said.

"We want to put innovation and creativity together to bring more events to life," Russell said. "The key to our success has been our focus on giving people what they want — unique experiences — not only on-site, but across the nation from a television perspective. Our heritage is that we create content and experiences that engage passionate audiences. That's why we will continue to grow."

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Palm Beach's service means return clients

Palm Beach County Sports Commission's motto is "Just Bring Your Game," and with good reason.

Event organizers will find it easy to love the variety of world-class facilities in Palm Beach County, but will also find themselves blown away by the sports commission's dedication to serving their event.

"When an organization decides Palm Beach County is the best location for an event, then our work has only begun," said George Linley, executive director of the Palm Beach County Sports Commission. "We can help an event owner handle all business aspects of managing the event so the owner can focus strictly on the

sports-specific components of their tournament."

The Palm Beach County Sports Commission offers a wide range of services to event organizers, free of charge. The commission can handle marketing and public relations, as well as operational and logistical support. It can find volunteers, source equipment and manage operations from concessions to parking to security. It will assist in identifying local sponsors for an event, help organizers develop event layouts and work as a liaison between the event organizers and the venue management to keep planning flowing smoothly. It even works to keep organizers on budget.



PALM BEACH COUNTY SPORTS COMMISSION

Palm Beach County is home to a host of tournaments and competitions, including swimming.

"We pride ourselves on our high level of event servicing," Linley said. "We want you to have as successful an event as possible. We want to help you grow it and we want to make sure you come back. We connect all the dots for you to make life as easy as possible."

In addition to services, the Palm Beach County Sports Commission offers financial incentives to bring events to town.

"Those incentives help rights holders offset their costs to come here and to come back in the future," Linley said. "When we invest in tournaments and sports events, not only financially but with our time and service, that investment comes back to us in big benefits to our county and economy."

When the PGA hosted the Honda Classic in March, 190,000 people, including star players Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson, came through the county, along with millions of dollars.

"Well worth the investment," said Linley.

SEE PALM BEACH, PAGE 42



PALM BEACH COUNTY SPORTS COMMISSION



PALM BEACH COUNTY SPORTS COMMISSION

Palm Beach County can host large youth and amateur tournaments in a single location thanks to its partnerships with venues, such as the International Polo Club Palm Beach.

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MASON FISCHER



GREATER BIRMINGHAM CVB (3)

Birmingham knows more than football, regularly hosting events as varied as bass fishing tournaments to USA Wheelchair Rugby. Some of the city's outstanding venues include, from left, the Birmingham Crossplex for swimming and track, the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex and Barber Motorsports Park.

Birmingham sports expertise goes wide, deep

From professional Grand Prix races to youth soccer, Birmingham has deep experience hosting any sports event.

"Although Alabama is known for our football, we go way beyond that," said David Galbaugh, director of sports sales and marketing for the Greater Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau. "We're gymnastics championships, we're marathons and tennis and golf and bass fishing."

The key to all that variety can be summed up in one word — facilities.

Barber Motorsports Park, with its 2.3-mile track, is home to the Honda Indy Grand Prix of Alabama every April, and is comparable to the best of European Grand Prix racing. The annual event attracts more than 80,000 fans from 43 states and three nations. The park's museum houses the world's largest collection of motorcycles.

The Birmingham CrossPlex is another example of the area's great offerings. Built in 2011, the facility boasts one of the finest indoor track and field stadiums in the nation, as well as an Olympic-sized natato-

rium that hosts college swimming and diving championships. The track is one of only eight in the world with a unique, state-of-the-art Mondo banked track. The facility is fully flexible and can be configured to host volleyball, wrestling, cheering and gymnastics events.

The Birmingham area also features one of the nation's premier golf courses, Shoal Creek Golf Club, which is the annual host of Regions Tradition, a major tournament on the PGA's Champions Tour.

The Lakeshore Foundation strengthens the area's strong ties to the U.S. Olympic Committee and the Paralympic movement as one of the few combined Olympic and Paralympic training sites in the U.S. The barrier-free athletic complex features Paralympic training and competitions in wheelchair basketball and rugby, track and field, power soccer, wheelchair tennis, marksmanship and swimming.

Lakeshore Foundation is headquarters for USA Wheelchair Rugby. In March, the facility held the Lakeshore Cup, a women's wheel-

chair basketball tournament with teams from Australia, Japan and the U.S.

