

THE OFFICIAL QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR FLORIDA SPORTS TOURISM

THE VICTORY STAND



FALL 2026



FLORIDATM
SPORTS
— FOUNDATION —



PLAY WITH A PURPOSE!

VICTORY VISION

Opening reflections and vision for FSF's future.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Maicel Green, President/CEO

Stock cars, lacrosse sticks, pom-poms, and pool cues. Welcome to Florida's fall calendar, and what a calendar it is.

On September 17, the Board approved 25 grants worth almost a million dollars. The events they back are expected to draw 272,352 out-of-state visitors and generate more than \$267 million in spending. That comes to about \$274 for every dollar we put up. Any banker would frame that return.

The list of events reads like a sporting goods catalog. Stock cars in Pensacola for the Snowball Derby and in Miami for the NASCAR Cup Series Championship. Lacrosse in Manatee County. Soccer from Tampa Bay to the SEC Championship: triathletes, BMX riders, softball players, cheerleaders, volleyball players. There is also a billiards championship, which proves that in Florida even the pool tables draw a crowd.

What I love most is the range. Professional championships and youth tournaments share the same list, and each one fills hotels, restaurants, and bleachers in a Florida community. Pro or youth, big or small, each event brings families to town and pride to its host.

Anyone who grew up in youth sports knows that feeling. I was once that young athlete in the back seat on the way to a meet, and my parents were the economic impact. They took off work, paid for the hotel, fed a hungry runner, and bought gas for the car. We were sports tourists before the phrase existed. To us, it was just the drive to the competition.

So, when I read this list, I think about all families who will make these trips this fall and carry the memory for a lifetime. I still carry mine.

One of the things I appreciate most about this program is that these figures are only the beginning. While they represent our initial projections, the broader story unfolds after each event as we collect actual results and measure impact. More importantly, that impact continues well beyond the event itself through increased visitation, economic activity, stronger partnerships, and future opportunities for our communities. Each event builds upon the next, allowing us to continue measuring our progress, expanding our reach, and celebrating the lasting impact of sports across Florida.

To the sports commissions and CVBs who bid, host, and deliver: thank you. You do the work, and we get to support and cheer.

MEET OUR BOARD

Since April 2019, the Governor appoints members of the FSF Board, ensuring alignment with statewide leadership and oversight priorities. HB5 aligns the FSF board appointment policies with gubernatorial appointment policies. It also requires each gubernatorial appointee to complete the gubernatorial appointments application, reinforcing a consistent and transparent selection process.



Jesse Biter
Biter Enterprises, Chairman



Jay Feaster
Tampa Bay Lightning



Sean Flynn
SureAthlete



Dan Malasky
IMG Academy



Caroline O'Connor
Miami Marlins



Michelle McGann Satter
LPGA Tour



Marc Weinroth
Miami Dolphins

FLORIDA SPORTS FOUNDATION

1203 Governor's Square Blvd, Ste 300
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

CONTACT US

850.577.7200
info@playinflorida.com

VISIT US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



TAG YOU'RE IT!

Featured Plate: Teams, stories, and impact behind Florida's specialty sports tags.

MIAMI HEAT AND TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS PLATES ARE AMONG TOP 10 IN THE STATE, WHY?



In a field of over 170 Florida specialty license plates, two Florida Professional Sports Teams plates rank in the top 10.

The Miami Heat ranks fourth with over 88,000 plates sold, while the Tampa Bay Buccaneers rank sixth with more than 62,000 on the road.

The 10 Florida Professional Sports Teams plates help support Florida's sports industry through the Foundation's Grant Program.

So, what drives more than 140,000 Floridians to choose Heat and Buccaneers plates beyond the eye-catching team graphics?

Perhaps it's a history of winning and elite players. The Heat won NBA championships in 2006, 2012, and 2013 with stars such as Dwyane Wade, Shaquille O'Neal, and LeBron James. The Bucs won the 2020 season Super Bowl with Tom Brady leading the way.

Florida's NHL teams have also had recent success. The Tampa Bay Lightning and Florida Panthers combined to win four of six Stanley Cups from 2020 through 2025, each winning back-to-back titles.

