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The American Youth Soccer Organization Selects Palm Beach County as Site for 2016 AYSO National Games

Thousands of soccer players from across the nation will transform Palm Beach County into the epicenter of youth soccer.

Palm Beach County will be home to one of the largest and most prestigious youth soccer events that takes place in the United States. The American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) selected Palm Beach County as the destination for the 2016 AYSO National Games. AYSO Section 14 will partner with the Palm Beach County Sports Commission to host the National Games at the International Polo Club in Wellington, from July 3-10, 2016. The AYSO National Games are held every other year.



The joint bid was submitted in March and approved at the AYSO National Annual General Meeting held in Anaheim, CA. Palm Beach County has been a hotbed for soccer through AYSO Section 14, which oversees AYSO soccer in most of Florida and parts of several surrounding states, and its efforts to significantly grow soccer participation. AYSO Section 14 has become one of the greatest ambassadors for soccer in the State of Florida.

“We are very excited to see the AYSO National Games return to Palm Beach County for 2016,” said AYSO National President Mark Stewart. “The International Polo Club converts into one of the most stunning soccer facilities imaginable with 30 soccer fields side by side on pristine natural grass. We expect the National Games to again be an important economic contributor to Palm Beach County, but also a tremendous event for thousands of AYSO soccer players from across the U.S. We know it will be an amazing experience for all.”

AYSO invites over 240 soccer teams, consisting of more than 4,000 athletes and 10,000 total visitors to participate in the National Games, making this one of the most renowned soccer events in the United States. The participating teams will contend for titles in boy’s and girl’s divisions, featuring a variety of age groups (Under 10 to Under 19). Over 1,200

soccer games will take place during the 2016 AYSO National Games, creating an unrivaled number of amateur soccer games that takes place during a single event.

The AYSO National Games is expected to be the largest summer sporting event to take place in Palm Beach County this decade. Palm Beach County was previously home to the AYSO National Games during July 2010. However, the 2016 National Games will bring more soccer and more impact due to the event's substantial growth in team and player participation, primarily because of the inclusion of more age groups. The successful bid is also a landmark occasion for the entire state of Florida, which will host the AYSO National Games for only the second time during the event's illustrious history.

The International Polo Club is a remarkable venue that maintains over 300 acres of land, consisting of nine (9) polo fields. The venue was a key ingredient in Palm Beach County's successful bid. This venue will allow for a layout that showcases more than 30 contiguous soccer fields. The partnership with the International Polo Club provides a competitive advantage for Palm Beach County in regards to pursuing and hosting major national and international sporting events. "We are pleased to partner with the Palm Beach County Sports Commission to bring back the AYSO National Games," said John Wash, president of the International Polo Club. "Our ability to host 240 teams, along with their families adds up to over 10,000 spectators! There is really no other venue in the county that can host an event of this magnitude. Our club is involved in so many events that are not related to polo, and we truly enjoy it!"

The AYSO National Games is much more than just a soccer tournament. In addition to the soccer competition that will take place at the International Polo Club, AYSO will host the Games' Opening Ceremonies at FAU Stadium in Boca Raton, which features an inspirational parade of teams combined with a family-style festival and celebration of soccer. Also unique to the AYSO National Games is SoccerFest. At SoccerFest, all of the players are shuffled into new teams according to age level and play in a series of

friendly games, giving everyone a chance to get to know each other before they take the field and start the “official” competition.

Very few communities have the privilege and ability to host the AYSO National Games, which transforms destinations into a soccer mecca. In addition to exciting soccer, the AYSO National Games provides enormous tourism benefits for host communities. This event will generate over 10,000 hotel room nights and more than \$7 million in direct visitor spending for Palm Beach County, which will significantly impact hotel occupancy levels, bed tax revenues, and economic impact during the month of July. Soccer athletes, coaches, and spectators will be occupying hotels and spending money countywide.

The American Youth Soccer Organization is one of the most admired associations promoting soccer in the United States. AYSO was established in 1964 with nine teams and is celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2014 making it the oldest national youth soccer organization in the U.S. Today, AYSO consists of more than 50,000 teams and over 500,000 players. Over the years, AYSO has created many valuable programs and concepts. Most notably, AYSO revolutionized youth sports with its "Everyone Plays®" and "Balanced Teams" philosophies. In AYSO, each child who registers is guaranteed to play at least half of every game.

AYSO Section 14 Director, Richard Schwartz, stated, "It is with great pleasure and pride to announce that the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) has awarded the 2016 National Games to AYSO Section 14. The tournament will be played in July 2016 at the International Polo Club in Wellington, Florida with the opening ceremonies to be held at FAU Stadium in Boca Raton. The AYSO National Games start off a week-long celebration that brings together AYSO players, volunteers and parents from across our country. Over 4,000 players and approximately 10,000 individuals will be converging on Palm Beach County during the tournament week. This is a great way to show off what Florida and more specifically, Palm Beach County, has to offer. The economic boom that this creates for

businesses in Palm Beach County is immeasurable. We look forward to working with the Palm Beach Sports Commission in making this the best National Games ever."

"Winning the bid for the 2016 AYSO National Games is a historic occasion for Palm Beach County", remarked Guy Quattlebaum, President of the Palm Beach County Sports Commission. "Hosting one of the largest sporting events for the most popular sport across the globe further elevates Palm Beach County's stature as an elite sports destination. Its extra gratifying that AYSO has awarded only two bids for the National Games to Florida and both were presented by the Palm Beach County Sports Commission and AYSO Section 14. We are proud to have been home to the 2010 AYSO National Games and can't wait to see this event return in 2016."

"The Palm Beach County Sports Commission is humbled, honored, and excited that the American Youth Soccer Organization will bring its most prestigious event to Palm Beach County", says George Linley, Executive Director of the Palm Beach County Sports Commission. "The abundance of new dollars and rise in hotel occupancy will be welcomed by the hospitality and business community. Hotels, restaurants, retail outlets, and attractions from Jupiter to Boca Raton will experience a surge of business during the middle of summer. There are very few opportunities to host a single sporting event that will create a positive economic explosion countywide."

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About AYSO

The American Youth Soccer Organization is the largest single-entity youth soccer association in the U.S. with over 500,000 registered players and 125,000 registered volunteers. AYSO develops and delivers quality youth soccer programs in a fun, safe environment based on the Five Philosophies of Everyone Plays, Balanced Teams, Open

Registration, Positive Coaching and Good Sportsmanship. To learn more about AYSO and how you can become a part of AYSO and the National Games experience, contact (800)USA-AYSO or visit www.AYSO.org.

About Palm Beach County Sports Commission

The Palm Beach County Sports Commission is a private, not-for-profit organization contracted by Palm Beach County to promote and market the County as a sports destination. The Commission brings sporting events and activities to the County, enhances economic impact, stimulates bed tax revenues (primarily in the off-season), and maximizes utilization of County facilities. The Commission supports and hosts sporting events that bring visitors from across the state, region, nation, or globe to grow tourism in Palm Beach County. For more information on the Palm Beach County Sports Commission go to www.palmbeachsports.com.



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