As headquarters to the SEC, Southeastern Athletic Conference and Gulf South Conference, Birmingham frequent hosts college and university events. The NCAA awarded the city five championships over the next four years, including the College Cup, which is the Final Four of men's soccer. This year, the city hosted the NCAA women's gymnastics championship. In 2015, University of Alabama-Birmingham will be the site for Conference USA's men's and women's basketball championships.

"People always think of the SEC for football, but the conference has strong programs in a lot of sports, including gymnastics and golf; and we regularly host those championships, too," Galbaugh said.

The city and surrounding region have welcomed other big events in recent years, such as the USTA Southern League Championships, called the world's largest tennis tournament, at the Pelham Racquet Club. The city has also hosted Davis Cup and Fed

Cup matches at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex.

Birmingham features strong homegrown events as well, including the annual Mercedes Marathon, which brings in more than 10,000 runners. The city annually welcomes Alabama volleyball and basketball high school championships.

With the Bass Angler Society headquartered in Birmingham, the "Bass Capital of the World," was the site of February's Geico Bassmaster Classic. Fishing took place on nearby lakes with the outdoor exhibitions and weigh-ins at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex.

The city and surrounding region cooperate seamlessly to handle events bigger than any one facility, Galbaugh said.

"All of our local entities work well together from our professional facilities to our high school stadiums to create well-run, dynamic experiences for our visitors," he said. "We run the gamut. We are very enthusiastic about sports of all kinds in this town and we can handle anything you bring our way." ■

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BIRMINGHAM



SFA at vanguard of venues trend

The big story in the sports industry now is the "professionalization" of youth and amateur sports and sports tourism, said Dev Pathik, chief executive officer and founder of Sports Facilities Advisory.

"A real shift in the sports industry is that travel and tourism professionals are more focused on youth sports than ever before," Pathik said. Communities know that tournaments and events attract tens of millions of dollars in new spending.

Clearwater, Fla.,-based Sports Facilities Advisory and its sister company, Sports Facilities Management, are at the forefront of that trend.

The trend has grown to the point that Sports Facilities Advisory currently oversees 1.5 million square feet of indoor facilities and 600 acres of outdoor facilities. The company's future roster will require 9 million square feet of artificial turf and hundreds of thousands of hardwood courts.

Sports Facilities has been the advisor or management company for The Myrtle Beach Sports Center; Tampa Bay Sports Commission; Round Top, Texas; Rocky Top Sports World; Spooky Nook Sports and the list goes on.

"When the economy crashed in 2008, the convention center model was hard hit," Pathik said. "At the same time, youth and amateur sports travel continued to grow and that industry has taken off."

It's now common for travel tournaments and championships to host 300



SPORTS FACILITIES ADVISORY

Sports Facilities Advisory and Sports Facilities Management oversee more than 1.5 million square feet of indoor sports facilities nationwide.

teams in a single event, a significant economic boost to any city fortunate enough to serve as host.

Sports Facilities Advisory and Sports Facilities Management lead communities through the process of planning, funding and managing sports travel facilities.

Together Sports Facilities Advisory and Sports Facilities Management have served a portfolio totaling more than \$4 billion in planned and operational facilities around the world.

"Here are our proof points: Rocky Top Sports Complex in Gatlinburg opened in July and we're already at 100 percent of our full year's projections for bookings," Pathik said. "We are achieving these results by professionalizing every aspect of marketing, management and financial tracking and we hope that it will elevate the entire youth and amateur sports industry." ■

Maryland growth in sports facilities ensures quality events for owners

Centrally located in the Mid-Atlantic region, close to most of the nation's major Eastern cities, Maryland is the ultimate destination for sporting events.

"It's a 'one-tank-of-gas' destination," said Terry Hasseltine, director of Maryland Sports, Maryland's sports commission. "Not only is it easy to get here, but you can drive from mountains to beaches and hit every basketball court, soccer field and field hockey pitch in between."

Youth and amateur sports organizers have responded. Maryland, for example, has become the epicenter of lacrosse in the U.S., so much so that lacrosse is the official state team sport.

Over Memorial Day weekend, the state welcomed the NCAA Divisions I, II and III Men's Lacrosse Championships, the NCAA Division I Women's Lacrosse Championships and the U.S. Women's Lacrosse National Tournament, while simultaneously hosting the Columbia Invitational, a 685-team youth soccer tournament.

"In those three days, we welcomed more youth and college athletes than many states and cities do in a year," Hasseltine said. "And that's just one example of the volume of tournaments and championships we bring to Maryland."

Maryland is a four-season sport state with venues from mountains to cities to waterways. Garrett County in western Maryland's mountains will host paddlers from 40 countries in the International Canoe Federation Slalom World Championships in September. This summer, Ocean City kick-started the

10th anniversary of the Dew Tour with five days of skateboarding and BMX competitions in front of record-setting crowds.