Winning teams also build community. Fans fill stadiums, wear team gear, and show their pride with license plates across South Florida and the Tampa Bay area.



Show your team pride and help move Florida forward!

From neighborhood fields to statewide competitions, every plate plays a bigger role in building a stronger, more active community. Together, these small acts of support add up to something greater.



Show your team pride and make an impact with your favorite team's specialty license plate.

This partnership turns team pride into real support for youth programs across Florida.

AMATEUR ALL-STARS

Spotlighting the passion and talent rising through Florida's amateur sports scene.

SUNSHINE STATE GAMES ARTISTIC SWIMMER GROWS INTO ADULTHOOD IN THE GAMES

Trinity Noriega began her Sunshine State Games journey in 2012, competing in the Novice 8-and-Under Division. Fourteen years later, she returned in 2026 to compete in the Open Team Free Event while also coaching the Miramar Mermaids and judging the next generation of swimmers.

"The Sunshine State Games and Artistic Swimming programs connect and impact families and communities," said sport director Lorraine Valerino. "We have coaches who rose through the ranks in the Sunshine State Games and are impacting the next generation of artistic swimmers."



Trinity Noriega (2012)

GENERATIONS OF THE GAMES

A legacy of competition passed from one generation to the next.

Mark Amsinger, a Sunshine State Games judge, has watched the tradition continue through his own family. His daughters, Crystal Amsinger Motes and Jennie Amsinger, competed with the Suncoast WaterWorks during their youth. In 2026, Crystal's daughters, Emily, 13, and Elizabeth, 7, continued the family tradition in the water.

The tradition extends to Caroline Karolinko-Tiernan, now coach of the Palm Beach Coralytes. A Sunshine State Games competitor in 2002 and 2005, she returned to coach the same team she once represented, including Trinity Noriega.



Trinity Noriega (2026)



Learn more about the Sunshine State Games at SunshineStateGames.com.

FUN FIRST, FITNESS FOREVER

Encouraging kids to stay active through play, movement, and healthy habits.



FUN FIRST, FITNESS FOREVER: TURNING MOVEMENT INTO A LIFELONG ADVENTURE!

Fun First, Fitness Forever is off and running! Through exciting partnerships with school districts, the Florida Departments of Education and Health, and communities across the state, we are building an education-based curriculum that helps young people discover the joy of being active.



So far, 2,010 students at 3 participating schools have taken part in 2 Fitness Weeks. A big shout-out to our first host district, Orange County Public Schools, and to Chickasaw Elementary School, Union Park Middle School, and Walker Middle School. Thank you for leading the way in this fitness initiative!

We want children to learn new skills, build confidence, discover their inner athlete, and experience how great it feels to have a healthy, strong body. When we make fitness fun from the start, we can inspire healthy habits that last a lifetime!

THE ASSIST

Funding opportunities, grant highlights, and tips to help you succeed.

YOUTH ROWERS FLOCK TO NATHAN BENDERSON PARK

The 2026 USRowing Youth National Championships was the recipient of a Florida Sports Foundation grant. The event returned to Nathan Benderson Park in Sarasota, featuring four days of elite 2,000-meter racing, wonderful fan experiences, and premier viewing opportunities as the nation's top young athletes compete for national titles.

The athletes in action ranged from 12 years old to under 20 years old and qualified at a regional event from their area of the U.S.



For many of the youth rowers competing it was the first step to collegiate rowing and a possible spot on a future National team event the 2032 Olympic Games.

Recognized as the 2025 Best Florida Sporting Event for Mid-Size Markets and the 2024 Best Amateur Sporting Event (Sports Travel Awards), the event attracted over 4,000 athletes from 240 teams, 1,000 coaches and draws more than 5,000 spectators. The US Rowing Youth National Championships is the large youth rowing event in the country.

A PREMIER DESTINATION FOR ROWING

From Sunshine State Games competition to national championships, Nathan Benderson Park has become a destination for athletes at every level.