And, in July, Maryland hosted the inaugural International Crown, a premier global women's golf tournament with a \$1.6 million purse. The LPGA brought teams from the eight top-ranked nations to Caves Valley Golf Club in Owings Mills, just outside Baltimore.

"Sports tourism has grown exponentially over the last decade," Hasseltine said. "And Maryland has grown along with it, offering more fields, more venues and more quality experiences to athletes than ever before." ■



MARYLAND SPORTS / KEVIN MOORE

Maryland, the epicenter of lacrosse in the U.S., regularly hosts college, youth and amateur tournaments in several sports often with hundreds of teams.

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KERRY HUFFMAN

Pittsburgh, long known for its professional teams like the Pittsburgh Pirates here at PNC Field, is a natural for hosting youth and amateur competitions.

Pittsburgh's dedicated to quality sports

Pittsburgh has long been associated with success in professional sports, but, in recent years, the city has made a name for itself at every level of competition.

"We've established ourselves as a professional sports town and it naturally follows that people would turn to us for amateur and youth sports as well," said Craig Davis, CEO and president of VisitPITTSBURGH. "We've done a great job in recent history of creating venues and resources to appeal to the youth and amateur sports market."

Case in point — the East Coast Volleyball Championships for high school girls' club teams. The tournament, which attracts 5,000 girls and their families, is a great way to end the season for teams not competing in the USA Volleyball Championships.

Pittsburgh offers some of the world's best professional sports facilities that can be used for amateur and youth sports.

"After East Coast played here once, they decided they had to be in Pittsburgh every year," Davis said. Now in its seventh year in Pittsburgh, the tournament's annual estimated economic impact is \$2.2 million.

Pittsburgh is successful because of the quality and diversity of its venues. The David L. Lawrence Convention Center, for example, is column free, which means it can be configured to house any number of indoor sports under a single roof, including volleyball, basketball and cheerleading competitions.

Pittsburgh offers some of the world's best professional sports facilities that can be used for amateur and youth sports, as well, including Heinz Field, home of NFL's Steelers; PNC Park, home of MLB's Pirates; and Consol Energy Center, home of NHL's Penguins.

"We also have colleges and universities in Pittsburgh with tremendous facilities of their own," Davis said. Those include the new 12-acre Petersen Sports Complex and the 12,000-seat Petersen Events Center, both at the University of Pittsburgh. Robert Morris University's Island Sports Center boasts Olympic and NHL regulation-sized hockey rinks.

With the leadership of the Penguins, Pittsburgh has built a strong infrastructure for hockey and is able to host substantial, multiple youth tournaments, from locally grown

annual hockey tournaments to USA Hockey National Championships.

"In recent years, we've been able to showcase Pittsburgh as a true hockey town," Davis said. In 2013, the city hosted the NCAA Men's Frozen Four, which brought 18,000 people to the city, along with \$10 million in spending. The city also hosted the NHL Winter Classic in 2011 and the NHL Entry Draft in 2012.

"Bottom line, Pittsburgh is successful because of its recent investments in venues," Davis said. "It makes it easy for us to host sporting events."

Another key to Pittsburgh's success is location. It is less than a six-hour drive or 90-minute flight, from most of the U.S. population.

On tap for August is the USA Gymnastics' premier event, the P&G Gymnastics Championships, in Consol Energy Center. VisitPITTSBURGH anticipates that the four-day event, with 15,000 athletes, fans, coaches and judges, will result in an estimated \$12.6 million in direct spending.

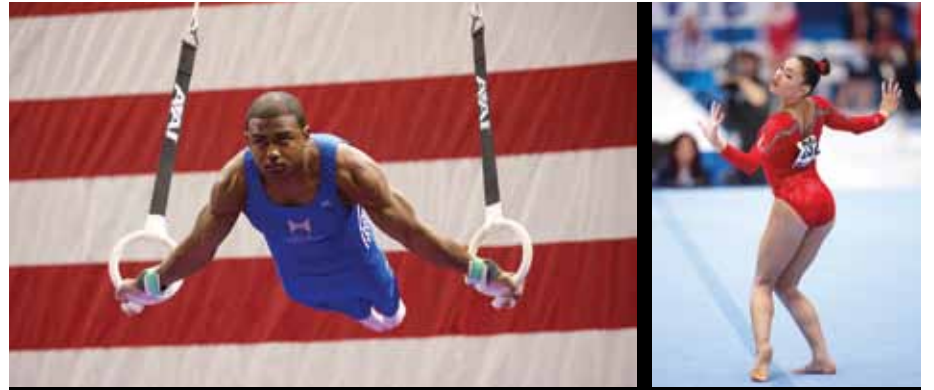
The city will host the Atlantic 10 Conference Cross Country Championships this year and, in 2015, will welcome the second and third rounds of NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Championships.

Pennsylvania has more golf courses per capita than any other state and Pittsburgh was recently named the second-best U.S. city for public golf. For the past three years, the city has hosted the Constellation Senior Players Golf Championship at the iconic Fox Chapel Golf Club.

In 2016, Pittsburgh will again welcome the USGA's Men's U.S. Open Championship at the renowned Oakmont Country Club. Oakmont was site of the U.S. Women's Open in 2010 and the Men's Open in 2007.

When the competition ends, Pittsburgh offers a compact, safe, walkable, affordable and action-packed downtown with more than 100 restaurants, nine live theaters, scores of attractions and plenty of nightlife. More than 2,500 hotel rooms representing all brands and prices are within walking distance of the convention center, Consol Energy Center, Heinz Field and PNC Park.

"Sports are a big thing in this city — at every level," Davis said. "It's ingrained into our very being. And our residents want nothing more than to invite athletes and their fans, from youth to professional, into our city and show them our level of commitment and dedication to sports."



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Elizabethtown Sports Park has pro flavor

Elizabethtown Sports Park plays like the pros. Set on 150 acres, this Kentucky complex sets the gold standard for outdoor youth sports as one of the largest and most comprehensive in the country.

The professionally managed complex, with 12 baseball and softball fields, 10 natural grass soccer and football fields, two full-sized synthetic turf fields and a diamond for physically disabled athletes, is built with many of the same features as professional sports.

With stadium-quality lighting, tournaments can last into the night, and professionally designed drainage and irrigation systems keep the fields playable when the weather fails to cooperate. There's even a WiFi tower for parents and coaches to set up live streaming. The artificial turf fields stretch the tournament season from mid-March for softball to December for soccer and football.

Players feel like they're in the big leagues when they leave their covered, brick dugout to take the field. Each of the diamonds has a warning track to protect outfielders, bullpens for safe relief-pitcher warm ups and wireless scoreboards.

Elizabethtown Sports Park is built to keep fans and families happy. For younger fans, the park has four play-



ELIZABETHTOWN SPORTS PARK

Players feel like the big leagues at Elizabethtown Sports Park, a venue that treats every athlete like an All-Pro.

grounds with cool-water misting stations. Parents love that all the seating is shaded. And restless fans can take advantage of the three-mile walking path that surrounds the complex.

"We want our players to be treated like rock stars," said Janna Clark, the park's sports and sales director. "We want them to feel they're playing like the pros. For many families, this is their vacation and we want them to feel that it's worth every minute. Parents are spending their money on sports travel rather than other kinds of travel. The youth sports travel market is a very important, very special market to us."

Those families and players are responding. In only its second year of operation, Elizabethtown Sports Park is booked, with 50 events scheduled from mid-March to December, bringing thousands of athletes and families from every state to Elizabethtown. ■

Jacksonville has big city amenities along with small-town hospitality

Big enough to host a Super Bowl, yet small enough to make every visitor feel important, Jacksonville has honed the art of sports and sports tourism.

"We are dedicated to making every visitor feel like the big fish in a small pond," said Katie Mitura, director of marketing and product development for Visit Jacksonville. "People think of Jacksonville for our pro teams, but we're also a hub for youth and amateur sports travel."

The University of North Florida's Hodges Stadium is a dedicated track and field venue featuring a MondoTrack SX surface, which gives Jacksonville the ability to host large-scale track events, said Mitura. Hodges Stadium is one of only seven U.S. facilities to receive certification from the International Association of Athletics Federations.

The city regularly welcomes the NCAA's Eastern track and field preliminaries, along with Florida high school and Amateur Athletic Union events.

"We have the USATF Junior Olympics coming in 2015, as well as the USATF Masters Outdoor Championships," said Mitura.

In keeping with Jacksonville's strong soccer following, the city regularly hosts youth and amateur tournaments at Patton Park Fields, home of Jacksonville FC. The 120-acre park features 12 year-round soccer fields and a football field.

The state-of-the-art Jacksonville Equestrian Center routinely hosts regional and national events showcasing the best in horse competition. Regarded as one of the premier equestrian facilities on the East



TODD DREXLER / SE SPORTS MEDIA



VISIT JACKSONVILLE

University of North Florida's Hodges Stadium, top, and the Jacksonville Equestrian Center play host to youth and amateur athletes from across the nation.