- **Since 2009:** Hosting rowing events for more than 15 years.
- **Sunshine State Games:** Hosted rowing and canoe/kayak events from 2012–14.
- **Beyond Rowing:** Hosts races, triathlons, and running events.

Today, the park welcomes international championships while continuing to serve athletes, spectators and the surrounding community.

GAME CHANGERS

Home to world-class events, elite athletes, and unforgettable championship moments.

ORLANDO NAMED ONE OF FOUR INTERNATIONAL CITIES TO HOST OLYMPIC Q-SERIES



Orlando will join Tokyo, Shanghai and Montreal as one of four international hosts of the Olympic Q-Series on the road to the LA28 Olympic Games.

From June 8–11, 2028, Orlando will host flag football, beach volleyball, climbing and skateboarding at Camping World Stadium. The event will be the final Q-Series stop, taking place just one month before the LA28 Games.

The Q-Series will help determine the final Olympic qualifiers in flag football and beach volleyball, bringing elite competition closer to fans in an urban festival atmosphere.

Orlando adds the event to a strong Olympic résumé that includes the 2024 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials and preliminary soccer matches during the 1996 Atlanta Games.

THE ROAD TO LA28 RUNS THROUGH ORLANDO

Four global cities. Six sports. One final road to Olympic qualification.

- **Four Host Cities:** Tokyo, Shanghai, Montreal and Orlando
- **Orlando Events:** Flag football, beach volleyball, climbing and skateboarding
- **Final Stop:** June 8–11, 2028, one month before the LA28 Olympic Games



The Greater Orlando event was recognized by the Florida Sports Foundation as the **Best Large Market Awarded Event** at the 2026 Summit.

PLAY MAKERS

Celebrating the people behind the plays who move Florida sports forward.

SENIOR GAMES ATHLETES WIN GOLD

The Florida Senior Games includes a long tradition of U.S. military veterans, from World War II veteran Jack Appel to Vietnam veteran Harry Carothers.

At the 2026 National Veterans Golden Age Games in Tampa, Florida Senior Games athletes continued that tradition, earning gold medals in powerlifting and track and field.

Andrew Harrell, a Vietnam War veteran who has competed in badminton and track and field at the Florida Senior Games, won four gold medals in the 50-, 100-, 200- and 400-meter events in the 75-79 age group. He also earned track and field gold medals in 2022 and 2024.



"No one knew about that kind of stuff in 1971 when I came home," said Harrell. "Or that we would be traumatized for years. There was no treatment for it from the VA for a long time."

SMALL IN STATURE BUT LARGE ON THE FIELD



Now batting for the Golden Gals, Madelaine "Tiny" Cazal.

At the 2026 Florida Senior Games Softball Championship, held September 26, in Leesburg, 88-year old Madelaine "Tiny" Cazal stepped up the plate and delivered as usual.

She will also compete in the 2026 Florida Senior Games Track and Field competition, in December, in Pasco County. Cazal, a resident of The Villages, has been competing in the Florida Senior Games since she was in the 60-64 group. She's now a member of the 85-89 age group. Tiny has won countless medals in The Villages Senior Games, the Florida Senior Games and National Senior Games.

Cazal was the Florida Senior Games Female Athlete of the Year in 2004 and holds 15 age group records in the discus and javelin throw, shot put and long jump events. Tiny is living proof of the saying, "you don't stop playing because you get old, you get old because you stop playing." Keep playing, Tiny.

FUEL UP

Smart nutrition and athlete-approved recipes to power your performance.

START STRONG: BREAKFAST FOR ACTIVE DAYS



Great performances start long before the first whistle, and they start in the cooler. A smart snack pairs carbohydrates for quick energy with protein to keep you going, like fruit with yogurt, whole-grain crackers with cheese, or trail mix. And don't forget water. Sip before you play, during breaks, and after the final buzzer, especially under the Florida sun.

Orange slices and watermelon do double duty by hydrating while they fuel. Pack well, drink often, and let your body do what it trained to do.

BEAT THE HEAT: FUELING IN FLORIDA

Training in warm conditions makes hydration especially important. Athletes should drink before, during and after activity to replace fluids lost through sweat and help maintain energy and performance.