Coast, the 1,700-acre facility is home to rodeos, dressage, bull riding and barrel racing.

Some of Jacksonville's signature sporting events include golf's The Players Championship and Web.com PGA Tour Championship, both played at TPC Sawgrass; and, at EverBank Field, the TaxSlayer Bowl, formerly the Gator Bowl. EverBank Field also welcomes the annual mash-up between University of Florida and University of Georgia in the classic SEC football rivalry. ■



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Massachusetts' dedication means winning events

A passionate fan base for every sport, from fencing to the Frozen Four, historic and world-class venues and a dedicated and experienced events team ensure rights holders will find Massachusetts a blue-chip destination for every event at every level.

"People think of Massachusetts for its professional teams and their facilities, such as our iconic Fenway Park, but we offer outstanding venues in communities across the Commonwealth for college, youth and amateur sports," said Shannah McArdle, director of the Massachusetts Sports Marketing Office, a department of the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism.

Sports Marketing works collaboratively with regional tourism councils, communities,

colleges and universities and venues to ensure premier events for rights holders. Event organizers know they will receive needed support from both local experts and a statewide team of dedicated sports marketing professionals.

"Basketball was invented in Massachusetts," McArdle said. "And that, in itself, exemplifies our state's long passion for sports. We bring an electric atmosphere and record numbers of fans to events at every level. We love nothing better than a good competition."

Massachusetts and its communities have a proven track record for handling a wide variety of events. The NCAA has awarded Massachusetts several major championships

over the next few years, including Division I championships in men's hockey, fencing and men's volleyball, along with the Division II Field Hockey Championship.

In addition to hockey, Massachusetts' communities are well known for their quality venues in ice skating circles, having hosted the U.S. Figure Skating Championships this year and, in 2016, welcoming the ISU World Figure Skating Championships.

Boston is home to a popular stop on the PGA Tour, the Deutsche Bank Championship at the Tournament Players Club of Boston.

And, the state has a long history of hosting gymnastics competitions, including the USA Gymnastics America Cup and USA Gymnastics Women's Visa Championships.



The MassMutual Center in Springfield, Mass., has hosted NCAA Division II Elite Eight men's basketball.

"Massachusetts brings excitement to every sporting event it hosts, whether that's basketball and lacrosse or rowing and water polo," McArdle said. "Our dedication and our rich sports tradition ensure every event here is a winner."

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Myrtle Beach: Ready to play ball with new center

Tournament organizers can walk into the Myrtle Beach Sports Center in South Carolina ready to play ball, knowing the 72,000 square feet of column-free space is already set up and staffed.

The sports center will be a one-stop shop for event organizers. The Myrtle Beach Sports Center's staff will set up events for organizers and provide ticket takers, scorekeepers and other event staff. Organizers can take advantage of plentiful hotel rooms, and, in the off-season, reduced rates.

"Sports tourism is a natural fit for Myrtle Beach," said Mark Beale, director of the center's marketing and business development. "What's better than coupling your beach vacation with your kid's sports tournament two blocks from the Atlantic? The reason people vacation here is the same reason people bring their tournaments here. You're steps away from shopping and entertainment and you're steps away from the Atlantic Ocean."

The Myrtle Beach Sports Center, owned by the city of Myrtle Beach and managed by Sports Facilities Management, will open in March 2015. The center's bookings are already at 75 percent of Sports Facilities Management's first-year projections.

Myrtle Beach's centralized location is another natural draw for tournaments



MYRTLE BEACH SPORTS CENTER

The Myrtle Beach Sports Center will enhance the sports tourism market in this South Carolina beach town.

from all over the East Coast.

"We're such an easy drive," said Beale. "Colleges bring their spring training here because they say, 'Why drive all the way to Florida when we can stop halfway?'"

The Myrtle Beach Sports Center will bring basketball, volleyball, wrestling and other tournaments under one roof.

"We have wildly successful tournaments, with 350 teams, but until now, they've been scattered all over the city," Beale said. "With the center and our adjacent convention center, we can house most of them in one location. And having more facilities will allow tournaments, like the Winter Bump volleyball tournament, to double in size. The Myrtle Beach Sports Center will be able to handle 130 basketball teams on its own." ■

Twitter: @mbsportscenter

Facebook: Myrtle Beach Sports Center

Website: MyrtleBeachSportsCenter.com



ROCKY TOP SPORTS WORLD

Rocky Top Sports World, which opened in July, is creating a new generation of repeat visitors for Gatlinburg, Tenn.

Rocky Top Sports opens with a 'wow!'

When Rocky Top Sports World in Gatlinburg, Tenn., opened in mid-July, the reaction from parents and athletes was "wow!"

"We had an amazing opening weekend," said Lori McMahan Moore, Rocky Top's director of marketing and business development. "We had four tournaments going on the first week — basketball, volleyball, lacrosse and seven-on-seven football."

Bookings for Rocky Top Sports World already far surpass first-year projections, said Moore. She's expecting about 40,000 athletes and spectators to use the youth sports complex in the first 12 months.

The complex, with an indoor facility housing six hardwood courts for basketball and volleyball and seven outdoor fields for soccer, lacrosse, football and band competitions, is owned by the city of Gatlinburg and Sevier County.

It's the newest project to come online for the Sports Facilities Advisory and Sports Facilities Management, sister companies that helped bring Rocky Top to life, from the initial feasibility studies to marketing and management and operation of the complex.

"Youth sports is the fastest growing segment of the leisure travel industry," Moore said. "Right now is the premier time for Rocky Top to come into the marketplace. Families are turning tournament travel into a 'sportcation.' Rocky Top Sports World, combined with all the great attractions we have in the area, turns Gatlinburg and the Smoky Mountains into an ideal destination for teams."

Event planners nationwide are bringing tournaments for every season.

"Our six synthetic turf fields mean we can host tournaments from January to December," said Moore. "Even if it's snowing, the fields are playable. Rocky Top Sports World really opens the door for teams to compete at a higher level."

And, most importantly, Rocky Top Sports World, with its focus on kids aged six to 16, is creating a new generation of repeat visitors to Gatlinburg.

"The long-term results of Rocky Top Sports World extends far into the future, from repeat tournament guests to reunions and family vacations," Moore said. "We're creating a Gatlinburg-for-life visitor." ■

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Pensacola Sports Association: Proud Past, Bright Future

As the Pensacola Sports Association celebrates its 60th anniversary, PSA Executive Director Ray Palmer keeps one eye on the past and another firmly on the future.

"We're really good at staying focused on what we do well," Palmer said. "We're always looking to grow, but with a firm eye on making sure we are going to be successful. That old under-promise and over-deliver mantra, we spend a lot of time focusing on that."

Pensacola delivers with a unique blend of beauty and activity that combines to make it the perfect sports event destination. The PSA helps stage more than 50 events annually and the economic impact on the region is significant. A commissioned study last year by the University of West Florida Haas Business Development Center found an annual impact of up to \$22.5 million each year between 2009-12.

The upcoming Pensacola Marathon in November is a signature event and a case study in success. After taking over manage-

ment of the marathon a few years ago, the PSA shifted the date from mid-February to Veteran's Day weekend.

The marathon in Pensacola, which serves as home to the famed Blue Angels Naval Flight Demonstration Squadron, has now evolved into the centerpiece of a full-fledged holiday festival.

"We enjoy, not just partnerships, but cooperation with a multitude of groups — arts and culture and entertainment — and so this year we have a new conglomeration of events that are going to run about 10 days surrounding the Veteran's Day weekend," Palmer said. "We honestly would rather have more things than you can possibly do in Pensacola than be the lone event here that weekend."

A myriad of adventures is just waiting to be had in this picturesque part of North Florida along the Gulf of Mexico. In addition to its breathtaking white sand beaches, Pensacola also boasts a bevy of cultural diversions, including the symphony, opera, theaters and museums.

"The history of Pensacola is significant and I think a lot of people aren't aware of that until they get here, learn about it and explore," Palmer said. "We've got a great lighthouse, beaches, the world's largest Naval aviation museum and the Blue Angels."

The PSA has helped attract a wide variety of guests and events to the area. Under the terms of a three-year contract with the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association, Pensacola will host NIRSA's national flag football championship event in January.



PENSACOLA SPORTS ASSOCIATION

The Pensacola Marathon, a signature event for the city, is the centerpiece of an annual 10-day festival in November around Veterans Day. Below left, a Marine helicopter monitors the runners' progress.

The Pensacola Double Bridge Run, a 15K point-to-point race that starts in downtown Pensacola and runs to the beach, draws 30 percent of its 4,000 entrants from outside markets. The NCAA Division II men's and women's soccer championships are returning for a third time in 2015 and volleyball is on tap in Pensacola for 2017.