For longer or more intense workouts, especially in Florida's heat, fluids with electrolytes can help support hydration and replace what the body loses during extended activity.



RECIPE SPOTLIGHT: FLORIDA SUNSHINE ENERGY BITES



Ingredients:

- 1 cup old-fashioned oats
- ½ cup peanut butter (or sunflower seed butter for a nut-free version)
- ⅓ cup honey
- ½ cup dried cranberries or chopped dried apricots
- ¼ cup unsweetened shredded coconut
- 2 tablespoons chia seeds
- Zest of 1 Florida orange
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt

Instructions:

1. Stir all the ingredients together in a large bowl until evenly mixed.
2. Chill the mixture for 20 to 30 minutes, so it is easier to handle.
3. Roll into bite-size balls, about one tablespoon each.
4. Store in a covered container in the refrigerator for up to a week.

Why It's Great for Athletes:

Oats fuel, nut butter adds protein, and orange zest brings Florida flavor. Perfect for tournament days.

RALLY POINT

Where Florida's sports community connects, celebrates, and shares.

WIREGRASS RANCH: A HUB FOR SPORTS

A premier destination for competition, community and connection.

Since opening in 2020, Wiregrass Ranch Sports Campus has become a hub of sports activity in Florida's Sports Coast/Pasco County.

The 98,000-square-foot indoor facility and surrounding outdoor fields accommodate a wide range of competition. Basketball, volleyball and cheer events are hosted indoors, while the outdoor fields provide space for soccer, lacrosse and other sporting events.

Beyond competition, the campus serves as a gathering place for the Wesley Chapel community. Athletes and families are welcomed by a spacious concourse often filled with food trucks, vendors and exhibitors, while nearby accommodations provide convenience for out-of-town visitors.



HOME TO FLORIDA SPORTS FOUNDATION EVENTS

From the Florida Senior Games to the Sunshine State Games, Wiregrass Ranch has welcomed athletes from across Florida.

Wiregrass Ranch Sports Campus has become a regular destination for Florida Sports Foundation events. Through the current Florida Senior Games agreement with Florida's Sports Coast, the facility has hosted basketball, bag toss, badminton, pickleball and volleyball indoors, along with archery on the outdoor fields and a 5K road race surrounding the campus.

Sunshine State Games Taekwondo has also called Wiregrass Ranch home, with competitions held at the facility in 2024 and 2026.



ON DECK

A quick look at upcoming competitions and events across Florida.

Perfect Game WWBA (Baseball)

(FSF Granted Event)

October 8-19, West Palm Beach & Jupiter

Strongman's Championship League (SCL)

(FSF Granted Event)

October 10, Olustee Park

Englewood Beach Waterfest

(FSF Granted Event)

October 10-11, Port Charlotte

2026 AVP Grass Nationals (Volleyball)

(FSF Granted Event)

October 23-25, Gainesville

Tampa Bay Super Cup (Soccer)

(FSF Granted Event)

October 23-25, Tampa

PGF Show Me The Money Fall (Fastpitch Softball)

(FSF Granted Event)

October 31-November 1, Newberry

2026 UCI BMX Racing World Cup

(FSF Granted Event)

October 31-November 1, Sarasota

Girls Academy East Regional (Soccer)

(FSF Granted Event)

November 6-9, Bradenton

Men's Senior Baseball League (MSBL) Fall Classic

(FSF Granted Event)

November 6-9, Bradenton

Men's Senior Baseball League (MSBL) Fall Classic

(FSF Granted Event)

November 7-21, West Palm Beach

Sunshine State Games Alachua/Gainesville Festival

Weekend (Archery, Fuji BJJ, Swimming, Ultimate)

June 5-7, Various Alachua County Locations

Backwards K College Exposure Showcase & Camp

(Fastpitch Softball), (FSF Granted Event)

November 13-15, Newberry

IWLCA Presidents Cup (Lacrosse)

(FSF Granted Event)

November 20-22, Bradenton & Tampa Bay

Snowball Derby (Auto Racing)

(FSF Granted Event)

December 2-6, Pensacola

USA Softball High Performance Program National

Selection Event, (FSF Granted Event)

December 2-6, Vero Beach

American Youth Cheer

(FSF Granted Event)

December 3-6, Kissimmee



ON DECK

A quick look at upcoming competitions and events across Florida.