Minor League Baseball's Pensacola Blue Wahoos, the Double-A affiliate of the Cincinnati Reds, play at Pensacola Bayfront Stadium. Baseballparks.com named the stadium, which has views of the bay looming just off the outfield, the 2012 Ballpark of the Year.

There is something for every sports enthusiast in Pensacola and getting there is

easy. The city has the largest airport between Jacksonville and New Orleans with more flights than its regional counterparts in Mobile and Tallahassee combined. Interstate 10 runs from Jacksonville to the west coast right through Pensacola, making it extremely accessible to the drive markets.

Pensacola's bright future has been forged on its proud past with the PSA playing an integral role throughout.

"We've been a component of our community for 60 years," Palmer said. "We take great pride in trying not to be something we're not. We try and find where we're needed and fill that void. I think we're conservative, but moving forward at the same time."



PENSACOLA SPORTS ASSOCIATION

Pensacola...Explore the Challenge, Discover the Fun!



For 60 years, Pensacola Sports Association has helped event organizers create successful sporting events. From youth teams to nationally recognized events, we have the know-how and the facilities to attract participants and help your event run smoothly. When the competitions are over, you'll find miles of sugar-white beaches, delicious coastal cuisine and a historic downtown, ripe for exploration. **Bring your event to Pensacola and see why Pensacola has been loved by explorers since 1559.**





COLUMBUS, FROM PAGE 28

each year for its homegrown events, including the Capital City Half Marathon, with 15,000 runners, and the Nationwide Children's Hospital Columbus Marathon, which is celebrating its 35th year. The 2014 Arnold Sports Festival, held in Columbus every March, is the world's largest multi-sport fitness event with 175,000 sports fans and 18,000 athletes.

The city is home to more than 21 high school championships annually, one of the highest numbers for any individual city in the country, and will welcome back the Ohio High School State Football Championships to Ohio Stadium, home of the Ohio State Buckeyes football team.

In December, the NCAA awarded Columbus nine championships in seven sports from 2015 to 2018, one of the highest number of championships awarded to an individual city. Those events range from Division I Women's Volleyball and Division II Women's Basketball Elite Eight to NCAA Rifle Championships. The city will host the NCAA Division I Men's Lacrosse Quarterfinals in 2016.

"We're fortunate to have NCAA Division I,



GREATER COLUMBUS SPORTS COMMISSION

The Presidents Cup, a prestigious stop on the PGA Tour, was held at Muirfield Village on a course designed by Columbus native Jack Nicklaus.

II and III colleges based in Columbus," said Logan. "They make our city a natural draw for the NCAA, which appreciates a city that hosts a great event and treats all the division levels as equally special."

The North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance Gay Softball World Series will return to the city in 2015. The city has booked the U.S. Senior Open for 2016 and the USA Track and Field Men's and Women's

Half Marathon Championships for both 2016 and 2017.

All of those sports events translate into hundreds of millions of dollars in direct visitor spending in Columbus. Logan estimates that since 2002, the sports commission has brought more than 240 new sporting events to Columbus that generated an estimated \$500 million in visitor spending.

"Facilities are our strength," Logan said. "Ohio State University has almost a mini-Olympic village of fantastic venues. We're one of only a few cities to feature two 20,000-seat arenas. We work closely with our professional teams and colleges as their facilities set us apart and that's what gives us the ability to host all of these events."

Add to that Columbus' long experience with handling major sports events, as well as a strong city infrastructure, plenty of hotel rooms and a fun, compressed downtown that's convenient, affordable and walkable.

"Our city collaborates to make all of our community feel welcome and taken care of," Logan said. "Columbus is big enough to handle large events; we roll out the red carpet to make our visitors feel like their event owns this city."

RALEIGH, FROM PAGE 31

tions were capped at 3,200 athletes — a growth of 700 athletes from 2013 — who came from 41 states.

"The GRSA is delighted and proud to have partnerships with two of the most respected and highly regarded brands in the sports event industry — Ironman and the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Series," said Dupree.

The fourth signature event for spring 2014 was the Deep South Classic, a girls' basketball showcase in the Raleigh Convention Center. Twenty courts were set up in the exhibit hall to accommodate 328 teams from throughout the U.S., up from 272 teams in 2013. More than 400 college coaches came for scouting and recruiting. Deep South generated more than 7,000 hotel room nights and \$2 million in direct visitor spending.

The GRSA is anticipating more successes throughout the next 12 months. The area will host three more NCAA championships, including the NCAA Men's Col-



GRSA

The Raleigh Convention Center plays host to the Deep South Classic, a signature girls' basketball tournament, this year boasting 328 teams from across the U.S.

lege Cup, considered the Final Four of men's soccer, at WakeMed Soccer Park in Cary. In May, Cary will host the NCAA Baseball Division II World Series at the USA Baseball National Training Complex and Raleigh will host the NCAA Division I Women's Golf East Regional at Lonnie Poole

Golf Course.

Greater Raleigh houses some of the finest sports facilities in the nation, said Dupree. PNC Arena, with seating for almost 20,000 and 66 luxury suites, has hosted NCAA men's and women's basketball tournaments, Stanley Cup Finals, NHL All-Star Weekend and the NHL Entry Draft. WakeMed Soccer Park in Cary is the beneficiary of a \$6.4 million expansion that saw its seating capacity grow to 10,000.

Other venues include Five-County Stadium for baseball in Zebulon; Carter-Finley Stadium for football at N.C. State University; Cary Tennis Park, one of the largest in the Southeast with 29 lighted courts; the USA Baseball National Training Complex in Cary, the home of amateur baseball in the U.S.; Walnut Creek Softball Complex, with nine fields; and the WRAL Soccer Center with 25 fields.

The Raleigh Convention Center, home to the Deep South Classic, is a multi-purpose state-of-the-art facility with more than 500,000 square feet under cover, including a 150,000-square-foot exhibit hall.

"For most rights-holders, the single biggest factor in selecting a site is the quality of the venue," Dupree said. "We are fortunate here in Greater Raleigh to have a large number of world-class facilities. Other factors that strengthen our bids include our superb host partners and the abundance of hotel rooms. We're convenient and have a great climate. But most of all, we have tremendous community support and we provide all our visitors with a dynamic experience. All these factors combine to make Greater Raleigh a premier sports event destination."



- raleighsports.org (website)
- [@raleighncsports](https://twitter.com/raleighncsports) (Twitter)

PALM BEACH, FROM PAGE 34

"And a lot of those visitors had such a great time in Palm Beach County that they'll come back for a second visit to take in all the other things they missed."

But, Linley said, the gatekeeper to all that success is in the quality of venues found in Palm Beach County's 38 municipalities. One of the premier venues is the International Polo Club Palm Beach, both for its nine polo fields and for its commit-



PALM BEACH COUNTY SPORTS COMMISSION

The International Polo Club Palm Beach can be converted into soccer fields to host hundreds of teams for a single tournament.

ment to partnering with the sports commission to bring other amateur events to Palm Beach County.

Last fall, the polo club hosted 4,400 college- and high school-aged girls — 260 teams — for the National Hockey Festival. That Thanksgiving weekend tournament brought in almost 13,000 room nights and an estimated \$8.9 million in direct spending.

"We were able to bid on that event because of the polo club," said Linley. "They converted six polo fields into 33 field hockey pitches and used another two fields for parking. We were able to offer organizers 33 pitches in one location, which was key to our winning the bid. It's tough for other cities to compete with that. Very few places can host 260 teams at one venue."

Having the polo club as a partner has enabled the sports commission to bring other big amateur tournaments to town, such as lacrosse and soccer.

With its 160 courses, Palm Beach County is known as "the golf capital of Florida," Linley said. Those courses include the Jack Nicklaus-designed Champion Course at



PALM BEACH COUNTY SPORTS COMMISSION

The Delray Beach Tennis Center is a favored stop on the ATP World Tour.

PGA National Resort and Spa.

The Palm Beach International Equestrian Center in Wellington is home to the FTI Consulting Winter Equestrian Festival, which draws elite riders, including Olympic athletes, from around the world.

"We had 20,000 participants over 12 weeks this year," Linley said. "And those par-

ticipants were very affluent spenders. They accounted for 80,000 room nights in hotels and vacation rentals and \$100 million in economic impact."

The Delray Beach Tennis Center, with an 8,000-seat stadium and 20 courts, is a favored stop on the ATP World Tour and Champions Tour, as well as for amateur tournaments.

Jupiter's Roger Dean Stadium, the spring training complex for the St. Louis Cardinals and the Miami Marlins, with 13 diamonds offers plenty of room for amateur baseball tournaments.

In addition, Florida Atlantic University boasts a 30,000-seat football stadium, which was the site of last spring's international friendly between 2014 World Cup winner Germany and Ecuador.

"We've had some banner years," Linley said. "In the last year, we've supported 122 events for 171,000 room nights. I attribute that to, not only the growth in the sports travel market, but to the Palm Beach County Sports Commission's high level of investment in quality services along with the expansion and growth of our venues."