Elite Academy League Winter Event (Soccer) (FSF Granted Event)

December 3-8, Lakewood Ranch

2026 ECNL Girls Florida (Soccer) (FSF Granted Event)

December 5-7, Seminole County

2026 AAU Cross Country National Championships (FSF Granted Event)

December 5, 2026, Tallahassee

UYFL Football and Cheerleading National Championships, (FSF Granted Event)

December 5-12, Plant City

35th Annual Florida Senior Games

December 5-13

Various Florida's Sports Coast/Pasco County locations

Lou Groza Collegiate Kicker Award

December 7

West Palm Beach

Battle Youth Football National Championship (FSF Granted Event)

December 7-13, Wellington

United Soccer League (USL) Youth Finals (FSF Granted Event)

December 10-15, Tampa

2026 Junior Orange Bowl International Youth Festival (FSF Granted Event)

December 12-January 7, Various Miami locations

2026 Pro Billiard Series Championship (FSF Granted Event)

December 15-21, Jacksonville

Boca Raton Bowl

December 18

Flagler Credit Union Stadium, Boca Raton

Union Home Gasparilla Bowl

December 18

Raymond James Stadium, Tampa

StaffDNA Cure Bowl

December 22

Orlando

Pop Tarts Bowl

December 29

Camping World Stadium, Orlando

Taxslayer Gator Bowl

December 30

Everbank Stadium, Jacksonville

Reliaquest Bowl

December 31

Raymond James Stadium, Tampa



SPORTS SUMMIT

Connecting Florida's sports tourism leaders, partners, and event professionals.

The annual Florida Sports Summit brings together sports tourism professionals, event rights holders and industry partners from across the state to connect, collaborate and share ideas. Through educational sessions, peer-to-peer meetings, networking opportunities and industry recognition, the Summit helps strengthen relationships and advance Florida's position as a premier destination for sports.



STATUTES

Statutes supporting sports development, funding, and initiatives across Florida.

F.S.S. 288.1229

PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS-RELATED INDUSTRIES AND AMATEUR ATHLETICS

The Foundation shall assist the department in the promotion and development of the sports industry and related industries for the purpose of improving the economic presence of these industries in Florida. The promotion of amateur athletic participation for the citizens of Florida and the promotion of Florida as a host for national and international amateur athletic competitions for the purpose of encouraging and increasing the direct and ancillary economic benefits of amateur athletic events and competitions.

F.S.S. 320.08056

SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATES

The department is responsible for developing the specialty license plates authorized in s. 320.08053.

F.S.S. 320.08058

SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATES

FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL SPORTS TEAM LICENSE PLATES. The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles shall develop a Florida Professional Sports Team license plate as provided in this section for Major League Baseball, National Basketball Association, National Football League, Arena Football League, National Hockey League, and Major League Soccer teams domiciled in this state.

F.S.S. 1006.205

FAIRNESS IN WOMEN'S SPORTS ACT

It is the intent of the Legislature to maintain opportunities for female athletes to demonstrate their strength, skills, and athletic abilities and to provide them with opportunities to obtain recognition and accolades, college scholarships, and the numerous other long-term benefits that result from participating and competing in athletic endeavors.

CHAPTER 286

PUBLIC BUSINESS: MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Reports statutorily required; filing, maintenance, retrieval, and provision of copies.

F.S.S. 288.11625

APPLICATION FOR SPORTS DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

HB 7095 created s. 288.11625, F.S., funding for the Sports Development Program. Entities seeking to receive funding under this program must complete the required application process, as specified. The annual application period is from June 1 through November 1.

F.S.S. 288.11631

RETENTION OF MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL SPRING TRAINING BASEBALL FRANCHISES

The Department of Commerce serves as the state agency for certifying qualified applicants to receive state funding for a facility for a spring training franchise under Sections 288.11631 and 212.20(6)(d)6.e, F.S.